



PROJECT MUSE®

Resilience!

Jenny Price

Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities, Volume 1,
Number 1, Winter 2013, (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/res.2014.a565569>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/565569>

Resilience!

JENNY PRICE

Resilience. It connotes give and take, fluidity, back and forth, flexibility, movement. It beckons safely away from the rigid dichotomies of nature/not nature, nature/culture, nature/people that have defined, haunted, plagued, misdirected modern environmental thinking and environmentalism (at least American-style) since—well, since the beginning. Nature, it suggests, isn't something other or out there. It's not something we either save or destroy. Environments change, they have histories, we inhabit them in constantly shifting ways for better and for worse.

Resilience. Now that's an optimistic word, isn't it? It rejects the dichotomous, apocalypse-style environmental thinking: OMG, we've destroyed the entire earth! And the hopelessness that suggests. The climate may be warming, but the sky isn't falling. The river may be on fire, or it looks an awful lot like a concrete sewer—but we can clean it up. We can take out the concrete. We can restore it to health. Let's banish the image of the delicate, fragile earth that a person can hold in and protect with two hands. Resilience: toughness, comeback. There's still some air left in the ball; there's still something left in the tank.

Resilience. It connotes energy, force, *action*—and a slingshot humanities that applies its methods to urgent environmental, social, economic, political issues. That brings its considerable powers to bear—its deep understanding of context, storytelling, power, historicity, cause and effect, and how we make meaning—on the big, fundamental questions about how to inhabit environments more sustainably and equitably. A humanities that insists on the indispensability of these powers. Want to

clean up the air and water, revitalize that river, battle species extinction, tackle climate change? Just flash the green bat signal, and it turns out we've got an abundance of bat suits among us.

Resilience. It's a nice, common English word. A strong and readily understandable word that conjures active verbs and real people doing real things. It's the sort of word that the humanities should use and rely on—to communicate, and thereby to act, and to be seriously useful. We're not calling this journal *Discourse in Environmental Humanities*, or *Interflexienvirohybridativity*, or even just *Environmental Humanities*.

Or above all, *End of Nature Studies*. This is *Resilience*. We're complex. We use strong, accessible language and engage in useful and reasonable thinking, theorizing, and storytelling. With flexibility, with open minds. With optimism.

And, one can long for, with a little humor. Environment is ironic, and contradictory. Resilience. The roadrunner gets flattened and pops right back up. The boomerang flies back when you're not looking. Everything has unintended consequences. The one small zucchini plant in your garden won't stop producing gigantic zucchinis. Oops. Let's get deadly serious. And let's have some fun.