Acknowledgments

Although I didn't know it at the time, this book began in twelfth-grade English, on the day that Mr. Ducharme was absent and the teacher from our junior year returned from retirement as a substitute. As soon as she found that we were studying *Hamlet*, her face lit up. "Let's recite!" she exclaimed, and launched into "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" No one joined her. She gave a puzzled look and tried, "O that this too too sullied flesh would melt," only to find, once again, that she was reciting alone. "Do you know 'To be or not to be?" she asked. We shook our heads. "Well, then, what speeches have you learned?" When we told her that we hadn't memorized any, she was utterly bewildered. "But, then, what have you been doing in class?"

That moment crystallized what had been so exciting about senior English: reading was no longer an act of memorization ("How many stab wounds had Caesar's body?" is the question that sums up my first encounter with Shakespeare in eighth grade), but as an activity in which we did things with texts. We did some pretty sophisticated things, too, and although I no longer remember all of them—and no longer practice many that I do remember—I have no doubt that it was the energy of that class that drew me away from nuclear physics to a career in literary studies. Because he showed me what it really meant to read, I respectfully dedicate this book to Edward Ducharme.

Edward Ducharme has not read any of the manuscript, but he was also my first teacher to take writing seriously, and I have so internalized his cynical red-pencil marks that even now, twenty-
five years later, some of his imprint can be found in these pages. Other colleagues have had a more direct hand in the text that follows. Wayne Booth, who taught me to read criticism in much the same way that Ducharme taught me to read literature, went over an early draft of the book and, with his usual acuity, questioned some of the weaker links in the argument. Steven Mailloux also provided a painstaking reading of the text, offering a large number of suggestions that led me to clarify the precise nature of the claims I was making and to place them in a broader critical perspective. Sophie Sorkin helped streamline the style and pointed out embarrassing ambiguities in the writing. Janice Radway collaborated in an even more direct way. Not only did she, too, read an early draft, but she also contributed to the formulation of some of the theoretical arguments about misreading at the beginning of the section of Chapter 6 titled "Scapegoating Carmen," arguments that originated in a presentation we made jointly at the American Studies Association convention in 1983. She has generously allowed me to borrow from that paper here. Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz read so many versions of the manuscript and criticized them so thoroughly that at times it is hard to tell whose voice is emerging from these pages.

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