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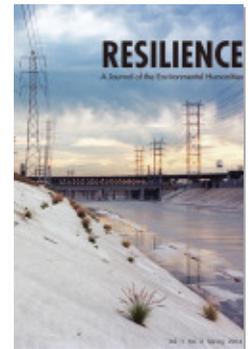
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Claiming the Language Ecotone: Translinguality, Resilience,  
and the Environmental Humanities

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# Claiming the Language Ecotone

Translinguality, Resilience, and the Environmental Humanities

To the Editors:

At this year's ASLE conference in Lawrence, Kansas, we attended a series of panels on topics related to the environmental humanities, culminating in the stimulating roundtable "Building the Environmental Humanities," chaired by *Resilience* editor Stephanie LeMenager. In the course of the thought-provoking statements (by Stacy Alaimo, Jon Christensen, Paul Outka, Cate Sandilands, and Jennifer Wenzel) and subsequent lively discussions, we came to a striking conclusion: although humanities scholars agreed on the importance of language in their respective disciplines, transcultural processes and multilingual matters are crucially unaddressed.

It is clear that to embrace resilience as a mode of knowledge production, environmental humanities scholars will need both to transcend the boundaries of disciplines and the assumption that English alone as the academic lingua franca can express the complexity of the relationships between mankind and the non-human environment. Indeed, Ursula Heise pointed to the linguistic dilemma as a particular challenge for ecocriticism:

[M]onolingualism is currently one of ecocriticism's most serious intellectual limitations. The environmentalist ambition is to think globally, but doing so in terms of a single language is inconceivable—even and especially when that language is a hegemonic one.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, we cannot speak all languages, but truly global environmental thinking depends on the creative potential of language and in-

tercultural literacy. We name, perceive, and interpret our environment through language. Translation itself is a way of reshaping the world. Ecological diversity dynamically relates to culture and uniquely adapted languages.

The foreign languages have much to contribute to environmental humanities. Through the study of texts in their original language we learn how environmental issues and ecological knowledge are (en)coded in other cultures and languages. Language and intercultural literacies are intrinsic to shaping our ecological futures. Inspired by the recent ASLE roundtable, we hope to enter into a vibrant conversation about the potential synergy between the foreign languages and environmental humanities discourse—and plan to initiate that discussion with a more elaborate statement soon.

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NOTE

1. Ursula K. Heise, “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Ecocriticism,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 121.2 (2006): 513.