shifts."

Where does this leave us? It would seem that the archaeological method is poststructuralist in its approach, leaving us with no firm foundation on which to build. At this point, Porter abandons the poststructuralist agenda, claiming that rhetoric "has to turn, ultimately, and become reconstructive." After the excavating/deconstructing, Porter promises to reconstruct the concept of audience in a way that is meaningful and useful for contemporary writers. It is in this effort that he disappoints.

Arguing against the "fuzzy notion" of discourse communities as descriptive of our current view of the relationship between writer and audience, Porter suggests replacing it with the term "forum," by which he means a concrete locale where several discourse communities intersect. Studying the relationship of audience to rhetoric in these specific places—such as a journal or a conference or a corporation—allows us to understand more fully the social constraints on our composing processes. In other words, we can understand what we mean by audience and how that audience affects our writing if we identify not a single rhetorical situation or discourse community but the specific places where several of these situations and communities intersect. It is in these forums, says Porter, that we move from limiting one-dimensional views of audience to the multidimensional realities in which we live. Analyzing forums permits us to see how closely we identify with the various audiences and how their ethos has composed our views as surely as we affect theirs.

Answering the question of audience by proposing specific structures for forum analysis, Porter ends with a whimper, not the bang that the earlier chapters promise. Falling victim to the need for reconstruction, he reduces the concept of audience to another fixed heuristic for writers. Disappointingly, the book ends with a set of specific methods for teaching audience and forum analysis, complete with definitive lists of questions and models of appropriate analyses. The significant contribution of this book is the archaeology of audience that releases us from stable, comfortable structures and allows us to find insight in that instability. Suggesting methods for finding specific answers via forum theory ultimately serves to systematize as surely as Aristotle and Campbell did. The many-layered question of audience is reduced to a formula.


Reviewed by David Coogan, SUNY at Albany

At the risk of sounding too clever, this is not a book about development. It is, rather, a book about developmental plotting, the ways we "narrate"
development. The approach, and the overall set-up of the book, is refreshing. First, Haswell takes us into the minds of students and imagines development from their point of view. Then, from the teacher's point of view, he spins several "tales" of development (based on student essays) to show that development is always interpretive and never simply a matter of fitting students into static slots. But surprisingly, after intriguing us with these tales, Haswell offers what seems to be a definitive tale of development. And though there are five parts to the book (a section each on growth, maturation, development, style, and curriculum), we end up, essentially, with two books, at least two motives behind Gaining Ground. In Book One, we get the reformer's urge to rehumanize development—to give it back to teachers. But in Book Two, we get a meta-theory of development and a slew of research: holistic ratings of a large sample of diagnostic essays; banner essays, thickly detailed; and a curriculum that seems at odds with the promise of a decentralized, populist development.

What makes the study intriguing is Haswell's insistence "that developmental studies must be narrative, dialectical and hermeneutical." This rejection of hierarchy—the path from beginner to finisher—unsettles the complacency of deficit models (and, in its wake, readiness tests, remediation, accountability, you name it). Indeed, the very concept of developmental "stages" comes under direct attack and, by default, so do the teachers and researchers who believe in stages. Haswell is tough, to be sure, but he doesn't play favorites. He pins his critique on biological as well as cultural models of development—both of which posit an inevitable "ending" to the plot.

Development "is not," Haswell argues, "just an inner, maturational growth nor just an outer, social acculturation, nor even the interaction between the two, but an educational life-process or lifework." Don't be fooled, he seems to say: development does not exist outside of its narration; it is life's work, performed by real people who interpret (rather than defer to) developmental theories. One concludes from this that any given theory of development will not necessarily transfer "across the board" to all students. Haswell urges teachers not to lament, but rather to "plunge in, in medias res" where the student is, and let development begin.

When he uses this tone and attacks Big Theory, Haswell is convincing: "Development in writing involves a change in status not from beginner to finisher but from experienced to more experienced, and with that change comes a shift in evaluative or interpretive standard." But, at the same time, he seems troubled by this critique, perhaps apprehensive about "interpretive" standards. Book Two responds by extending the critique and harnessing the creative energy of interpretation. What transpires is a more theoretical "Transformative Tale of Development" and increasingly pointed analyses of diagnostic essays. The theory provides a context from which teachers might build "transformative" situations in the classroom, and the research indicates (eventually) what is to be transformed: stylistic and cognitive skill.
In effect, Haswell says, “the transformative tale relates how an initial state of internal instability is shocked into a kind of self-reflection that learns a new knowledge or skill by unlearning and revising old knowledge or skill.” Driving the transformative tale is “something alien and threatening, a direct challenge to the self” that the student must recognize, work through, and “appropriate.” Students, Haswell admits, are responsible for their own transformations; but teachers, the “architects of that development,” must link each episode and create a “meaningful” (later, “generative”) context for change.

Although I wonder about the apparent ease with which one identifies “transformation” (not to mention the pecking order for “meaningful” or “generative” contexts), I am at least assured that these transformations have a particular domain: the development of style or the structural physique of the text. And though he later links stylistic changes with “deeper” cognitive changes, Haswell never engages diagnostic essays on a content level: he doesn’t talk about what the essays “say,” only what they look like and what might lurk beneath their surfaces.

There is, of course, a good reason for this: the essays have been stripped from their original contexts. As Haswell explains, “Typing and anonymity of the essays squelched other cryptic inclinations that might lurk behind the teachers’ profession of values, factors such as handwriting, gender, age, and academic class. The system meant to make the final value judgment of the teacher-raters more objective.” Now, Haswell does take some time to qualify this assumption about objectivity—in a sense to soften the impact of his approach—but in a book about “lifework,” one has to wonder about a procedure that purges the raters’ selves, the students’ selves, and Haswell’s self, in deference to “objectivity.” Of course, the need to be clear is understandable: with so many essays and so many raters, there needs to be some sort of game plan. But Haswell’s approach denies (what seems) a lively discussion of the actual classroom. In his effort to produce objective results, he overlooks development(s) likely to occur “in” (the transformative) text: political awakenings, sense of self, or what we might call textual “identity.”

In the final chapters of the book, with all his cards out on the table, Haswell offers a curriculum. While he resists developmentally sequenced curricula in Book One, Book Two has no such reservations. Reviewing his research, Haswell contends that between first-year composition and advanced composition student writing moves (or should move) from the concrete to the abstract, from tight experiential essays to more analytical and dialectical essays. As students get used to academic discourse, “style becomes less verbal and more nominal: a larger share of the words in the essays are put to use modifying nouns, and the modification grows more complex. Sentences lengthen. To be blunt, they sprawl.” Haswell follows these stylistic transformations into the workplace, where employees write with a savvy flair for complexity (but not pretension), comfortably handle abstract reasoning,
and employ multiple solutions to problems.

This tale of stylistic development parallels Haswell’s idea of good psychological development. “People of college age,” he says, summing up current strands in humanistic psychology, “leave the security of tidy and self consistent systems of thought and engage the real world with more complex and ambiguous weapons: probability, analogy, dialectics, pragmatism, relativism, meta-cognitive reflection, existential commitment, subjective or constructive interpretation.” The path we follow, then, is the well-beaten path of gradual assimilation to academic ways. In short, the plan is to “leave the security of tidy and self consistent systems,” battle with complexity and relativity, and emerge with an identity: a rational, flexible self that understands “open-ended structures” but is also able to pin down what that self wants to say.

Though I find nothing inherently wrong with Haswell’s tale, nothing harmful or insidious about it, I also find nothing very “transformative” or radical about it. Despite the revisionary focus on narration, there really is no sustained quarrel in this book with business-as-usual: no discussion, for example, of ethics, creative writing and development, or cultural diversity. By limiting development to style and cognition, Haswell cuts out a great deal: other forms of writing, institutional pressures that largely dictate academic style, institutional differences (say, writing in a research university versus writing in a small college), and individual differences, not to mention the power dynamics of “transformative” pedagogy.

Furthermore, or perhaps more to the point, Haswell’s methodology is also rather conservative: we get the texts but not the students who wrote them; we get some pedagogical theory, but no teachers using the theory. A journey into this subjective terrain (which Haswell pans as the ungrounded English Teacher vision) might have been provocative, but it would not have produced *Gaining Ground in College Writing*, which despite my criticisms is actually quite remarkable. Within its methodological scope, it shakes the roots of Development Proper and will, I hope, encourage a fresh revival of the field.


Reviewed by Peter Smagorinsky, University of Oklahoma

Just after I had finished reading *Reading Empirical Research Studies*, I ran into a distinguished literacy researcher who was teaching an introductory course in research methods in his university’s English department. He