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Emotion

> [P]sychology has been the beneficiary and the prisoner of our most fascinating proclivity—to explain the world around us, to understand what surrounds us, to make up stories . . . that explain and make comprehensible the evidence of our senses. . . . Over the centuries the men and women who made up the most convincing stories were elevated to a special position in the life of the mind; first they were the prophets, then the philosophers, and finally, the scientists.
>
> —George Mandler, *Mind and Body*

Why Aren't Things Going Better?

It's the third week of class. By now my major goal for the first segment of the semester has been accomplished: I know all my students' names and they are beginning to know one another, becoming a community of writers. I pass back the freewrites they have done and ask them to trade papers just to see what others have written; there is laughter and good-natured praise expressed for the ideas of others. Still, I am not entirely happy with how the class is going—the students are a little too subdued, too passive. Perhaps part of the problem is the room, in the bowels of one of the oldest buildings on campus, where the lighting is poor and it's small enough that students can't get into groups comfortably. I

call and ask the powers that assign rooms to move us, and we are put in the queue. The 9 A.M. hour may also be a problem; for college students, that is daybreak. I bring in a coffeepot on Wednesday and before we start open all the windows to get some fresh air. The students brighten a bit, and by the end of the hour they are more animated. I get the message that a room in a newer building is available and we move on Friday; the room is bigger, the chairs are more comfortable, the lighting is better—I begin to feel that the class atmosphere may improve.

A couple of encounters with students puzzle and intrigue me. One is in our first session in the computer lab, a facility in which we will meet regularly, once a week. Most students have at least some acquaintance with computers (some have their own), but logging on to the network was new to them all. Ed, the student just out of the army, was trying the same strategy over and over but failing to log on. When I went over to help, he was rigid with frustration. "I should be able to do this! I've been working on a computer for the last two years!" I discover he is using a strategy from his previous experience (involving logging on to a mainframe rather than on to a network), and we talk about how difficult it is to switch from one computer environment to another. I go over the instructions with him once more; he gets on to the network, relaxes, and starts to write. I wonder why he persisted in using the same log-on strategy again and again when he could see that it did not work the first time.

Another puzzling encounter is with Alice. The first paper is due soon; we have been discussing the readings, all of which have to do with what one might call cultural encounters. Now they are to describe and analyze an encounter they have had with the "other," with another culture or another way of doing things. Alice is having trouble—she says she finds the topic "boring." In a conference she tells me she has nothing to write about, that she had never encountered the "other." I discover she is from San Francisco; hasn't she found any differences between the city and our

small college town that she could write about? Did one of the readings, Hall's "Anthropology of Manners," give her any ideas? Her response: "People here seem different—they seem friendlier." Fine, write about that. The resulting draft is a description of an incident in San Francisco where a man asked for directions and was ignored, and a paragraph on how much nicer people are in our little college town. There is no analysis of the incident. She does not seem interested in revising, even though her peer editing group and I have given her a number of suggestions as to how she might analyze the incident in light of the readings on the "other." Her friend Jane, with whom she always sits and on whom she seems to depend for help, also gives her some good suggestions; she smiles and nods agreeably, and doesn't revise.

Leontina is having difficulty getting her ideas down in a coherent fashion, even though she (unlike Alice) is obviously engaged in her topic. Her cultural encounter was a fairly ugly racial incident in her high school—a fight that grew out of a misunderstanding about where and with whom people sat at lunch. She was still very upset about the way it was handled by the white principal, feeling that he was unfair to her fellow African American students; her description of the incident is disjointed and hard to follow. I ask her to reread Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" and then write in her reading journal about the cues he gives readers to show how the incident unfolded, thinking she might find his deft chronology a model. I worry about the students in her writing group, who seemed to me during the discussion of Orwell's piece to be fairly naive about cultural difference. Will they be able to help her, or will the paper make Leontina the "other" in their eyes, cutting off any useful discussion? I decide that I will change the groups in the class around and put her in one with two other students who have written about similar experiences (Alberto, whose topic is gang activity in southern California, and Ed, who was horrified by the skinheads in the German town where he was stationed for awhile). There should be some commonality in the pa-

pers that will help them help each other.

And what about Tom and his mirror image, Chad? They sit near the front but exhibit behavior that I usually associate with the back row—they stare off into space, occasionally put their heads on their desks, and seem to be distancing themselves as much as possible from the class. They are not disruptive, just publicly unenthused in this required course. Yet both of them write fairly well; Chad's draft is especially good. How can I get them more involved in the class? I try chatting with them in a friendly fashion before class, calling on them when they are looking out the window, standing right in front of them during discussion, and visiting briefly with their writing group (one member of which confides to me later that "all they want to do is talk about their frat parties"). Tom falls asleep one day in class. I notice, however, that Chad does contribute to class when Tom is absent. I decide to put them in separate writing groups with more enthusiastic students like Heather and An Mei; maybe their enthusiasm will be catching.

The Uses of Theory

Why do teachers of writing need to know about theories of emotion? As Tinberg and others have pointed out, some in our field see theory and teaching as separate, at odds; the two have become, in Berthoff's phrase, "killer dichotomies." As with other supposed dichotomies (affect and cognition, cognition and context), to polarize is to stigmatize, and we wind up calling each other "mere practitioners" or "ivory-tower theorists."

But theory is simply a systematic way of stating underlying principles based on available evidence. We all theorize. A class is not going well, and we ask ourselves why; we search for causes, make and test hypotheses (it must be the room, or the early hour), try new approaches. Most of the time our theories are tacit, sometimes they are incomplete and contradictory, but they are always there. A study

of theory helps us address our unstated assumptions about writing and learning, helping us clarify—and modify—those assumptions; it also helps us understand our students more fully. I find it most useful to think of theory and practice not as a dichotomy but as a dialectic, interwoven and interactive: theoretical frameworks help us organize our observations in useful ways, and classroom experience pushes us to build or restructure those frameworks. Theories present us with a sense of why things happen as they do, helping us understand and sometimes predict outcomes and behaviors. For example, schema theory, described below, can help us understand one reason why a student like Alice might be so reluctant to revise her work. A writer might have a "writing the paper" schema that does not include revision as an inevitable part of the process. Once the intended action of writing the paper has—as George Mandler puts it—rushed toward completion (*Mind* 173), there is a pleasant feeling of closure; the writer reports feeling satisfied and has no urge to review what has been done, in spite of evidence that others (a peer group, the teacher) think that revision is in order. As a teacher, I find theories such as this one essential to my work, since they provide me and my students with ways of thinking about the composing process that lead to useful classroom practice (for example, discussing with Alice the fact that the "joy of completion" is a common but not entirely satisfactory response to finishing a first draft and discussing strategies to help her revise in spite of the sense of completion).

This does not mean, however, that one need subscribe only to a single theory, forsaking all others. I would not want to argue that one of the two theories under discussion in this chapter—one focusing on cognition, one on context—is "correct." They are simply the theories that have the greatest explanatory power, given the present state of theory-building in composition. They are, as the quotation from Mandler suggests in the epigraph to this chapter, simply the most convincing stories that anyone has made up so far. We need not

think of them as conflicting or competing but as focusing on different phenomena. Flower has suggested that instead of striving for one "correct" view of the writing process through the lens of cognition or of context, we need a "more integrated theoretical vision which can explain how context cues cognition, which in its turn mediates and interprets the particular world that context provides" ("Cognition" 282). This chapter, then, presents two theories of emotion, one psychological, the other sociocultural, working toward a theoretical integration of cognition, context, and emotion.[1]

A Cognitive Theory of Writing

Thanks to Flower and Hayes, writing teachers are generally familiar with a cognitive approach to writing. In discussions with other teachers, however, I find that many of us are not familiar with cognitive science, especially with its research methods and the history of and assumptions behind the methods. Some information about the discipline itself is needed in order for us to understand how a cognitive theory of writing might take affect into account.

The social sciences (particularly psychology) have examined affective phenomena from varying perspectives over the last hundred years, using varied methodologies.[2] Around the turn of the century, because those who were psychologists were usually also philosophers, the method of study was introspection and self-reflection. William James is perhaps the best known of that group. During the early decades of this century, there was a reaction against such a speculative (and rather nonrigorous) model. A group of young American scientists, of whom the best known is probably B. F. Skinner, proposed instead a model for research that took into consideration only the outward manifestations of inner events—not mental processes, but the outward, measurable behaviors that were the results of those processes. Behavior provided the only valid data for scientific hypoth-

eses; affect and cognition alike were rejected as valid concepts, since they could not be observed and measured.

But it soon became clear that the behaviorist model, while it explained some phenomena, did not explain all; humans are not merely the sum of their behaviors. With the advent of the information-processing age, scientists like Alan Newell and Herbert Simon of Carnegie-Mellon University became interested in those things the behaviorists had ignored, specifically in mental representations, in thought processes, and in problem-solving, and cognitive science was born. According to Gardner, this science has several important features, some of which are relevant to the present discussion. First, cognitive scientists based their discipline "on the assumption that, for scientific purposes, human cognitive activity must be described in terms of symbols, schemas, images, ideas, and other forms of mental representation" (39). (It may seem strange to writing teachers that one should have to justify a serious discussion of images, ideas, or symbols, but in fact it was a revolutionary idea to take mental representations as valid scientific constructs.)

At the beginning, cognitive science deemphasized such factors as context and affect. Those working to develop the discipline did not necessarily dismiss these factors, but their work was cleaner without them. It was a question of practicality. "If one were to take into account these individualizing and phenomenalistic elements, cognitive science might become impossible. In an effort to explain everything, one ends up explaining nothing" (Gardner 41). Much as the clock became a metaphor for the universe during the Enlightenment, the computer became a metaphor for human thought in cognitive science. The way that computers process, store, and retrieve information gave insight into the way the mind works; computer problem-solving (in chess games, for example) was studied for the insights it might give for human problem-solving. Comparisons of expert and novice problem-solvers pointed to successful and unsuccessful strategies. Protocol analysis (based on computer programming

protocols) became a tool for research, artificial intelligence a way of looking at human intelligence, the computer program a model for human thought processes.

This computer metaphor informed the now-familiar model of the writing process first put forward by Hayes and Flower in 1980 and refined slightly in 1981 (Flower and Hayes, "Cognitive"), a model that looks rather like a flow chart for a computer program (see Figure 1).

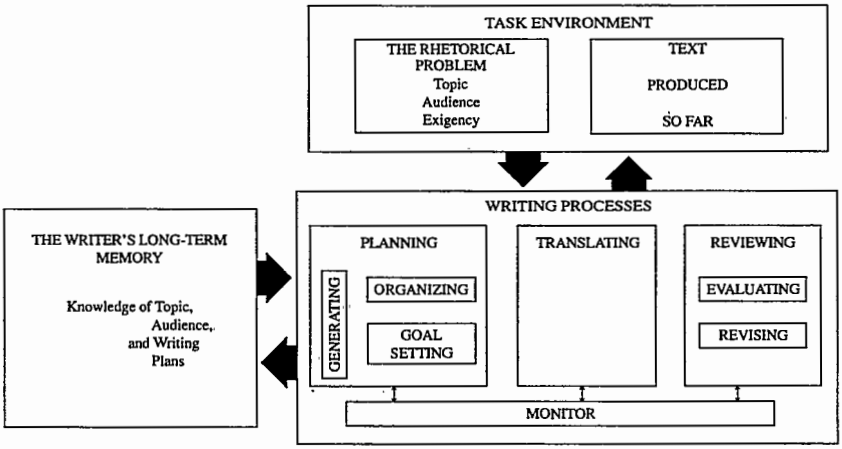

Figure 1. The structure of the writing model. From Linda Flower and John R. Hayes,"A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing," *College Composition and Communication* 32 (1981): 370. Copyright by the National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted with permission.

The world of the writer is divided into three parts: the task environment, the writer's long-term memory (which together with the task environment constitutes the writing context), and the writing process. The latter consists of three major mental processes: planning (that is, constructing an internal representation of the knowledge needed for writing), translating (writing a draft), and reviewing (going back over what

has been written). For planning, there are also the subprocesses of generating ideas, organizing those ideas, and goal setting (defining for the self both procedural and substantive goals related to the writing task); reviewing has two subprocesses, evaluating the text and revising. Controlling all these processes is a "monitor," an executive control mechanism that helps the writer determine when to move from one process to another and then back again—how long one should spend generating ideas, for example, before attempting to organize them. It is important to note two things about this model. First of all, the arrows indicate the flow of information from one process to another, not a movement of the writer from one stage to another (Flower and Hayes, "Cognitive" 386–87). The double arrows also indicate that this information flows back and forth, that the processes are recursive rather than occurring in discrete stages. Second, it should be noted that the model was developed and confirmed through observation, by analyzing think-aloud protocols from writers. In a laboratory setting, writers were asked to say out loud what they were thinking as they wrote. Their words were then transcribed and carefully analyzed, along with the resulting texts, for evidence as to their cognitive processes (see Hayes and Flower for an explanation of their procedures).

In spite of negative critiques from several quarters (Berkenkotter; Bizzell, "Cognition"; Connors, "Composition"; Cooper and Holtzman; Emig, "Inquiry Paradigms"), this theory has had an enormous impact on how the composition community views the writing process. Unlike earlier stage-process theories, it emphasizes both the recursive nature of writing and the dynamics of the process, particularly the juggling of demands and constraints (see Flower and Hayes, "Dynamics," "Cognitive"). It is also systematic, breaking down the writing process into understandable, manageable subprocesses. Comparisons between novices and experts in each of these subprocesses suggest specific strategies that novices can learn in order to improve their

performance; thus the model has immediate classroom application. Flower's *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing*, now in its fourth edition, is an elegant example of cognitive-process theory translated into practical pedagogy. Finally, the theory moves attention away from the finished product alone and focuses also on the writer's mental operations. The experimenter's relentless question "What are you thinking?" during a protocol session helps writers give glimpses of their thinking processes, somewhat like (as Hayes and Flower put it) following the tracks of a porpoise as it occasionally breaks the surface of the sea (9); the traces are incomplete, but we now have some notion about what is beneath the surface. It helps us understand the cognitive processes of a novice writer like Alice, who is unreflective about her work; she needs to develop strategic knowledge—a "monitor"—for her writing process.

Like other cognitive problem-solving models developed by researchers at Carnegie-Mellon University, this one did not address affective issues.[3] This is not to say, however, that the 1981 Flower and Hayes model is outdated and cannot still be used to explain how affect and cognition interact in the writing process. The theory of emotion formulated by George Mandler, a cognitive psychologist, can help us examine this interaction.

A Cognitive Theory of Emotion

In order to understand Mandler's theory, we need to look for a moment at how cognitive scientists discuss mental representations—how knowledge is organized and stored in the mind. The notion of the schema, first proposed by Kant in 1787 and introduced to psychology by Bartlett in 1932, was developed by cognitive scientists into a theory of how knowledge is represented and used; schemas are units of thought, the building blocks of cognition.[4] They are the mental elements that interpret sensory data, retrieve information

from memory, organize actions, determine goals, and generally guide the flow of mental processing (Rumelhart 33–34).[5] Theorists use the analogy of a play to describe the characteristics of schemas. Just as a play has roles that can be filled with various actors in different performances, so a schema has variables that are defined by particular instances, or "instantiations," of that schema (see Rumelhart and Ortony 101). The schema for "write," for example, usually involves the variables of writer, the act of writing, the written product, and a reader. There are different kinds of schemas; of most interest for this discussion are the event schemas, those representations that organize common sequences of events temporally. They may be thought of as a set of expectations about what will occur in a given situation (see J. Mandler, "Categorical" 11). The organization of these event schemas drives us to complete them in sequence. So powerful is this drive toward completion that we will try to complete our plans or planned behavior even when we cannot (like Ed trying to log on to the computer network using the same failed strategy, over and over), or we will complete plans in what turns out to be an unsatisfactory way just to come to closure and then resist going back to change anything (like Alice, who resisted revising).

The interruption of plans or planned behavior is central to Mandler's theory (outlined in *Mind and Body*) of how emotions occur. Like several other cognitive theorists (Schachter and Singer; Lazarus, Kanner, and Folkman; Averill, "Constructivist"), Mandler holds that an emotional experience involves both mind and body. It is constructed out of two elements: arousal of the autonomic nervous system (the visceral reaction—a quickened heartbeat, a tensing of muscles) and a cognitive—but not necessarily conscious—evaluation of that arousal (a negative or positive interpretation of the physical reaction, labeling it as "fear," "joy," "frustration," and the like). The cognitive evaluation is crucial to the experience of the emotion. Bertrand Russell, reflecting about his experience with being injected with

epinephrine (adrenaline), wrote that he felt the bodily reactions of an emotion but did not really experience an emotion: he felt *as if* he were fearful but knew there was no reason for such an emotion. Russell concluded that without a cognitive element, there is no emotion (218–19). We experience emotions physically; we construct them mentally.

What accounts for the visceral arousal that needs interpretation? According to Mandler, we experience the feelings of emotion when the expectations of some schema are violated—when there is a discrepancy in what we think will happen and what actually happens, when some action is interrupted, when ongoing plans are blocked. (Note that Mandler does not say that emotions *are* interruptions but that interruptions, blocks, or novel situations—such as the situation Ed found himself in while trying to log on to the computer network—are the *occasions* for arousal of the autonomic nervous system.) This theory, based on the interruption of schemas, fits the cognitive model of the writing process. In "Plans That Guide the Composing Process," Flower and Hayes describe the range of mental operations that comprise the writing process: forming an internal representation of your writing task, defining goals and strategies, and then during the writing itself assessing your progress and "with disturbing frequency" (40) redefining your goals to fit the multiple constraints of audience, rhetorical situation, topic knowledge, and the discourse conventions of written prose (see "Dynamics" 34–40; Cleary has shown how often various student writers experience such interruptions and how they react to them). In other words, interruption of plans—a major reason for emotions to occur, according to Mandler—is an integral part of the writing process Flower and Hayes have described. Affect and cognition are inseparable as we write.[6]

What seems crucial for teachers to understand, as I have discussed elsewhere ("Some Thoughts"), is the cognitive interpretation of the sensory data generated by the interruption of plans. When I am working on a project like this book,

I find the flow of thoughts continually interrupted by the constraints of audience and topic knowledge (Will teachers get something out of the information on psychological theories? Have I represented the various psychological theories adequately and fairly?). Observers would note evidence of a certain amount of visceral tension as I write—I type for awhile, get up and pace, then sit back down at the computer. But because I am intrigued by and engaged in my subject, I evaluate the tension as interest, even excitement. Likewise, when I experience a feeling of relaxation and satisfaction following a particularly intense writing session, I do not interpret those feelings to mean that I am finished with the written product, since I know about the cycles of tension and relaxation (described by Bloom and Broder) involved in problem-solving. I am conscious of my emotional states, and they aid my writing and revision processes.

Watch student writers at work and you will also see signs of autonomic arousal—they wad paper, sigh, run their hands through their hair, chew on pencils. How do they interpret their tension? Larson investigated a number of high school students engaged in a long writing project, finding that the students could be sorted into two groups. The first group found their emotional states disruptive. Some in this group (like Leontina trying to write about the racial incident in her high school) were overaroused and overanxious; even though they were interested in their topics, they found it hard to focus, sometimes working themselves into a frenzy. Others in this group (like Alice) were underaroused, bored, disinterested; they were not engaged at all in their task. The papers of both the overaroused and the underaroused students were judged by independent raters to be fragmented, disjointed, mechanical. These findings conform to the Yerkes-Dodson Law, which suggests an inverted U-shaped relationship between arousal and performance on laboratory tasks—that is, both high and low arousal interferes with the subjects' ability to cope with task requirements; those in the middle, like the students described below, were best able to

cope with the task. (See Yerkes and Dodson; G. Mandler, *Mind* 226). This might be thought of as the "Goldilocks Law": in order to perform well on a task, one should be in an emotional state that is not too hot, not too cold, but just right.[7]

The second group of students in Larson's study were in that "just right" condition where their emotions were enabling. They were interested in their projects, sometimes becoming so absorbed as they wrote that they lost track of time. In describing their emotional state, some students used the word "flow," a state studied by Csikszentmihalyi where there appears to be a balance between the perceived challenge of the task and the person's skills (*Beyond, Flow*). Although the students in the second group were no different from those in the first in terms of their scores on achievement tests and their experience with writing long assignments, their resulting papers were judged by raters to be appreciably better than those of the other group. What is interesting about this group of students, as Larson notes, is that they appeared to be using deliberate strategies to engage and then control their emotions (34-36): they worked at making the task enjoyable, monitored their internal states and their energy levels, stopped themselves when they got overexcited, and generally tried to adjust the balance between the challenge and their skills. In other words, they used metaaffective as well as metacognitive strategies for writing, controlling their affective state so that it was "just right" for writing.

Larson's research suggests some classroom applications of Mandler's theory. There has been much attention given recently to improving learning skills through encouraging metacognition—helping students know *how* to know. The research conducted by Faigley and his colleagues implies that one way we can help students with their writing is to increase their awareness of their own composing processes. Experienced writers, according to this research, have a well-developed executive mental mechanism (the "monitor" of the Flower and Hayes model) that helps them track their

progress, allowing them to step back from their work to assess it.

If we can use these expert strategies as models for students, it follows that we can also use the experts' meta-affective monitoring strategies as models for novices. We can tell students like Leontina, for example, of the strategies used by the students in Larson's study. We can tell them that all writers experience feelings of tension and that they can learn to interpret tension (and the ensuing relaxation once the paper is finished) in an enabling rather than in a debilitating way. Teaching people to change their cognitive interpretation of sensory data is not a novel idea; the medical profession has been using the technique for some time—dentists now routinely tell their patients not to mistake pressure for pain. The technique works. A study of a particularly uncomfortable medical test found that patients who were told what bodily sensations to expect during the test and how to interpret what was happening were able to process those sensations as "normal" rather than threatening (Johnson and Leventhal). It follows that we could ask students like Alice and Leontina not only what they are thinking but also how they are feeling as they write: do they need to calm down or pump up? We can then help them work out specific monitoring and coping strategies for those internal states—affective as well as cognitive—working toward strategic self-management in both domains.

An excellent model for helping students become aware of and manage their affective states may be found in Vivian Rosenberg's composition textbook, *Reading, Writing, and Thinking: Critical Connections*. In chapter 2 of this book, "Thinking about Feelings," Rosenberg first explains to students how their thoughts and feelings are intertwined and how they need to be aware of their own and others' feelings if they are to be good critical thinkers and writers (in order to think about audience one has to be able to understand the feelings of that audience). She then discusses how to recognize and describe emotion—how to interpret the visceral feel-

ings—supplying lists students can use for such interpretation and exercises to help them use the lists. In the summary at the end of the chapter, she tells students how understanding the emotional dimension of their experience will help them, advising them to learn to recognize and accept how they feel as they approach an assignment, to give themselves permission to experience confusion, to use the problem-solving strategies in other chapters to get over the confusion or to get them engaged if they are bored, and to use their empathic capacity as they develop audience awareness (45). These nuggets of advice are then expanded upon with examples in the chapters on writing and on reading strategies, combining instruction on cognitive and affective processes.

Social Construction Theories of Writing

Let us now examine composition and the emotions through the lens of social constructionist theory. The cognitive theory of writing examines how the mind represents knowledge to itself; social construction theory examines how those representations are shaped by context, by the conventions and expectations of particular social and cultural groups.[8] Vygotsky suggested that individual consciousness is built not from within but from without, through social relationships; communication with others is internalized, becoming the "inner speech" that is vital to thought. Social constructionists build on Vygotsky's idea of construction, holding that knowledge itself, as well as the individual consciousness, is constructed.

Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, a book that challenged conventional assumptions about the nature of scientific knowledge, is singled out by Kenneth Bruffee ("Collaborative," "Social") as the work that heralded social construction theory. Scientific knowledge, Kuhn held, is not discovered so much as built collectively by the scientific community; changes in how this community views phenomena

occur not because of a further accumulation of data but because of the way scientists agree collectively to interpret the data. According to Bruffee, Kuhn's ideas were generalized by philosopher Richard Rorty in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*;[9] Rorty discussed knowledge in all fields as a social artifact, as socially justified belief. We arrive at a consensus about this belief—about what constitutes knowledge in our fields—through disciplinary "conversations," both written and oral. These rather specialized conversations about knowledge in a particular field help to constitute a "discourse community," a group that has particular rules for the conversation: a specialized vocabulary, certain rhetorical conventions that are valued (such as conciseness in the sciences), certain ways of talking about knowledge that seem so natural to those in the community that they often forget how strange they may be to those outside the community. For example, the graduate students in the American studies program at my institution often have difficulty shifting discourse when they move from literature to history seminars. One of these students helped me understand one of the reasons for the difficulty—the verb tenses.[10] In literature, the discourse accepts the use of present tense when one is quoting the words of long-dead authors; since Shakespeare is not of an age but for all time, we can write "Shakespeare says." In history, however, one could never write "Gibbon says"; when quoting from past sources in that field, one must put them in their historical context. To use the present tense is to imply not that your source is timeless but that he or she is still alive.

If knowledge is socially constructed in the conversations of discourse communities, it follows that one of the things teachers need to do is recognize the difficulty of learning all these specialized forms of discourse and demystify them for students. We can help students succeed by introducing them first to generalized academic discourse (see Bizzell, "College"; Bartholomae) and then as they move into their chosen disciplines, the more specialized discourse of those fields.

Using the tools of discourse analysis they learn in our classes, students should not only be able to understand the varied conversations in academe but also be equipped to deal with other specialized discourses they may encounter after they leave our halls. We can also introduce them to the collaborative processes at work in the construction of knowledge through collaborative learning and writing tasks in the classroom. The use of writing groups in various configurations and permutations (pairs of students involved in collaborative planning, several students working together on a single text, a peer tutor in a writing lab working with several students) is the most visible classroom manifestation of this theory.

Those who write about social construction and the teaching of writing usually discuss just the aspects of social constructive process mentioned above: writing as creating a discourse community and as a form of social behavior within that community or discipline. But there is another process at work as well: writers construct mental representations of the social contexts for their writing, for example, when they consider audience and purpose (see Rubin 2). Students must learn not only to analyze discourse but also to mentally represent ways of situating themselves in that discourse. If we consider a constructivist theory of writing to include mental representations of social context, that theory complements rather than contradicts cognitive-process writing theory.

A Sociocultural Theory of the Emotions

We may also think of a social constructionist theory of emotion as complementary to cognitive process theories of emotion.[11] We have already seen that cognitive theories such as George Mandler's take as a given the individual construction of affective states. But we can also think of emotional states as socially determined constructions, shaped by particular contexts and cultures (like a university or a particular

classroom).

Those who write about the social construction of the emotions are opposed to the traditional view, traceable to Darwin, that emotional responses are essentially biological in origin, hardwired into the organism in the course of evolution (for an explanation of this view see Izard; Tomkins). Social construction theorists do not deny that some emotions, like fear, seem innate. However, they see most emotional response as shaped by the environment rather than biologically determined; the instinctive responses of infants (smiling or crying) *become* expressions of emotion in a societal context (De Sousa 285). Our capacity to experience emotions such as shame, guilt, or love is contingent upon our internalization of cultural norms and principles (Armon-Jones). The cognitive appraisal of physiological data, which figures so importantly in cognitive-process models of emotion, also looms large here. Sociocultural theories of emotion conclude that such appraisal is shaped socially as well as individually, conditioned by the norms and standards of our culture.

These theorists point to the cultural variations among emotional constructs as proof of their notion that affective response is culturally shaped rather than biologically determined. In Japan, for example, there is an emotion for which Western society has no specific equivalent—*amae*, variously translated as "to play baby" or "to depend or presume upon another's love," carrying connotations of sweetness and permissiveness as well as closeness to a loved one (Morsbach and Tyler). Western notions of "regression" or "infantilism" suggest the reason why we have no exact synonym; it is connected to behavior our society does not sanction. In Castillian Spanish, *coraje* connotes aggressiveness, while in English, "courage" need not include that trait (Crespo). As further proof of their theory, social constructionists also point to changes in emotional constructs over time. Guilt to the ancient Greek, for example, had little to do with willful action or sin; it was contamination, often as the result of acts against the gods committed unknowingly, as in the case of Oedipus

(Heelas). The emotion "accidie," common in medieval times, occurred when one did not do one's duty to God with joy and delight; those who most experienced the state were hermits who became bored with their ascetic life (Harré and Finlay-Jones). Along with hermits, the emotion is now rare.

One issue of interest in the sociocultural theory of emotion is that it allows us to think of emotions in dramatistic terms, as transitory social roles in the plot structures of culture (see Sarbin; Averill, "Constructivist"). For example, the role that the angry person is allowed or expected to play can vary greatly from culture to culture; extreme examples are the "wild man" behavior of some New Guinea Highlanders and the phenomenon of "amok" (aggressive frenzy, as in "running amok") in several Southeast Asian societies (Averill, *Anger* 55–63. (One thinks about the well-documented phenomenon of binge drinking among college students and the "boys will be boys" role that intoxicated students have been allowed to play in American culture.) The repertoire of dramatistic emotional roles one can play is learned from what one theorist calls "paradigm scenarios" (De Sousa 285). These scenarios are prototypes of the social drama and are learned early in life—children play at being angry or fearful, just as they play at being parents or doctors, as they work to understand the meaning of the emotional roles they observe (Averill, "Constructivist" 321). Various cultural myths, beliefs, and values give shape to the roles. Anger, for example, is shaped by "courtroom or Olympian mythology; oneself as legislator or judge; the other as defendant. Oneself as the defender of values, the other as offender" (Solomon 289). In writing groups we ask students to play the role of coach, one that has important emotional components; we can teach them how to play this role effectively through observation and modeling—for example, by using a "fishbowl" of volunteers or a videotape of an exemplary writing group (like the award-winning *Student Writing Groups: Demonstrating the Process*).

The immediate social context for the cognitive appraisal of the emotional experience also has an effect on that ap-

praisal. Laughter is heartier in the presence of other happy persons, for example; fear is "contagious," as is the calming influence of companions who are not afraid. The classic experiments by Schachter and Singer, which suggested the importance of cognitive appraisal, also suggested the contextual aspects of emotional reactions. The experimenters injected epinephrine (adrenaline) into their subjects; some were told that this injection would produce increased heartbeat and physical tension, and some were not. Each subject was then placed in a room with another person who had also supposedly received an injection. Actually, the second person in the room was a shill, employed by the experimenters. In one condition of the experiment, the shill feigned euphoria, floating paper airplanes, playing with a hula hoop, and shooting wads of paper. In the other, the actor feigned anger while filling out a questionnaire, finally tearing it up and stalking from the room. Those subjects who had been informed of the physiological reaction from the injection had no emotional reaction to their companions' behavior. Those who had not been informed, however, took on the emotion of the actor in the room with them—they became either angry or euphoric. In other words, since they did not know the reason for their visceral arousal, they interpreted it in light of the available social data. Averill points out that physical surroundings (what he terms the "environmental psychology of the emotions") can have an effect on cognitive interpretation as well; it is easier to become angry in a bar than in a church, to be frightened at night than during the day, to become jovial at a party than in the classroom ("Constructivist" 323). Thus the emotions involve not only a cognitive evaluation of physiological arousal (an evaluation shaped by cultural and social norms and expectations) but also of the particular social setting in which one experiences that visceral arousal.

How can an understanding of the social construction of the emotions help us in the composition classroom? First of all, such an understanding will show us how important

the environmental psychology of the classroom can be in determining students' affective responses to writing. (Such a concern may seem trivial, but those who arrange professional conferences know how important it is to the success of their gatherings to have pleasant hotel accommodations and meeting rooms.) We can't always change from one room to another, as I did, but we can do other small things—put the chairs in a circle, erase a blackboard full of mathematical symbols from a previous class, bring coffee, turn on all the lights—that can have a noticeable impact on the classroom atmosphere. It is also important that the teacher establish a particular persona at the beginning of the semester; the effect of teacher affect will be discussed in a later chapter, but for now it should be noted that whatever their methods, successful teachers appear confident and competent, make their concern for students apparent, and express their confidence that students can perform at the level expected (Spear). Teachers can do much at the beginning of the semester to establish a classroom atmosphere that fosters facilitative emotional reactions to writing.

Group work, as Gere has pointed out, can do much to encourage a positive attitude toward writing. Students can share their emotional as well as their cognitive writing experiences and strategies with one another, coming to understand that their reactions are not unique. The decision to put Leontina in a group with others who had written about racial incidents they had found disturbing and personally threatening was guided by the notion that they could help one another if they shared their emotional reactions as well as their papers. Their first session turned out to be so successful from their point of view that they asked to stay together for the next paper; while Leontina's paper was not the best of the group, she was able to improve upon her first draft after seeing how Ed's and Alberto's papers dealt with similar issues. Putting Tom and Chad in separate groups also had a salutary effect. They no longer had another person next to them to validate and mirror their behavior, and

while Tom continued to be detached, Chad became much more engaged—even helpful—when in his writing group. He seemed to be pulled into the higher level of enthusiasm exhibited by the other students in the group.

There are other ways in which an understanding of the social construction of emotions can help us as teachers. If it is true that our emotions are shaped in part by "paradigm scenarios," then we can try to learn more about those scenarios. We can, for instance, have our students write in their journals or in inksheddings about the emotions they experienced in certain paradigmatic writing situations (writing a piece and then getting the paper back from the teacher, for example) and discuss what influence they think those emotions might continue to have on their writing.[12] If we agree that our emotions are shaped by our culture, we also need to examine how that culture views writing and what cultural myths or beliefs might help shape the emotional roles we play when we write (see Gere and Smith). Beliefs and attitudes are the subject of another chapter, but two examples here will serve to make the point. The first is belief in the romantic myth that writing results only from bursts of creative inspiration. The muse visits, you write, and the result of your first draft is "Kubla Khan." Preparation and revision are obviously unnecessary. With this kind of myth helping to shape our emotional reactions to writing, it is no wonder that many of us (not just students) get discouraged waiting for inspiration to strike, or that we resent having to revise our work if we feel inspiration has produced it. We must make explicit to students that the myth of inspiration is just that; few writers, including Coleridge, ever wrote polished and complete first drafts. Students can learn (as discussed in chapter 5) to make an appointment with the muse, to establish writing habits that give them time to draft and revise and thus not be distressed when a piece doesn't turn out well the first time.

The second cultural belief that we need to deal with is that for those not blessed with creativity, learning to write is

a technical rather than an intellectual process, that the job of the writing teacher is to hunt down error, that revision is simply clearing a paper of such error, that teaching grammar is equivalent to teaching writing. (This belief is closely connected to the value our culture places on correctness and appearance.) Our professional journals testify to the fact that we have exploded this myth, but it persists—as myths do—in the culture, sometimes as close as the next classroom. This myth helps explain some students' frustration over that fact that we *don't* cover their papers with red ink, since that is what they expect as a result of their past experience. It also helps us understand their negative attitude when we ask them to rethink the whole paper rather than just tinkering with surface features in their revisions. To counteract such an attitude, we can show students examples of professional writers revising and share with them our struggles with our own writing, helping them understand what is involved in reseeing a paper rather than simply editing it.

Finally, to return to the uses of theory, we can as teachers do what we ask our students to do about the writing process: observe (and ask others to observe) our own teaching and our students' learning processes; reflect systematically and regularly in a teaching journal about classroom events and interactions with students; and try—as Mandler suggests in the epigraph to this chapter—to make up stories about teaching and learning that make comprehensible the evidence at hand. Those stories will be most convincing if they are grounded in theory.