views. In the first half of their article, Herrington and Moran comment on this problem, but more in relation to its implications for teachers who discover that "when we work with teachers from disciplines not our own, we see our own teaching in relief, standing out against the goals and strategies of other teachers in other disciplines." Finally, they turn to the problems of students when they comment on the "challenge we face as readers of student writing: to understand discourse practices and values that may differ from our own." In the end they recall Mina Shaughnessy's 1976 article, "Diving In," especially for its fourth stage in the developmental scale for teachers of basic writing. Shaughnessy noted that "the teacher who has come this far must now make a decision that demands professional courage—the decision to remediate himself [or herself] to become a student of new disciplines and of his [or her] students themselves in order to perceive both their difficulties and their incipient excellence." I can think of no greater teaching challenge and no better note on which to end this review. In lieu of offering a rating or implicit recommendation, let me invite you to dive into this book yourself.


Reviewed by Kristin R. Woolever, Northeastern University

This book begins with the _question_ of audience, not the fact. "Consider your audience," we say, assuming our students know what we mean. When I teach first-year composition, I concentrate on students' progress from writer-directed to reader-directed prose. When I train teaching assistants, I discuss how important it is for fledgling writers to understand the elements of the rhetorical situation, including audience. When I teach technical and professional writing classes, audience analysis plays a central role. In short, I _want_ to talk about audience; I think it is a basic principle of our discipline. But what am I really talking about when I talk about audience? More importantly, how valuable is the notion of audience to the composing process? Is it part of invention or part of editing? Both? Neither? These are the questions behind the question—the questions James Porter asks in _Audience and Rhetoric._

To find the possible answers, Porter uses Foucault's "archeological" method of digging through the strata of rhetorical theory to discover how audience is treated through the ages. This method, says Porter, "forces its user to ask disruptive, at times rude questions about the ordering practices of a discipline" in the hope of moving closer not to a static definition of audience but to an understanding of the range of possibilities. In other words, by following the notion of audience through rhetorical history, Porter shows us that the term is not an unshakable "given" with an accepted
meaning (a “God-term” in our discipline, as Kenneth Burke would say), but a concept that needs to be reconstructed again and again.

Certainly, others have broached this subject recently: Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, Peter Elbow, Douglas Park, and many more. One of the more heated of the contemporary debates is whether we should consider audience at all when we write, whether the aim of writing is to develop a genuine voice or to master the conventions of a given discourse community. Other issues of current concern are whether we address real people when we write or whether we invent audiences. Another is the question of when we should think about audience: before or after we have written a draft?

Resisting the temptation to take sides, Porter remains faithful to Foucault’s method and returns to the history of rhetoric, exploring the theoretical underpinnings of our contemporary notions of audience. In the linear communication model posited by Plato, Aristotle, and other classical rhetoricians—a model that privileged speaking over writing—the practice of dialectic included an intelligent audience that participated in the making of meaning, but the less lofty practice of rhetoric (often aligned negatively with sophism) assumed a homogeneous, passive audience affected by the rhetor’s words. As speaking occasions gradually gave way to the predominance of writing occasions, the audience’s role became diminished even further. Later rhetoricians—Ramus, Campbell, Blair, and others—reduced writing to a concern for style.

As a result of his archaeological digging, Porter finds that two primary perspectives on audience emerge and remain central to our debates about audience today: the managerial view and the social-epistemic view. The managerial point of view suggests that audience is a passive entity to be acted upon; the writer’s search for meaning occurs outside the realm of rhetoric, and rhetoric itself becomes nothing more than the presentation of a message. The social-epistemic perspective suggests that audience participates in the discovery of meaning and essentially “writes the writer.” In the former, audience all but disappears as a vital force. In the latter, audience is integral to the composing process.

The early sections of Porter’s book focus on how these two views manifest themselves in what James Berlin has called “the four rhetorics directing contemporary practices”: current-traditional, expressivist, neo-Aristotelian, and new rhetorical. According to Porter, followers of current-traditional and expressivist rhetorics subscribe to the managerial view, while neo-Aristotelian and new rhetoricians tend more toward the social-epistemic view. In later chapters, Porter traces the notion of audience through reader-response, feminist, and poststructuralist criticism, noting how the meaning of audience changes in each and sometimes contradicts itself within each. But, as he states at the outset of the study, he is “chiefly interested in the structure of the knowledge system, and in examining the rupture points within the system—i.e., historical moments when the meaning of ‘audience’
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”