

So why the fuss? It is not, I submit, about the body at all. The anxiety of offended propriety here is a response to the display of a personal relation: a relation between a writing I and a written-about you that is private, perhaps even intimate, and thus "naked" in the sense of being vulnerable to betrayal (of confidence), abuse (of trust), and exploitation (of commodification). This is an anxiety I share. To write about my father is to appropriate him as material for *my* story, not his. It is a form of expropriation. At the same time, it is a gesture of personal and professional integrity. For in writing about my father, I expose the matrix of affective pulls, loyalties, commitments, and accountabilities that forms a bedrock of knowledge and insight for us all.

Such exposures of the private self that informs the public voice are not new, a fad of identity politics. They have been much honored in the decorum of scholarship. One could even say that the ritualized expressions of gratitude and debt—acknowledgments, dedications, epigraphs, anecdotal inserts in prefatory notes and afterwords, and the like—virtually constitute a genre.

Reading acknowledgments affords me a predictable pleasure not devoid of a touch of guilt. As I think that I should immediately engage the text on intellectual grounds, I am initially drawn, irresistibly, to its margins. This is where the story, for me, begins. Sometimes this is where the deeper motives for the work are most clearly, if inadvertently, revealed. Moreover, if the integrity of knowledge production rests in part on our capacity for critical self-reflection, the acknowledgments and analogous apparatus are an integral part of the scholarly project. It is here that the material grounds of learning are first mapped. In the ritual thank-yous to family, partners, and friends, to colleagues and institutions, the vital intersections between the life of the mind, the realities of work, and our daily lives in human communities become visible in ways that render palpable the historical contingencies of knowledge.

At times, this history is a record of gender patterns and their shifts. The conventional thank-you to the wife "without whom . . ." becomes an acknowledgment of John, who "didn't wash my socks but supported me intellectually." Who is mentioned, who is not—spouses, lovers, children, networks of friends, the women and men who helped with the technical production—are a record, however faint, of the circumstances and mind-sets that brought forth this work. For example, the short prefatory note and the brief afterword in Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* indicate that this book was "written between May 1942 and April 1945" in Istanbul, largely from memory without the aid of a "well-stocked library of European literature." The envoi, in which Auerbach dedicates his

work to "those of my friends from the past who survived" and to those "whose love for our Western civilization has survived undarkened," establishes this study not only as a monument to the civilization whose passing the author fears but also as a love letter to those whose culture and lives have been destroyed or forever altered.

The personal frame in which our scholarly work is embedded—the acknowledgments and dedications, the stories told in forewords and afterwords—is much more than a set of personal anecdotes. Reading this material therefore yields much more than the satisfaction of prurient curiosity. Indeed, this frame is a vital and valid window through which to review the integrity of our scholarship. Here the lines that converge to produce authorship are drawn, and here we acknowledge the larger communities to whom, in our work, we are responsible and accountable.

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When I write academic prose, I use the first person, and I instruct my students to do the same. The principle that researchers should acknowledge their participation in their work is an outgrowth of a humanistic approach to linguistic analysis. In my book *Talking Voices* (Cambridge UP, 1989), I see everyday conversation as made up of linguistic strategies that are usually thought quintessentially literary—what I call "involvement strategies" such as repetition, dialogue, details, and the use of narrative. Understanding discourse is not a passive act of decoding but a creative act of imagining a scene (composed of people engaged in culturally recognizable activities) within which the ideas being talked about have meaning. The listener's active participation in sense making both results from and creates interpersonal involvement. For researchers to deny their involvement in their interpreting of discourse would be a logical and ethical violation of this framework.

The typical methodology for scholarship in my branch of discourse analysis (known as interactional sociolinguistics, because we analyze the discourse of human interaction) is to tape-record and transcribe naturally occurring discourse, to analyze it in ways not unlike those used for literature (looking for recurrent patterns of specific linguistic forms), and to present an exegesis supported by excerpts from the transcript. In interactional sociolinguistics, it is common for the researcher to be a natural participant in the interactions under study. This is a variation on the staple of anthropological method in which the researcher participates in order to observe. I encourage students to take their tape recorders with

them and to record (openly and with permission) dinner-table conversations and other interactions in which they take part.

Having participated in an interaction affords the researcher insight into its context that is essential to understanding the interaction. Without such insight, much of the meaning would be opaque, since conversationalists routinely refer to past incidents, use in-group language, and are motivated by emotions sparked by prior interactions. Moreover, the history and nuances of speakers' relationships with one another inform every utterance.

This method introduces the risk—indeed, the certainty—of bias: the lack of objectivity everyone necessarily brings to interactions. But objectivity in the analysis of interactions is impossible anyway. Whether they took part in the interaction or not, researchers identify with one or another speaker, are put off or charmed by the styles of participants. This one reminds you of a cousin you adore; that one sounds like a neighbor you despise. Researchers are human beings, not atomic particles or chemical elements.

Mary Catherine Bateson points out in *With a Daughter's Eye* (Morrow, 1984) that analysts of human behavior should pursue not objectivity but disciplined subjectivity. The researcher must be alert to biases and try to correct for them. Scholars in my field do this by questioning first interpretations, looking for patterns beyond the ones that appear initially, and checking interpretations with a number of different sources: participants, other speakers of similar and different backgrounds, and other researchers. The writer who believes in the possibility of objectivity will not be on the lookout for bias and will do nothing to correct for it, thereby increasing the likelihood that the analysis will be compromised by it.

Another danger of claiming objectivity rather than acknowledging and correcting for subjectivity is that scholars who don't reveal their participation in interactions they analyze risk the appearance of hiding it. "Following is an exchange that occurred between a professor and a student," I have read in articles in my field. The speakers are identified as "A" and "B." The reader is not told that the professor, A (of course the professor is A and the student B), is the author. Yet that knowledge is crucial to contextualizing the author's interpretation. Furthermore, the impersonal designations A and B are another means of constructing a false objectivity. They obscure the fact that human interaction is being analyzed, and they interfere with the reader's understanding. The letters replace what in the author's mind are names and voices and personas that are the basis for understanding the discourse. Readers, given only initials, are

left to scramble for understanding by imagining people in place of letters.

Avoiding self-reference by using the third person also results in the depersonalization of knowledge. Knowledge and understanding do not occur in abstract isolation. They always and only occur among people. In *Our Own Metaphor* (Knopf, 1972), Bateson explains that when she had to report the results of a conference, she approached the task as if writing a novel, using literary techniques to capture the emotional elements of human interaction that led to conferees' creation and communication of ideas. She notes that in standard conference proceedings, in which the emotion is edited out, the ideas cannot be fully understood because they are taken out of their human context. In a similar spirit, Nigel Gilbert and Michael Mulkey, in *Opening Pandora's Box* (Cambridge UP, 1984), show that scientific insight occurs in an atmosphere of intense emotional excitement that is excluded and denied in scientific writing.

A therapist friend once commented that someone denying emotions and motives is not trying to understand them. In a parallel fashion, denying that scholarship is a personal endeavor entails a failure to understand and correct for the unavoidable bias that human beings bring to all their enterprises.

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The invitation to participate in this Forum couldn't have been more timely. I'd just completed a book project in which I'd found myself, somewhat to my surprise, repeatedly turning to personal narrative techniques in the introductory chapter to encapsulate the evolution of my argument and methodologies. However, the first thought that sprang to my mind at the request that I write about academic uses of the personal was how amused some of my graduate students might be, since I have apparently garnered a reputation among some of them for keeping the "personal me" at a distance, however "personally engaged" I've been in their work and careers. I'll return to the complexities that attend the personal in teacher-student relations, but I begin with this vignette because I suspect it touches on a paradox intrinsic to this Forum: not only is one person's sense of the "personal" never the same as the next person's, but the fiction of intimacy established by the recourse to the personal, in scholarship or the classroom, always involves a verbal performance—one that, however truthful, inevitably occurs within implicit quotation marks.

Two examples from my recent book illustrate these points. The introduction includes a long section in which