Preface

A word about the collaboration of Susans that has led to this book. The idea for the book and the eventual first draft came from Susan McLeod. Appropriately enough, the book grew out of an affective experience: a vague feeling of dissatisfaction with the explanatory power of both cognitive and social constructionist theories of the composing process. Let me, the first Susan, hasten to say that I have found both these approaches to researching and teaching composition most helpful, as readers will discover throughout this book; both provide useful ways of conceptualizing issues and of putting theory into practice in the classroom. I have found Linda Flower's newest book, *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning: A Social Cognitive Theory of Writing* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1994) to be especially insightful.

But various encounters, familiar to all teachers of composition, told me I needed to know more about matters of the heart. There was Alice, the student who remained satisfied with her first drafts and didn't revise, even though her editing group (and her teacher) told her rather insistently that her work needed revision. Then there was Leontina, the student who usually wrote well but produced a very disjointed paper on a topic she obviously cared deeply about. There was Ira, the student who told me that he had never been good at English, his voice and manner suggesting that it was hopeless to try; he was defeated before he started, putting little effort into the assignments because he knew he would fail. Most frustrating to me were the students (more numerous than I liked to admit) who seemed to care more about grades than about improving their writing. How could I deal—and help students deal in productive ways—with what seemed to be affective rather than social/cognitive issues?

So I researched and wrote. The first draft of the book was what Ernest Boyer would call the "scholarship of integration." It was a review of the research on affect, drawing primarily from psychology, sociology, and anthropology, fascinating stuff. Still, the dissatisfaction lingered; the draft seemed too—well, cerebral, an intellectual discussion of affect. Reviewers of the manuscript made suggestions, the most helpful of which was to provide more situatedness, more application to day-to-day classroom interactions. For one semester, I conducted a modest teacher-research project in my own English 101 class, discussing affective issues with students and collecting data. I then found a new administrative position thrust upon me, making a regular 101 teaching assignment difficult.

Thus began the collaboration with Sue Hallett, Susan #2, an instructor in Washington State University's composition program. Sue, a former medical social worker and special education teacher, is one of the most effective teachers in the writing program, at least from her students' point of view. In their evaluations, they praise her sympathy and understanding of them as well as her efforts in pushing them to do their best. The next semester, I observed Sue's class and took notes, interviewed students, read copies of their papers, and met with Sue to discuss what I saw in her class. The following semester, Susan Parker (Susan #3) became part of our collaborative effort. This third Susan, a new graduate student in our program, was observing Sue Hallett's class as part of her T.A. training and was also running a tutorial connected to that class.[1] Thus she was uniquely positioned to help us understand more fully what we saw, or what we thought we saw, in the classroom interactions that semester. Susan #2 and #3 kept teaching journals, I continued to read student papers and conduct interviews, and the three of us met weekly to discuss what was going on in Sue's classes and how certain events and student behaviors were illuminated by the theories set forth in this book.

What emerged from this study for us was a fuller un-

derstanding of affect in the classroom. In the account that follows, we have conflated the year and a half of our study into one semester in order to provide a narrative for the book. The class is a composite drawn from seven classrooms over three semesters; the students are real enough (we have changed only their names and a few identifying features), but they were not all in the same class. The narrative of the semester is not an ethnography—rather it is a story that provides illustrations of theory being played out in a particular context. We hope that by presenting a classroom context with illustrative vignettes, the research on affect will be more accessible for teachers like ourselves who want to understand our students better so that we can better help them with their writing.

Philosophers have had much to say about the affective domain, and we recommend their work to those interested in such musings. (See, for example, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Langer, Sartre. A useful summary of such approaches is provided by Calhoun and Solomon.) We have relied for the most part, however, on research from the social sciences; this reliance is not because philosophy has nothing to teach us, but because we, the writers, tend to be more pragmatic than philosophical. Our discussions of pedagogy, while they are meant to be of practical value, are intended to be suggestive rather than prescriptive. In fact, many writing teachers are already using some of the suggested techniques and approaches but perhaps had not thought of them in light of affective phenomena. We hope the discussion will help such teachers see their practice in a new way. Readers will note that there is a common thread through these discussions of pedagogy—the need for students and teachers to become aware of theory, to know themselves more fully, to examine their own affective as well as cognitive processes in order to understand (and therefore regulate or even change) these processes.

Finally, a word about how we, the Susans, refer to ourselves in the chapters that follow. While the work is collabo-

rative, we found it awkward to try to refer to ourselves as "we," especially after deciding to combine the various classrooms into one. The teacherly "I" of this book is therefore a conflation of the first two Susans, McLeod and Hallett, enriched with insights we gained from our third Susan, the participant-observer and helpful editor.

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