that Susan Miller is as aware as anyone of the two-tiered nature of the profession, I am puzzled by her statement.

But these are minor disturbances in two excellent essays in a book that I hope becomes a model for others. We need to hear not only researchers talking in personal ways about their research, but teachers talking about their teaching, students talking about their writing, theorists talking about their theorizing, etc. One great danger as a discipline grows is that it loses its human face. Such a loss is unfortunate for any discipline. For composition studies it would be tragic.

—Gary Tate
Texas Christian University


"Greenpeace activists declared victory today," announced Connie Chung on the CBS Nightly News. In a recent confrontation with a barge carrying toxic, cancer-causing waste for storage in France, Greenpeace activists convinced the French government to halt plans to provide storage facilities for any more shipments. The news coverage included dramatic photographs of the huge, ocean-going barge sailing solidly into the harbor, while, along side at its water line, the tiny Greenpeace vessel tossed on the heaving foam of its wake—an image that harkens back to the story of David's confrontation with Goliath, an image that Greenpeace activists cultivate in order to both use and break the environmental stereotypes reported in the news media, stereotypes encouraged by a phenomena M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer term Ecospeak.

Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America, is a practical attempt to analyze the patterns of rhetoric used typically in written discourse on environmental politics. Centering itself on problems grounded in ethics and epistemology, Ecospeak covers a wide-ranging number of writers in the field of environmental issues, attempting to "remain critical" despite the authors' leanings toward what they identify as "eco-humanism or social ecology," leanings that place them in sympathy with such writers as Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Barry Commoner, Herman Daly, John Cobb, and Lester Brown. Ecospeak examines varieties
of environmentalism, tracing developments in America through the conflicting conservation and preservation movements led by Gifford Pinchot and John Muir, demonstrating the difficulty of getting at precise definitions of such terms as environmentalism and ecology. The authors suggest that such terms often lend themselves to too many interpretations to be accurately defined at this time.

Ecospeak also points to the important role science plays in environmental action while voicing frustration over the effect objectivity has on scientific discourse and the way it is reported by the news media. Additional chapters analyze the rhetoric of the Environmental Impact Statement, the ecotopian rhetoric of environmental action groups such as Greenpeace, and the latest in environmental developments, the rhetoric of sustainability.

Ultimately, according to Kenneth Burke, the purpose of public rhetoric is identification. The authors of Ecospeak find that “[f]or the rhetorical analyst, the intractability of social problems like the environmental dilemma is due to the inability of concerned discourse communities to form adequate identifications through effective appeals.” They express concern over the inability of environmentalist groups to capitalize on the growing public awareness about the environment, a problem due, in large part, to ecospeak.

The problem of ecospeak, which is a kind of media shorthand—a “makeshift discourse for defining novel positions in public debate”—used in reporting stories about the environment, lies at the heart of misidentification and is a major concern to Killingsworth and Palmer. They warn that the familiarity fostered by the use of ecospeak leads to audience control through “oversimplification, stereotyping, and pigeonholing—especially in the mass media, where a telegraphic style mingles with the need to cultivate in the audience a quick recognition of issues and public figures.” In effect, ecospeak “becomes a form of language and a way of framing arguments that stops thinking and inhibits social cooperation rather than extending thinking and promoting cooperation through communication.” Ecospeak causes environmental reporting ultimately to become an “oversimplified dichotomy”—the white hats versus the black hats. Thus, environmental reporting takes on the same tone as reports about sports: it’s a matter of the horned owls versus the loggers—cheerleaders from both sides of the issue standing on the sidelines facing off against each other, and too often the environmentalists are cast in the role of the other.

Greenhouse effect, global warming, acid rain, toxic waste: what do these phrases all have in common? They pack loads of connotative meaning that allow the news media to employ them in reporting the news. However, these phrases have prematurely hardened in their meanings
for different groups of people, and, depending upon how they get used, merely help the media to paint on the team numbers that distinguish the good guys from the bad, so to speak.

When the news media employ ecospeak, stories about the environment become high drama, ready-made for popular consumption, but they do little to report environmental issues in depth. The authors of Ecospeak attempt to break through the high drama and stereotyping portrayed in the news media to demonstrate that there is a continuum of perspectives on nature that more closely identifies environmental issues and encourages more careful, in-depth treatment of these important concerns.

—Shelley Aley
Texas Christian University


I enjoyed this collection of seventeen essays, vigorously reading each one, wondering what each author would say about "resistance." At a recent conference, the notion of "resistance" came up repeatedly. In one instance, I was sharing with a colleague some of my student-centered teaching methods. He responded, "My department is too traditional. I face major resistance to these new methods." I pulled Composition and Resistance out and said, "You need to read this!"

And this is exactly what Composition and Resistance addresses: resistance to the new direction of composition studies. This new direction examines "the social relevance of teaching composition" and "the politics of language," and it asks us to see composition as a "struggle in and with social order," not as an ideologically neutral act (4). These essays address writing teachers who face resistance to their cultural-political examination of language and writing.

The innovative apparatus of the book mirrors the present scholarly conversations on this social aspect of composition in that the authors respond to the ideas presented in the other essays, creating a kind of conversation. Hurlbert and Blitz called the authors together for three roundtable discussions. They taped the sessions, transcribed them, and edited them for the book. The participants contributed a brief chapter that