activity in which all participants are equally motivated and selfless. In reality, the collaborative effort can be fierce ground for competition.

Writing Relationships will be comforting indeed to new teachers of composition who are wondering why the “process” described in CCC looks remarkably different from the process they find in the classroom. As for veteran instructors, Tobin’s book will be a refreshing change.

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Resisting Writings (and the Boundaries of Composition)—Derek Owens; Dallas: Southern Methodist UP; 1994; 278 pp. ISBN:087074-343-0.

For those interested in inquiring into forms of discourse beyond those immortalized by conventional scholarship, Resisting Writings is a timely work. Free from the didacticism and combative sermonizing that pervades scholarly publication, the pertinence of Owens’s ideas are realized by the proximity of his observations. Akin to the “open text” discussed in chapter five, Resisting Writings is a collection of observations that by their common locale call toward a reevaluation of composition studies. In roughly two hundred pages, Owens rushes through discussions of afrocentric discourse and the status and struggle of “feminine” discourse in patriarchal systems, offers a synopsis of postmodern efforts toward reworking a path of composition for the future, and concludes with approximately forty pages of suggestions for implementing these “alternative” forms of discourse into the academy. This flurry, nonetheless, is neither incoherent, nor sketchy. Rather, any discomfort produced in the reader, by the abundance of forms discussed, may be the most poignant commentary on the crimes committed by those teaching composition through ethnocentric or patriarchal templates.

Owens begins his discussion with an extended metaphor describing his own view of interaction between discourse communities: “A great many islands, some in chains, some scattered in isolation. Each island representing a particular discourse focus” (3). With this “survey of the landscape” Owens introduces his intent:

The notion that we are scholars and teachers of “writing” in any global, pluralistic, or multicultural sense is simply false. We
don’t teach writing or rhetoric per se, we teach our kinds of writing, enforce the rhetorics we like to see. I include myself in this characterization, for I’m hardly without my own ideological biases; it’s just that I’m fond of open-ended variety.... I’m interested in contemplating how classroom environments and English curricula might be structured so as to emphasize a more heterogeneous embrace of multiple discourse strategies. This is the attitude that shapes this book. (7-8)

**Resisting Writings** is a book about discourse, specifically forms of discourse considered alternative—relative to more traditional notions about academic prose. However, Owens sets out not to dismantle and eradicate the status quo, but rather to make conscious the intentions and the philosophies that undergird the decisions to exclude other forms of discourse from the academy. Hence, by an analysis of traditional pedagogical assumptions, related to the teaching of writing, Owens opens up spaces for the consideration of alternative discourse forms in the composition classroom.

In chapter three, “Beyond Eurocentric Discourse,” Owens writes, “Although it has become chic for liberals and self-proclaimed radicals to speak of enlarging the cannon,...it’s still practically unheard of for philosophies of writing and communication indigenous to these overlooked cultures to be critically taught—and practiced—in classrooms (72-73). Owens’s experience among “these overlooked cultures” has taken place largely in the African-American community; and, in “Beyond Eurocentric Discourse,” he offers a model that, while exclusive of forms other than afrocentric discourse, points to the wealth of discourse forms present within the larger world community. Nevertheless, while Owens’s treatment of afrocentric forms of discourse is important, as it reveals how inappropriate eurocentric pedagogies may often be, he is not advocating the eradication of more traditional forms. Thus, while he echoes Asante when he contends that classical rhetoricians “are simply inappropriate as models and standards to which multiethnic student communities must always unquestioningly adhere” (87), he also asserts that “the languages of the academy are not enemies, but rather realities that the students at some level must learn to negotiate” (74). This careful positioning is important and resounds throughout the book—for *Resisting Writings* is about inclusion. Hence, even as Owens wishes to call our attention to alternative forms, he does not do so in spite of academic discourse. Indeed, such exclusionary approaches may further harm the communities we are attempting to honor.

In “When Male Means Marginal,” Owens addresses the place of “feminine” discourse within the university. Here, he discusses the
prevalence of the “adversarial method” over more “playful, experimental, and stylistically inventive” means in academic work. However, for Owens, “masculine” and “feminine” extend beyond a battle of the sexes:

Personally, I don’t think there’s any such thing as a quintessentially “masculine” or “feminine” writing—at least not in any sense that a text or rhetoric could be definitively measured as such.... quite honestly I want nothing to do with being so categorized and compartmentalized, or to accept any dichotomy inferring that the active imagination must forever remain limited by gender. (118)

Having established this foundation, Owens moves to identify and discuss forms often labeled “feminine,” contending that forms allowing contradiction, blurred genres, and silence, may resonate more congruently with our life experiences than the frequently artificial, linear didacticism that is often expressed in monologic voices, ill-timed conclusions, and combative rhetoric.

The last two chapters build upon the foundations established in the previous sections. “Contemporary Options” and “Implications for Practice” are practical and illustrative, as they magnify and elucidate much of the theory discussed earlier in the book. “Contemporary Options,” as an introduction to alternative forms of discourse, is invaluable. It is, in one sense, prose bibliography. Owens’s discussions of “natural” writing, linear time in composing, the blending of genres, conclusion-less compositions, and hypertext explore a wide variety of texts and reveal Owens’s impressive knowledge base. In “Contemporary Options,” Owens offers the reader example after example of writers and texts that are challenging the boundaries of composing. “Implications for Practice” is a look at “these new composing methodologies from a practitioner’s perspective” (183). Here, Owens’s ideas are, as he admits, often “long-term and idealistic.” Nevertheless, the seven suggestions he makes for the modern composition program (ranging from abandoning the “one-stop composition course” to rethinking the distinctions made between “creative writing” and “academic writing”) are frequently insightful and are not incongruous with the theoretical elements of his work. Particulars aside, however, Owens concludes “Implications for Practice” with what may be the most sagacious remark of the entire book:

The best way I can think of to make these connective links frequent and constructive, and thereby turn the university into a network of crisscrossing philosophies and energies, is by taking our own habits and tastes with a bit more humor and a lot more flexibility. Inelastic pedagogy, after all, signifies more than
just a dramatic lack of imagination—it reveals a profound distrust of others involved in the educational process, and the changes that can result from that interaction with unlike individuals. (226)

It is with this sort of honesty that Owens develops his work. *Resisting Writings* stands apart as a collection of personal ideas that risk vulnerability, as Owens rejects the tiresome shrouding of linear argumentation and detached, seemingly objective, prose in exchange for an accessible and user-friendly map that offers to expand our discourse-world views. “Readers might find these experiments tremendously liberating, intolerably annoying, or simply boring.” Owens writes, “but whatever our reaction, our understanding of composition theory will lack depth of field if these ends of the spectrum remain ignored—especially if it’s simply because they don’t fit neatly into our most familiar pedagogical frames” (171).

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**CONFERENCE**

The South Central Writing Centers Association announces its 4th Annual Conference and issues a call for papers on all aspects of writing center theory and practice, including writing center administration, peer tutor training, and assessment and evaluation. Abstracts of 100-150 words are due by January 16, 1995. The Conference will be held at Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas March 30, 31, and April 1. To submit abstracts or for more information, contact

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