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INTRODUCTION
THAT GRATUITOUS SUPPLEMENT

> "The study of acknowledgements is more hapless than most because the genre is only mandated to say a certain few things, and then in a socially proscribed way, according to conventionalized forms."
>
> – Terry Caesar, "On Acknowledgements"

> "I want to admit right away that no words I write are my own and that I never write alone."
>
> – Tilly Warnock, "How I Write"

For some time now, I have turned to acknowledgments first in any book that I read. Writers' lives, work influences, and supports provide an intriguing backstory to a line of thought, a research project, and, in some cases, a lifelong obsession. Acknowledgments are the "Behind the Writing" of academic scholarship. Much like the VH1 program, "Behind the Music," acknowledgments can both numb with their sheer predictability and captivate by providing glimpses into a private world. At a minimum, acknowledgments give readers an inkling of how a writer came to develop a project, an approach, and, on rare occasions, the confidence to stand up for a particular idea or thesis.

The lure of peeking behind the curtain to see what warrants public gratitude and to learn about an author's influences is not exclusive to academics or writers, of course. In the liner notes to her 2012 album *Tramp*, singer-songwriter Sharon Van Etten thanks no less than 68 people and then names nearly 30 artists in a list of "recommended listening." A trail of breadcrumbs providing glimpses of the forces, affects, and cultural influences on her sound, the recommended list reads as a soundscape for the music she makes. More than a citational gesture, it permits mention of less immediately direct influences.

The desire to learn about strangers, their benefactors, predilections, wrong turns, and various experiences might be evidence of an insatiable cultural appetite for probing the intimacies of others' lives, for witnessing supposedly unvarnished "reality." Is it voyeuristic to go straight to acknowledgments before reading one word of the main text? Is the turn to the author's words about the writing process first driven by as banal a motivation as wanting access to the "real person" behind the writing? Such questions emerge from criticism of acknowledgments, but this study suggests that questions of this sort aren't particularly interesting because they fail to engage the complex writing realities offered

through acknowledgments. They can be a straightforward list of funding sources or an inevitable expression of gratitude to a life-partner, but acknowledgments can also teach us how to feel about writing, depict beliefs and values associated with writing activity, and assert writing as cohabitation. The genre provides a unique view of writing practices and writers enmeshed in varying partnerships with others, organizations, niche groups, animals, and places.

My understanding of acknowledgments as a genre is dependent on their paratextual status. "Para," as J. Hillis Miller explains, "indicates alongside, near or beside" (441). Miller goes on to point out the ambiguity of "para" by detailing its competing significations; "para," he writes, is "at once proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority, something at once inside a domestic economy and outside it, something simultaneously this side of the boundary line, threshold, or margin, and at the same time beyond it, equivalent in status and at the same time secondary or subsidiary, submissive, as of guest to host, slave to master" (441). Acknowledgments, following the articulation of "para" as neither inside nor outside, neither close nor distant, constitute a boundary, a "permeable membrane connecting inside and outside. . . an ambiguous transition between one and the other" (441). Gerard Genette, in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, similarly describes paratexts as threshold genres, but he adds authorial intent into the mix by articulating paratexts as forms that occupy a "fringe," which acts as "conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author" (2). Paratexts, Genette contends, are not obligatory for authors or readers: no one is required to write or read them, and their presence and presentation are influenced by prevailing conventions and context.

Their non-obligatory status might in fact be central to the appeal of acknowledgments, as reading them can feel recreational, intimate, and voyeuristic. At the same time, the non-obligatory status contrasts with the spatial prominence of acknowledgments: they consume prime real estate in a book—most often appearing before the main text—and yet, as described below in more detail, rarely are they treated as primary to a book's content or rhetorical power. In what follows, I discuss why writing scholars should care about acknowledgments, describe their evolution and key characteristics, outline how critics and essayists have treated the genre, and then describe this book's organization.

Before moving on, I want to note that, while my focus on writing partnerships as documented in acknowledgments is rooted in print texts—where acknowledgments most often appear—the wider genre set of paratexts is not exclusive to print. Paratextual elements of digital texts might include metadata, multi-user tag clouds, fan fiction, article-level metrics that document the number of times a piece has been viewed, cited, and/or downloaded, as well

as hashtags and coding schemes that control web design and behavior. Such paratexts reveal dynamic writing partners in digital environments that fall outside the scope of my study but that indicate the larger genre set of which print acknowledgments are but a part. Because I focus on stories that writers tell about writing debts, my study is necessarily limited in scope.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT MATTER(S)

> "Whenever I pick up a new (academic) book, I look at the acknowledgement page to see who shared in the experience of the authors in the creation of the work."
>
> – Linda Adler-Kassner, *The Activist WPA*

> "Why do we acknowledge only our textual sources but not the ground we walk, the ever-changing skies, mountains and rivers, rocks and trees, the houses we inhabit and the tools we use, not to mention the innumerable companions, both non-human animals and fellow humans, with which and with whom we share our lives? They are constantly inspiring us, challenging us, telling us things."
>
> – Tim Ingold, *Being Alive*

I wrote my first acknowledgments in fifth grade. Mrs. Maher required us to include an acknowledgments page at the beginning of our research papers (she also required that we turn in note cards, which for me were handwritten on the inside of cereal boxes). My paper, long vanished from my parents' basement, was what would now be described as a heavily patch-written biographical study of Fredrick Douglass. I wish I could remember what I wrote in the acknowledgments, if I thanked the *Funk and Wagnall's Encyclopedia* set from which I borrowed so indiscriminately to complete that paper. Did I thank my parents or brother for helping me (surely they must have helped, though I have no recollection)? Did I thank the IBM typewriter set among piles of random papers on the basement table, right next to the seldom-used sewing machine? What remains in my memory is the strangeness I experienced when asked to thank others for a paper I thought was mine alone. That writing is never entirely "mine" or "alone"—an inescapable lesson emergent in written acknowledgments—constitutes a major premise of this book. Another is that the mini-narratives about writing delivered through acknowledgments provide provocative, though not necessarily truthful, views of writing as always *in the world*, not a secret activity at a remove from ordinary life, a persistent wrong impression that sticks to writing of any seriousness or import. In short, this book begins from the premise

that composition is communal and communing with, an activity never without partners, and that acknowledgments provide a particularly rich vantage point from which to make this claim.

If we seek an antidote to the misconception that writing is "mine alone," then reading acknowledgments does the trick. The act of acknowledging others, whether in the context of writing or life in general, is, in its ideal form at least, an ethical one. The gesture of acknowledging involves recognizing others and envisioning ourselves within relationships, as the following excerpt from an acknowledgment illustrates: "First, we thought we should thank the builders of web-based collaboration tools like Google Docs, Skype, and others. This collaboration—involving over 30 editors, contributors, and readers scattered across the United States and beyond—would not have been possible without them" (Harris, Miles, Paine ix). Here and elsewhere, the world in acknowledgments is the world of "we," composed of multiple partners who all contribute to something beyond the single-author self. "Partners," as I use the term, include humans, non-humans, matter, technology, animals, feelings, time, and a great many others.

This project takes a cue from new media scholars who have argued that studying ubiquitous technologies like the pencil, the page, and paper reveals the mundane and profound ways in which writing is always mediated by tools (e.g., Baron; Prendergast and Ličko; Trimbur and Press). In the midst of this turn to ordinary writing tools and scenes, focusing on acknowledgments right now has a logic to it. Acknowledgments are ubiquitous to academic writing even as they typically escape critical notice and are not treated as meaningful content in writing pedagogy (for an exception, see Harris, *Rewriting* 94-97). As a result, a vital, expressive economy of writing is mostly hidden in plain site. In acknowledgments, we see that writing activities are frequently mediated by diverse others, a mundane reality that allows for an expansive view of writing. Acknowledgments are a revealing lens through which to view writing as a practice of indebted partnerships in complex collaboration.

The epigraphs by Adler-Kassner and Ingold depict writing as an ecosystem that includes contributions from editors, friends, colleagues, animals, strangers, emotions, environments, and tools. In written acknowledgments, writers produce necessarily abbreviated narratives about the worlds of writing they create and/or inhabit and describe how they interact with each part of the ecosystem. These narratives and descriptions make explicit what might otherwise seem overly theoretical and removed from material circumstances: writing is curatorial in that writers are stewards of materials, which are arranged in deliberate ways to cohere with a guiding vision or purpose; distributed by way of multiple nodes of influence and production that together form a writing ecosystem; and immersed

in fields of activity rather than bracketed as solitary activities produced separately from everyday life.

These qualities ascribed to writing have become familiar in composition studies, particularly as postprocess, multimodal, and new media understandings of writing and composing emerge and continue to be refined. Whereas new forms of writing and composing provide excellent opportunities for recognizing composing in the terms I've established above, the tendency to associate these qualities mostly with non-alphabetic texts elides the ways in which all composing can be understood as curatorial, distributed, and immersive. These are not categories unique to digital or multimodal composing, in other words. That said, the attention to new media and multimodal composing has generated productive reconsiderations of what counts as writing writ large, energizing the field's collective thinking about where and how to study writing.

Kendall Leon and Stacey Pigg's study of graduate student writing practices is a case in point. They argue that graduate student digital multitasking is writing that counts as real work, which they study using a mixed methods approach comprised of time-use diaries, screen captures, and interviews. For their research participants, writing is anything but single-minded: "Filling out forms is juxtaposed against creating academic knowledge through writing acts; checking email and connecting with friends, family, and acquaintances happens in the same moment as producing words that will eventually become presentations or publications" (8). Writing isn't a private activity, one that happens only in classrooms, heads, a room of one's own, or at kitchen tables, nor is it a set of linear tasks or a unimodal endeavor. It is elliptical, immersive in diverse environments, dispersed, ordinary (not rarified), mediated, ongoing, and coexistent with other activities. This idea shares kinship with Jody Shipka's research, which attaches value to writing's "broader flow of activity by highlighting the role other texts, people, activities, semiotic resources, institutions, memories, and motives play in the composers' overall production processes" (15).

For Shipka, the act of writing is not discrete but embedded in other forms of interaction and communing. A fitting example of this appears in Joseph Harris' acknowledgments for *A Teaching Subject*: "I wrote this book while teaching in the English department at the University of Pittsburgh; I doubt that I could have written quite the same book anywhere else, and I know I have learned more than I can say from the generous yet critically attentive talk about teaching that goes on there" (ix-x). The community of writers at the University of Pittsburgh constitutes what Shipka calls a "broader flow" that affects Harris' orientation to teaching. It often seems that documenting this "flow" is the express purpose of acknowledgments, an unusual site in academic writing where we see writing activities (the "doing") described and frequently narrativized, and writing recount-

ed in retrospect, or in terms of writing's conditions of completion (the "done").

Acknowledgments provide rich source material for viewing composing as inhabited, located in time and place, and entangled in complex relationships with diverse others. In documenting this complexity, acknowledgments also depict something of the complicated act of writing, reminding me of Janet Emig's longing, stated in "The Uses of the Unconscious in Composing," for rhetoric and writing guides of the 1960s to at least gesture toward "the untidy . . . the convoluted . . . the not-wholly-known . . . a more intricate self and process" (48). Some of these qualities of composing do in fact emerge in acknowledgments, a site that invites writing about writing and frequently documents the dispersed activities that constitute writing.

At the same time, I realize that acknowledgments invite mockery, affirming their literal and symbolic marginal status based on overdetermined generic tendencies. That is, the excessive performative qualities of acknowledgments make it hard to read them as trustworthy sites through which to understand writing. This point hit home for me when I applied for a grant to support this project. In their rejection letter, committee members wrote, "The project appears to take acknowledgments at face value, as an indicator of the writer's process or environment but these are often used strategically or even disingenuously—to pay social niceties, to thank loved ones who were not in fact helpful, to construct falsely humble narratives." This criticism, echoed in critiques of acknowledgments more broadly, and recounted below, helped me realize that I am not concerned with veracity in acknowledgments. I am interested in the stories that writers construct about writing—true or otherwise—because the choices result in crafted narratives that reveal what writing is like or perhaps what it should be like under ideal circumstances. In other words, fabrications and puffery, as well as the truth about writing, bring to light both real and imagined writing partnerships; rather than try to distinguish between fiction and reality, I read acknowledgments as archives flush with stories about writing.

Acknowledgments are micro-economies of debt and praise. This book explores those economies and proposes a lexical and conceptual shift from "writing about" to "writing with." Following from contemporary critical theory in fields as diverse as animal studies, new media studies, biology, anthropology, and political theory, there is a discernible shift toward conceiving and studying various phenomena as inseparable from objects, technologies, animals, sensory elements, and other partners. This work has helped me view writing as codependent with a host of others and to resist separatist thinking in order to imagine how to talk and think about writing as an indiscreet art. My study of writing is not dependent on current theories exclusively, though. The seeds for this project were planted some time ago by composition scholars, a lineage detailed in the

next chapter and followed by a discussion of what writing partners, as made visible in acknowledgments, connote in this study. First, though, I outline academic and popular treatments of acknowledgments with a particular focus on constructs of writing that emerge from this genre.

CONTEXTUALIZING ACKNOWLEDGMENT STUDIES

Scholars generally agree that writing was created as a form of accounting, or record-keeping, around the 4th millennium BC in response to a changing economy (cf. Robinson). Acknowledgments might be seen as a direct descendent of this originating use of writing. Essentially writing about writing, acknowledgments are a form of accounting in an ever-changing economy of writing, one that catalogs debts and credits, typically (and hopefully) with more prosaic appeal than might a straightforward ledger. Whether they name granting institutions, venues where previous work was published, mentors, friends, family, students, or seemingly far-flung recipients like the natural world or pets, and whether sincere or full of bunk, acknowledgments document services, exchanges, flows of capital (human, monetary, and otherwise), as well as a writer's view of writing practices. As such, they function as a lens for understanding how writing is practiced, experienced and, implicitly, defined. They also tell us something about the economy in which writing circulates, and, by that standard, demonstrate that writing is always "writing with" something beyond the self.

Most critical analyses of and commentaries on acknowledgments were published in the 1990s, though, as I discuss in the next section, research by international scholars has begun to appear with more regularity in the past five years. The timing of the initial research on acknowledgments converges with the rise of social constructionism across the disciplines and its insistence on the social make-up of language, identity, reality, meaning, and a whole range of practices and phenomena. This movement laid the groundwork for Blaise Cronin's claim, in his 1995 book on acknowledgments, whimsically titled *The Scholar's Courtesy*, that "research and writing are socially embedded processes" (1). Intellectual work, from this point of view, is never divorced from social scenes and associated people, things, and structures in those scenes. His study, like others produced during the same time period, emphasizes the pervasiveness of social exchange to scholarship. Collaboration, conversations with peers, presentations at conferences, and discussion with students, for example, all contribute to and enrich one's thinking.

Of course, peer influences might be construed more cynically in the context of acknowledgments. For example, Cronin and his coauthor Kara Overfelt surveyed readers of academic texts in 1992 and found that, while over 50% read

acknowledgments, frequently as a way to gauge relevance of an essay or book to their own research, 87.1% read them to register whether or not they themselves were acknowledged (171). This contrast in reader practices illuminates academics' usually unspoken desire to receive praise and recognition and paints acknowledgments as little more than reciprocal backscratching, an over-determined genre composed of limited content that adheres to a static formula.

The perceived conformity of acknowledgments was no doubt made more apparent by social constructionism, which, among other things, buoyed the basis for understanding genres as "an index to cultural patterns" and "keys to understanding how to participate in the action of a community," as Carolyn Miller contends in her 1984 study of genre as rhetorical action (165). Social construction, a critical standpoint that achieved near automaticity throughout the 1980s and 1990s, made it routine to proclaim that everything is a social construction and that inherent characteristics are only made to seem so through complex discursive processes, often inflected by political and ideological stances. Meanwhile, poststructuralism, an influential critical orientation during the same period, emphasized the power of discourse to shape reality and rejected grand narratives, valuing instead plural, small-scope narratives as a better gauge for analyzing the intersectional complexity of, for instance, class inequality, women's disempowerment, and race-based inequities.

In addition, deconstruction—poststructuralism's methodology and theory of reading—taught a whole generation of scholars to be wary of dichotomies (male/female; center/margin; heterosexual/homosexual) and the hierarchical valuation they (re)produce. As Derrida argued so effectively, dichotomies privilege one term and subordinate its other. Deconstructionists showed how focusing on a seemingly minor aspect of a text could disrupt binary logic, unraveling the hierarchical relationship established by that dualistic slash. Deconstructive readings often involved undoing the binarism of center/margin by drawing attention to previously marginal textual elements.

It doesn't seem a coincidence that, in this critical environment, acknowledgments became an object of study, even if only a minor one. They are, after all, peripheral to the main text, and typically considered less important to its meaning and function. As Terry Caesar puts it, acknowledgments are "presumably 'outside' the book, the 'text proper'" (92). They are even more outside the text proper than citations, which have been the subject of considerably more research since the 1960s and into the present. Citations can be counted and analyzed to gauge influences, trends in coauthorship, and biases in a field of study. Some search engines, like EBSCOhost and Google Scholar, include citation-tracking information, making it possible to trace how an article or author has influenced a given field by indicating the number of times both have been cited and in

what sources. Readers can also learn which scholars' articles have been cited with the most frequency. Web of Knowledge offers similar information in addition to citation mapping, an article's list of works cited, and, where available, direct links to cited articles.

By contrast, acknowledgments and their personal content present time-consuming difficulties for large-scale research projects. Acknowledgments do not conform to bibliometrics, statistical analyses of authorship, publication, and citation patterns. Representing a much less systematic and unquantifiable measure of influence and impact, particularly within humanities research, acknowledgments are not easily traceable. (A notable exception, AckSeer, an acknowledgment indexer for scientific literature, is a search engine that extracts content from acknowledgments for indexing and analysis.)

Whereas citation analyses put a face on research trends, acknowledgments put a face on writing, authors, and their surround. Poststructuralism decentered the author, famously posited the author as dead (Barthes), which may account for the less than enthusiastic development of acknowledgment studies, in which authors are ever-present. Indeed, poststructuralism emphasized fragmented, discursively constructed explanations of problems, mirroring its position on the fragmentation of a coherent self. The decentered subject was described in terms of subject positions, understood as constructed in and through language. Acknowledgments, by contrast, position the author as an important and real component of knowledge making, moving her out of the shadowy subject position and into the role of writer/person engaged with materials, others, and environments. The study of acknowledgments, and their steadily increasing presence in scholarly books, suggests that the author has found in textual gutters a sanctioned space where she can depict writing as an immersive, distributed, companionate activity.

CRITICAL VIEWS

> "If your book has its origins in a dissertation, your acknowledgments should not draw attention to this fact, as it will discourage library sales and book review attention."
>
> – *The University of Chicago Press*

Acknowledgments became common only in the 1960s, as noted by Ken Hyland. Writing in 2003, Hyland contextualizes the genre's emergence as follows:

> Academic tomes have always contained expressions of gratitude, and in journal publishing, early scientific articles often

> featured acknowledgements in an introductory cover letter (Atkinson, 1999). Their emergence as a textual feature was uneven until the 1940s . . . , and while they are still to be found in book prefaces or article footnotes, the compulsion to recognize colleagues and funding bodies is now more likely to receive institutional endorsement and editorial prominence in a separate textual space. ("Dissertation" 244)

In addition to appearing in prefaces and footnotes, acknowledgments might take form as an author's note or a dedication at the beginning of a text. I use this loose framing of the genre's emergence as a point of orientation since identifying an exact origin point for acknowledgments and the forms they have taken is beyond the scope of this project. Such mapping, in fact, exceeds the reach of existing research. That is, to my knowledge there is no comprehensive transdisciplinary study of acknowledgments in critical books (though discipline-specific ones exist, as discussed below); no complete tracking of their history and evolution; no longitudinal studies that might reveal, for instance, the traces of gender politics or other reflections of social arrangements in these sometime-juicy paratexts. Thus, my analysis proceeds by focusing on acknowledgments where they emerge: mostly as a freestanding genre appearing at the beginning of a book, which Hyland dates to sometime in the 1960s, less often at the end of prefaces or in other front matter.

Acknowledgments have been described variously as a record of "hidden influencers" (Cronin, Scholar's 1), a space where academics reveal themselves as "total persons not limited to their professional selves" (Ben-Ari 78), a pastoral genre that mixes high and low registers (Caesar 88), "a curious achievement of pretension, hyperbole and banality" (Hamilton 2), and a "Cinderella," "optional," and "interactional" genre (Hyland, "Dissertation"). As these descriptors suggest, when acknowledgments are discussed—which is not often—they personify extremes of a curious sort. Whether maligned for indecorous self-promotion or grating deference to superiors, or valued for the authentic space they provide academics seeking to prove they are in fact "regular" people, acknowledgments are deliciously ambivalent scholarly material.

I assumed this fertile genre would have generated a range of analyses—particularly from feminist and rhetorical genre studies perspectives, given that acknowledgments blur distinctions between private and public (feminist interest), and represent a paratextual genre in action (rhetorical genre studies). After some initial research, however, I was surprised to find that, while existing work is rigorous and significant, there's not much of it. Studies of academic acknowledgments as textual forms have been largely limited to the fields of information sci-

ence, anthropology, and linguistics, though acknowledgments in popular texts have been the subject of periodic pieces in venues like *The Economist* and *The New York Times*. While the former have offered rigorous studies of the genre and its field-specific conventions, including its role in academic identity formation and community membership, the latter have tended to indict acknowledgments as narcissistic, fictionalized descriptions of writers' lives, complete with supportive, understanding spouses, patient children, helpful editors, clean-working publishing houses, generous university support, and other unlikelihoods coaxed by the euphoria of completion or the immodesty of careerism.

Among the earliest studies of acknowledgments I have found are a 1972 unpublished dissertation on patterns of acknowledgment in sociology (Macintosh) and a 1991 study of acknowledgment practices in genetics (McCain). Really, though, Blaise Cronin, professor of information science at Indiana University, is largely responsible for making acknowledgments an explicit object of study. Since 1991, Cronin, often with coauthors, began to conduct empirical studies of acknowledgments, approaching them as a lens for examining the role of mentors in the development of scholarship ("Let"), patterns of personal attribution within library science journals (Cronin, McKenzie, Stiffler), field-specific genre norms (Cronin, McKenzie, Rubio), the social embeddedness of writing (*Scholar's*), and, more recently, collaborative work practices in the arts and sciences ("Collaboration"). In his 1995 *The Scholar's Courtesy*, Cronin distinguishes between acknowledgments and citations by writing that the latter develop an intellectual lineage of sorts, while acknowledgments foreground a "private interaction, or debt" (25). He notes that both "declare a relationship between the author and other actors on the academic stage," but acknowledgments are "a voluntary act of reciprocation" (25). The book argues for valuing acknowledgments as evidence of the social exchange necessary to create scholarship. Going further, Cronin seeks to concretize this value by including it in what he calls the "Reward Triangle (authorship, citation, acknowledgement)" (27). Acknowledgments, he argues, should count in promotion and tenure cases as evidence of influence and impact, a position that strikes me as untenable in relation to this idiosyncratic, optional genre, and undesirable too, since formalizing the value of acknowledgments might increase the genre's tendency toward rote expression and professional obligation and, frankly, force it to become less of a wild card.

Lest I give the impression that Cronin is fixated on rewards, I want to make clear that he attributes a wide range of functions to acknowledgments, writing that they can be viewed as "indicators of hidden influences" or as "gifts," "tokens of esteem," "credits or rewards," and, intriguingly, "ritualistic appendages" (about which the next section will have more to say) (18). The bigger picture, Cronin writes, is that acknowledgments help to "locate the author(s) in a partic-

ular cognitive or social milieu" and to assert group identity (19). To substantiate his claims, he conducts an empirical study of ten years of acknowledgments in ten high impact sociology journals, a classification established by Reuters' Journal Citation Reports. Comparing citation and acknowledgment data, Cronin finds that the two, at least in sociology, do not necessarily correlate: "one is visible and its influence measurable through citations; the other, historically hidden, is potentially detectable through the study of acknowledgements" (79). Not terribly surprising results, but when Cronin drilled down further to study transdisciplinary attitudes about acknowledgments, he made some interesting discoveries.

His study, mailed to 1,000 academics in 1993, yielded 278 valid responses from faculty in various disciplines across ranks (majority at associate or full), with 81.7% from men and 15.5% from women (remainder unknown). Though he largely downplays and even seems reluctant to address the significance of gender differences, Cronin found that women more often than men felt that they deserved an acknowledgment but didn't receive one. Acknowledgments, in the women's accounts, are intertwined with questions of suspected plagiarism of their work by male colleagues. One woman reports that she did receive an acknowledgment even though coauthor status was actually more appropriate: "'Yes, I once received an acknowledgement when a colleague submitted a paper that was about a 1/3 paraphrase of my own unpublished paper. It may be relevant that I had been sleeping with him'" (87). Another notes the following:

> 'This happened frequently to me and I believe to other women as well. I could cite many instances among them: (1) co-authors who in joining projects expect to receive a co-author status in *my* write-ups but who think they would single author their write-ups (even where I am the senior partner in the project); (2) people who think that co-authoring with me licenses them to lift my work and re-use it forever more with nothing more than an acknowledgement, etc.' (87)

These by-now familiar-sounding charges echo reports of sexism (and racism, ableism, ageism) that have been widely reported in the years since Cronin's 1995 book (i.e., Ahmed, *On Being*; Berry and Mizelle; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al.). Cronin's research, however, helps to shed light on how the study of acknowledgments speaks to the politics of scholarship. As he puts it, acknowledgments are "not trivial, meta-textual flourishes" (98), but "constitute a potentially rich source of insight into the rules of engagement which define the bases of collaboration, social exchange and interdependence within academia" (108). In the above examples, the rules of engagement are organized by gendered and sexual-

ized power differentials that get reenacted in acknowledgments.

In another article, Cronin and his coauthors develop a composite of acknowledgments drawn from scholarly journals in the disciplines of history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology over a twenty-year period. They identify six prominent topics appearing with regularity in the genre: moral support, financial support, access, clerical support, technical support, and peer interactions (Cronin, McKenzie, Rubio 31). Their research convincingly reveals networks of tangible and intangible support that undergird academic scholarship, making clear that writers are not, and never have been, lone wolves, however appealingly romantic that image might be. In his recent scholarship, Cronin argues that the lone wolf is becoming "something of an endangered species, having been displaced by groups, ensembles, and distributed collaborations" ("Collaboration" 22).

Distributed authorship has been fairly normative in the sciences for some time now, as Cronin points out, though not always without conflict. In 1991, the *New England Journal of Medicine* developed guidelines to rein in the increasing length and wide berth of acknowledgments, particularly in the context of multicenter clinical trials (Kassirer and Angell 1511). The editors cite an example of a twelve-page manuscript they accepted in which five pages were dedicated to acknowledgments (1511). The acknowledgments "listed 63 institutions and 155 physicians, the number of patients each institution had contributed (some as few as one), the 51 members of seven different committees, their institutions and their specialties, and the secretaries in the trial office. Many persons were named on more than one committee" (1511). As a result of such page-hungry acknowledgments, the editors developed guidelines limiting the genre to 600 words; those in excess were to be placed on record with the National Auxiliary Publications Service (1512).

In the humanities and social sciences, acknowledgments occupy a different place of importance. Writing in 1987, Eyal Ben-Ari, for example, views anthropologists' use of acknowledgments through the context of their scholarly training. Attributing the often-personal acknowledgments that anthropologists publish to a desire to "create images of ethnographers as social persons" (76), Ben-Ari notes that their intellectual interests in home cultures create a "persistent 'need' to express something about their relations with others" (78). Describing the world of ethnographers in the 1960s as characterized by asymmetrical power relations between students and advisors (71), Ben-Ari reveals the underlife of acknowledgments, where power differentials are woven into expressions of gratitude, as the following example illustrates: "And then I must thank Professor Evans-Pritchard, a more austere teacher, who teaches all his students that the study of man should be approached not necessarily without emotion but with careful scientific impartiality" (qtd. in Ben-Ari 70).

Linguist Ken Hyland, in his 2000 *Disciplinary Discourses*, focuses on how academics collaborate through texts. He notes, "Writers are oriented to more than an immediate encounter with their text when composing; they also conjure up institutional patterns which naturally and ideologically reflect and maintain such patterns" (xi). What's visible here are the limitations of an exclusively cognitive or muse-inspired approach to writing. For Hyland, writers always write in partnership with larger academic conventions and expectations. While the following chapters expand the concept of partnership to include much more than norms of discourse communities, Hyland's study provides a useful foundation for that discussion. Likewise, in "Dissertation Acknowledgements: The Anatomy of a Cinderella Genre" (2003), Hyland offers a genre specific analysis of dissertation acknowledgments that establishes a rhetorical approach to the genre helpful to my thinking throughout this work. He studies "professional connections and relationships as well as the valued disciplinary ideals of modesty, gratitude, and appropriate self-effacement" (266). Acknowledgments, he contends, are an "optional" and "interactional" genre, one that reveals "patterns of engagement that define collaboration and interdependence among scholars, and the practices of expectation and etiquette that are involved" (244).

More recent scholarship on acknowledgments by international scholars explores collaboration, etiquette, and other factors in relation to diverse material conditions, most often through a linguistic lens. In *Chinese PhD Thesis Acknowledgements*, for instance, Hua Peng uses survey and interview data to better understand acknowledgment practices of interdisciplinary Chinese writers, such as the frequency with which "Classic Chinese" students thanked those who shared reference materials with them. Peng concludes that these acknowledgments reflect culture-specific research conditions. Because these writers are working with materials that are centuries old or published outside China, the ability to lay hands on them is extremely compromised. Thus, when others assist with access, researchers make significant mention in acknowledgments. To depict typical problems of access, Peng writes,

> I read an acknowledgment text saying that her request of reference book was declined because at the time it was very humid and the reference book could not be exposed to such humid air. . . .A similar example referred to a reference book which was not allowed to be photocopied for fear of any possible damage to the rare edition. The student had to copy the book by hand in the library for days. (183)

In another effort to draw distinctions between Peng's research participants and Hyland's Westerners, Peng notes that "name dropping" may be expected by

Western researchers, but such naming in Chinese culture could be "a face-threatening act for the acknowledged who does not want to be mentioned as such on such a public occasion" (215).

In a comparative study of "soft sciences" dissertation acknowledgments written by native speakers of Persian (NSP) and native speakers of English (NSE), Mohammad Javad Mohammadi, also building on Hyland's research, analyzes rhetorical moves and "steps" that structure acknowledgments (536). While he finds considerable similarities between the two groups, he identifies one significant difference: the NSP writers employ what he calls the "thanking God" step to a much higher degree than do the NSE writers (80% of Persian texts compared to 4% of English ones) (543). Mohammadi explains this move in terms of cultural difference: "Since in the Islamic culture everyone is usually assumed to start work by the name of God and finish it by thanking God, so it is quite natural if such a step is to be found even in dissertation acknowledgements" (543).

Also comparing Western and non-Western approaches to acknowledgments, María Ángeles Alcaraz examines research articles in neurology to contrast acknowledgments written by English and Spanish writers. Her study is focused on collaboration practices as made visible in acknowledgments. While English writers devote more space to thanking granting institutions, Spanish writers spend significantly less, suggesting that "less funds [are] devoted to research, development and innovation, by national and local institutions" where Spanish-speaking researchers conduct their research (125).

In total, this work provides important reminders that acknowledgments—all texts, really—are cultural records that relay something about a particular group of people and the political, intellectual, economic, and cultural environment they inhabit (for more international studies of acknowledgments, see Giannoni; Golpour; Mingwei and Yajun). It also provides a fascinating portrait of writers writing, adding more dimension and significance to acknowledgments, a paratext through which we glean contextual clues about realities that control and influence the larger work. In this sense, depictions of acknowledgments as boorish, self-aggrandizing publicity—a frequent charge, as illustrated in the next section—fail to account for the way acknowledgments can render the material, emotional, and social elements of knowledge making in cultural contexts.

POPULAR VIEWS OF ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When we pay attention to acknowledgments, Terry Caesar notes, we come away with a sense that the work, "like its author, takes its place in larger human rhythms which embrace both past and future" (93). Acknowledgments humanize knowledge making, casting it in "the warm glow of an intimate con-

versation" (Caesar 88). They also provide glimpses of how books are made at a particular moment in time, as when, for instance, writers thank "squads of research teams, librarians, graduate students, government agencies, and private foundations" (Epstein 43), as well as illustrators, publishers, computer programs and programmers, social media, copy editors, marketing teams, and so forth. In this way, acknowledgments are potential barometers of writing and publishing technologies.

They are also, as noted above, spaces where the author is unabashedly front and center. The author's irrepressible presence, in fact, is precisely the problem for some critics of the genre writ-large (i.e, not particular to academic acknowledgments). In a *New York Times* article, "The Mistakes in This Essay Are My Own," John Maxwell Hamilton surveys 50 random books on his shelves and finds them to be filled with formulaic banalities that he compares to "kids cobbl[ing] together Mr. Potato Head" (2). Questioning the credibility of authors as they present themselves in acknowledgments, Hamilton asks, "How, indeed, does one measure authors who see around them only unfailingly helpful librarians, cheerful typists, utterly candid sources and selfless scholars who, contrary to the reality of academe, always make constructive comments—and on time?" (2).

In a similar vein, "Gratitude that Grates," an anonymous op-ed in *The Economist*—published in the 1990s as was Hamilton's piece—contends that in acknowledgments writers produce "long, rambling essays, in which they flatter the powerful, gurgle over their families, and otherwise boast to the world what happily married, highly-educated, well-connected and generally right-on people they have the good fortune to be" (83). Joseph Epstein too suggests that praise and gratitude are rendered nearly compulsive within the genre of acknowledgments. As he puts it, "Once [writing acknowledgments has] begun, it is not easily brought to a close, for it is something akin to handing out gratuities with play money—one may as well be a big spender" (43).

More recently, we seem to be awash in anti-acknowledgment sentiment. For instance, Noreen Malone, writing in the *New Republic*, uses the publication of Sheryl Sandberg's call for women to assume leadership roles in American corporations issued in *Lean In* as an occasion for railing against what she calls a "truly endemic and toxic" cultural phenomenon. She refers not to the prevalence of bullying, pedophilia, racist violence, legislative stalemates, or gun violence in American culture, but to the "current state of the 'Acknowledgments' section, what has perhaps reached its nadir in Sandberg's work. Lean in, and drop a name." Noting that Sandberg's acknowledgments consume seven-and-a-half pages and thank "140 people for contributing to her 172 page book," Malone laments the "exegeses of just how each person helped." And she's not alone in her distress about the excessiveness of Sandberg's acknowledgments. In *The Awl*,

Choire Sicha, extrapolating from Sandberg's book to make a point about the wider publishing industry, charges that book acknowledgments "have gone absolutely bonkers."

Malone points to other recent texts with similarly long acknowledgments—all of which, not coincidentally, are written by famous or semi-famous, well-connected people—and curses the name-dropping, sucking-up habits of contemporary acknowledgments. She approvingly excerpts an email response on the topic from *Paris Review* editor Lorin Stein, who complains, "'You don't see Joseph Conrad thanking Ford Madox Ford, or Virginia Woolf giving shout-outs to Leonard, Lytton, Vanessa, Clive, and Vita.'" Excessive acknowledging, he continues, "'mars the real intimacy of a novel, which is—or should be—between writer and reader and nobody else.'" This idea is echoed in a 2012 *New Yorker* piece by Sam Sacks, in which he charges that "[w]riters who saw themselves as magi, practitioners of mysterious art, would never have dreamed of breaking the spell they'd cast by guilelessly stepping out of character to thank their house pets."

Stein and Sacks' comments cut to the heart of the matter. Writing is supposed to be a private affair—creative writing in particular—that depends on a cloistered, never quite revealed, let alone discussed, contract between writer and reader. From this view, books are spells whose magic works only if we never catch a glimpse of what or who lies behind the curtain. The writer perverts good taste by airing too much insider information about the act of writing a book, a point that Sacks underscores: "Perhaps readers already know that book publishing is an insular, back-scratching industry, but does it have to be revealed quite so openly?" In an online comment, a reader concurs, comparing acknowledgments in novels (second in offense only to those in "scholarly books") to "a bloody accident in the street (or perhaps a burst sewer main)." While these examples are neither equivalent nor to scale, the point is clear: authors should refrain from making spectacles of themselves. More modesty equals more magic.

What really seems to incense Sacks, though, is the promotional character of acknowledgments, a genre that "appears like an online pop-up ad" or "an extension of the book's publicity" and is plagued by a politician-like appeal to "crowd-pandering." For Sacks, acknowledgments are an unsolicited "gratuitous supplement" that is "garrulously narcissistic and strewn with clichés." I have to admit that his hostility to the genre puzzled me at first. There are terrible things happening in the world everyday; why direct so much ire to a "gratuitous supplement"? Then it dawned on me that the anger is about the disappearance of the magi from the literary scene. Here we should recall that his target is not academic acknowledgments but the rise of the over-exposed, non-enigmatic Novelist. Sacks explains that the "heyday of the literary auteur is long past, replaced by the era of the writing program." The result, for him, is a loss of "mystique in

a craft" and the "quiet needed to disappear into a novel." Despite all that's been said to debunk the writer-in-the-garret myth, Sacks dares you to take it once and for all from his cold dead hands.

Writing against this rarified notion of book-making, *Slate* contributor David Haglund offers a more pragmatic stance on the issue. Writers can scroll acknowledgments to find an agent, for example, or to learn about book-making processes. "The real inspiration for a work of literary art may be mysterious," Haglund contends, "but the process by which that work reaches us should not be. Transparency is good. And so is gratitude."

Gratitude gone too far is the subject of historian Claire Potter's 2006 commentary on acknowledgments published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Writing about academic acknowledgments, Potter calls to mind orgasmic release as she wonders if writers feel "embarrassed from some of the declarations of love made so thoughtlessly at a time when the relief at being finished with the book was so overwhelming everyone and everything seemed dear to them." She shifts metaphors, asserting that acknowledgments have "metastasized," evoking the spread of life-threatening cancer cells as an apt characterization of changing acknowledgment practices. Potter came to this view after completing her research for a book that entailed examining historical texts published before 1930. Tracing the shifts in acknowledgment practices in a casual way, she reports that the 1980s brought a noticeable uptick in the length and a loosening of beliefs about relevant content to be included in the genre (as reported above, Hyland locates the uptick in the 1960s; these may be field-specific differences). Potter identifies reality TV as one possible culprit affecting the inflation of academic acknowledgments, asserting "there is no realm of relationship that we automatically feel comfortable keeping private any more." In addition, though, Potter connects the increase of acknowledgments to the state of the profession, particularly to the growing need for scholars to network, attend conferences, and essentially build alliances with faculty at other institutions in preparation for heightened tenure and promotion requirements.

To reduce the problem as she sees it, Potter offers a list of categories that writers should "eliminate or trim" from acknowledgments. The top offender is mention of pets ("they just do pet things"), followed by gratitude for "ordinary human relationships" that do not contribute to "scholarly thought" (in this category, she includes "manicurists, personal trainers, the rowing club," and so forth). From there, she nixes mention of family members "doing what family is supposed to do under ordinary circumstances"; friends; scholars whose work has been influential ("utterly shameless"); insider references; and children. Apparently, "scholarly thought," separate from ordinary life, is indebted only to editors and publishing houses, a matter that I'll take up later in this book.

Potter's essay generated two online comments. One is from Anthony Grafton, author of *The Footnote* who, as you might guess, is predisposed to care about marginal genres. The other is from "Flavia," who confesses that the "excessive and self-promoting" tendencies of acknowledgments are in fact appealing. She worked for an academic publisher and admits that even when she was unlikely to know anyone mentioned, she "turned to the acknowledgements first and read them straight through. It's like reading the wedding announcements, or those horrible Christmas newsletters that many people send out—often awful, but still, somehow, compelling." Acknowledgments, Flavia points out, reveal "how people construct those lives within a public and relatively formal genre like the acknowledgements section." In reply, Potter confesses that she too always reads them first "to put off thinking for as long as possible"; also, she directs her students to read acknowledgments "to get a sense of the web of intellectual connections between books and readers."

The dominant take-away from Potter's essay, and the others described above, is that acknowledgments consolidate writers' least likable traits. Acknowledgments become emblematic of the narcissistic tendencies of contemporary culture while unveiling the mundane practicalities of writing. The latter might be the worst offense, according to current critics of acknowledgments, for the long-windedness of the genre gives too much away. It both destroys the mystique of writing and unleashes too much feeling, especially hyperbolic confessions of love and gratitude.

OF SUPPLEMENTS

While reading these accounts, I began thinking about the "gratuitous supplement" moniker as more potentially significant than the implied dismissal first appeared. It returned me to Derrida's discussion of "that dangerous supplement," which references Jean-Jacques Rousseau's description of writing in contrast to speech. Rousseau viewed writing as a dangerous supplement to speech, a perversion of the natural act of speech by the cultural inscription of writing. Yet, as Derrida points out, we only know Rousseau through his writing. For Derrida, to view writing as supplement to speech is to valorize presence and to reinforce false oppositions between speech and writing (adhering to what Derrida terms logocentricism). Texts are ultimately chains of supplements with no single point of origin at their center, no presence to ground an authentic experience of reading and interpretation. The supplement, writes Derrida, is "*exterior*, outside of the positivity to which it is super-added, alien to that which, in order to be replaced by it, must be other than it" (145). The supplement's perversion of nature—its constant deferral of origins—is seductive because, as Derrida explains, the sup-

plement leads “desire away from the good path, makes it err far from natural ways, guides it toward its loss or fall and therefore it is a sort of lapse or scandal” (151). The seduction further emphasizes alienation from nature through an “infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception. Immediacy is derived” (157). Supplementarity is for Derrida the state of things; there is no original Presence, nothing Natural that a supplement supplements.

In light of Derrida’s provocative claims, it’s plausible to consider that behind the critiques outlined above is a sense that acknowledgments pose a danger by seducing our attention and interest away from what should be the primary content of a text and toward exteriority—the world beyond the text often made visible in the pages of acknowledgments. The demanding presence of acknowledgments might be evidence that the main text is not, after all, *main*. Not autonomous or entirely original, not magical but cultural, social, historical—the main text does not stand on its own. A book is undermined or in some way destabilized by its supplement, which is, in this case, acknowledgments. They threaten to seduce the reader away from the real content, and toward the conditions of its formation. As a permeable boundary between the interior and exterior of a text, acknowledgments occupy a liminal state, potentially distracting the reader with glimpses of the real and mundane, thereby threatening the idea that “the work” stands on its own.

METHODS OF READING ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

> “Even if you sit in a tiny room in a tiny town hundreds of kilometers from the center of the world and don’t meet a single soul, their hell is your hell, their heaven is your heaven, you have to burst the balloon that is the world and let everything in it spill over sides.”
>
> – Karl Ove Knausgaard, *My Struggle*

> “We didn’t have husbands who typed the manuscript nor children who played quietly while we worked, but we still have a few people whose help and support we’d like to acknowledge . . . . ”
>
> – Pat Belanoff and Marcia Dickson, *Portfolios: Process and Product*

Susan Sontag’s tribute to writer Paul Goodman, published in 1972, begins, “I am writing this in a tiny room in Paris, sitting on a wicker chair at a typing table in front of a window which looks onto a garden; at my back is a cot and a night table; on the floor and under the table are manuscripts, notebooks, and two or

three paperback books" (3). Sontag is not alone. She is surrounded by physical and environmental things and framed by the structure of place—a room, Paris, a garden. Every morning, she receives the *Herald Tribune* and its American news, calling to her mind very specific responses: "the B-52s raining ecodeath on Vietnam, the repulsive martyrdom of Thomas Eagleton, the paranoia of Bobby Fischer, the irresistible ascension of Woody Allen, excerpts from the diary of Arthur Bremer—and, last week, the death of Paul Goodman" (4). These others populate her serene writing getaway, even if not physically in the room with her. In this sense, composing is never something we do alone; we may do it in privacy, but sentences always tumble from a populated mind, heart, body, world.

A critical reading of acknowledgments helps us to understand and appreciate writing as populated and, along the way, to uncover ineffable truths about writing not immediately accessible on the surface or in the content of an argument, proposition, or claim. Writing activity is indexed in acknowledgments, which connote material in the many ways that term can signify: documentation of physical and non-physical matter from which research is made; sometime testament to what is essential in the making of a work; and reflection of the constituents—or raw materials—of a made thing. The genre storehouses compulsory and non-compulsory forms of gratitude and debt. Barbara Couture's explanation of writerly debts correlates to compulsory expressions in acknowledgments: "[W]riters must attend to the world outside themselves in order to effectively link one human being to another. This is what is required to be accountable as a writer" (35). Compulsory forms include thanking a dissertation director, reviewer, and/or copy editor, while non-compulsory ones can include thanking animals, exercise, food, travel, and so forth. Non-compulsory debts could be perceived as deviant because they appear distant from writing when conceived as a literal practice of producing words, yet they appear with some regularity in acknowledgments, despite the fact that they tap into no existing academic reward system.

Reading the compulsory and non-compulsory alongside one another offers a distinct view of the worlds that critical writers create and inhabit. This reading strategy also contributes to a view of composing that not only accounts for tools and technology (as so much recent work does, with great sophistication) but also those partners, not often included in theories or studies of composing, who emerge in acknowledgments—feelings, time, animals, and random material phenomena—that constitute different sorts of writing matter, leading to the distinct conclusion that all writing is radically collaborative. Acknowledgments use tactics that mix compulsory and non-compulsory debts, amounting to an implicit theory of composing that might be summed up as *writing is contamination*: created through contact with and exposure to diverse influences and agents.

Throughout this book, especially chapters two and three, I summon exam-

ples from contemporary academic acknowledgments published in critical books by rhetoric and composition scholars as well as by scholars beyond the field who address issues that impact and get taken up regularly in writing studies: feminism, queer theory, cultural theory, digital humanities, and more generally work across the humanities, the broad context for my study (see Appendix A for acknowledgment sources). I focus on books rather than journal articles or chapters because the former more consistently designate formal space to acknowledging, providing robust views of the genre. The books from which I've drawn span 37 years, with the earliest published in 1977 (Shaughnessy) and the most recent in 2014 (Monroe). My materials produce a selective view of acknowledgments and relationship to writing theory and practice, as I draw widely and unsystematically from texts that have been influential (i.e., Berthoff; Brodkey; Harris, *A Teaching*; Jarratt and Worsham) as well as from those that represent diverse standpoints and scholarly projects (i.e., Hawhee; Payne; Royster; Vitanza; Weaver). To a great extent, my choices bear "the traces of authorial predilection and prejudice," to borrow from John Tomlinson (73), as they include some titles on my bookshelves, others I've encountered in my research over the years, some that were recommended, titles arrived at through citations, ones I discovered while parked for hours in the PE1404 section of the library stacks, and still others I came across serendipitously (in a colleague's office, while searching online, at a used book sale, and so forth).

My choice of texts for analysis is inspired less by a cohesive mission than by circuitous reading paths through which ideas for my study began to accumulate. That is, this book favors a reading strategy that might be described as "productive wandering," a phrase coined by Jonathan Alexander, Jacqueline Rhodes, and me in "Indirection, Anxiety, and the Folds of Reading." We advocate a reading strategy that attaches "value and power" to reading "both by purposeful, guided choices as well as by accidents, associations, and sensory, felt pairings" (46). This approach is well suited to studying a non-obligatory genre that is sometimes read, other times skimmed or ignored entirely. Acknowledgments, usually written last but appearing first in a book, occupy an ambivalent status akin to the ubiquitous reflective letter in first-year composition classes. Both, unfairly or not, are characterized as perfunctory, unsurprising genres, yet both contain enormous potential to reveal something of writing's vitality. To preserve that vitality rather than codify it through a typology of sorts, my selection of texts is generally guided by an interest in writing as "a complex site for the enactment of prefaces, in which writers and texts preface each other, constantly inaugurating and deferring their own beginnings," as Anis Bawarshi puts it in his Preface to *Genre and the Invention of the Writer* (ix).

Most of the acknowledgments I read averaged three to four pages. The ma-

jority conform to the following formula, roughly organized in this general order:

- Opening statement signaling that, like every other writing project, this one benefited from insights, commentary, and advice from others.
- Listing of those others and of institutional, personal, and emotional supports along the way.
- Listing, where relevant, of venues where earlier instantiations of the work were presented, followed by thanks to groups who made those presentations possible, and permissions granted to publish chapters or excerpts of previously published works.
- Intimate thanks to close family and friends, without whom the project would not have been possible.

Despite the more-or-less common observance of genre conventions across acknowledgments, I found that writers reproduce more than clichés about networks of influence and social context. They collectively, and presumably without intent, enact a sophisticated theory of writing partnerships, which I develop in the remainder of this book.

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

Chapter one foregrounds my interpretive stance on acknowledgments by outlining a set of composing theories sensitive to small moments, idiosyncrasies, and the flotsam of writing. The theories of composing that inform my study illuminate the everyday marginalia of writing (i.e., hands, food, telephones). The work of Mina Shaughnessy, Janet Emig, Ann Berthoff, Sondra Perl, Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, Marilyn Cooper, Linda Brodkey, and Margaret Syverson asserts the marginalia of composing as worthy of study, a valuation that influences my treatment of acknowledgments—a fringe or threshold genre—as a site where authors store information about writing partnerships. Chapter one establishes acknowledgments as lens through which to study writing partners, which in this study include animals, feelings, technologies, matter, time, and materials interacting in both harmonious and antagonistic ways with writing. This chapter also unearths Emig's 1971 use of "significant other," an intriguing progenitor of my use of "partners" throughout this book. My overall purpose in chapter one is to show how theories of communal composing, as represented by the work of those theorists named above, encourage unconventional looking at writers' encounters with things and others—a baseline that anticipates my analysis in the following chapters. From here, chapters unfold by focusing on acknowledgments as a paratext that writers use to identify the following writing partners: good feeling, time, and animals.

Chapters two and three focus on good feeling and time, respectively, as writing partners that appear in acknowledgments. Both rely on textual analysis of acknowledgments drawn from a wide range of sources in and related to writing studies. Because much of my prior research focused on emotion and affect studies, I came to these texts with an already established interest in how writers would articulate the relationship between feeling and writing. Thus, as a reader and a researcher, I was attuned to those moments, predisposed to pay special attention to the emotional and physical aspects of composing. Chapter two illustrates writers' compulsions to narrate good feelings about writing in acknowledgments. Framing this compulsion as a performative feeling script, I discuss acknowledgments as pedagogical texts that teach readers and writers how to orient appropriately to writing. More specifically, this chapter reads affect and acknowledgments as partners that together form a pedagogy of how writing is supposed to feel. The final section explores the worrying consequences of projecting too much happiness onto writing, including the marginalization of writing blocks and writing differences associated with linguistic diversity as well as the valorization of writing as an able-bodied pursuit.

As a writer, I wanted to know how others endure the stillness, withstand the psychological and emotional demands, and essentially make the return to writing that I often find so difficult in my own process. Enduring, withstanding, and returning are of course temporal indicators that index the real-time labor of writing. Thus, my focus on time as a writing partner in chapter three emerges from the preceding discussion of good feeling. Feelings are rooted in time, just like everything else, and so I wanted to understand better how the affective experience of writing unfolds over time and figures into what writers select to recount in acknowledgments (itself a high intensity temporal genre that typically marks the end of a project). In addition, I have written elsewhere about time—more specifically, "slow agency"—in relation to writing program administration (WPA). Advocating for WPAs to recognize "the value of sometimes residing longer than is comfortable in the complexity, stillness, and fatigue of not knowing how to proceed," I sought to draw attention to pacing and agency within the context of administration (80). What are the costs and benefits of being in the moment as an administrator? Is it possible to embrace stillness as a legitimate philosophical basis for doing administration?

These sorts of questions find their way into my study of time and writing, where I explore a destabilized present in acknowledgments and highlight writers' efforts to chart their work in and across time. Efforts to situate writing in time reveal its incremental aspects often submerged by final products. Likewise, how writers inhabit time, an all too important and frequently stressful writing partner, is visible in acknowledgments. This chapter focuses on constructions of

time in acknowledgments that reveal time "thickening," a phrase that describes time's density, the way it becomes thick with bodies, feelings, materials, and others. I'm particularly interested in understanding how writers identify time as an orienting device that gestures both to a writing past and to writing's future, a horizon of possibility. Writing's time, as it intersects with possibility, attachment, and endurance, and is articulated in acknowledgments, forms my primary focus in this chapter. Writers' accounts of time emphasize pacing schemes that deepen my study of feeling and animal companions as writing partners, the subject of chapter four.

Drawing on textual analysis and qualitative data, chapter four focuses on the role of animal partners in writing activities. This chapter addresses the idea of "withness," or the ways in which animals and humans, tangled together in everyday encounters, co-create writing experiences and spaces in large and small ways. After presenting examples from written acknowledgments that demonstrate how nonhuman creatures contribute to writing activities, I integrate the text and image results of my field research showing how writers conceive the contributions that animal companions make to their composing lives. These contributions acknowledge partners that render writing an art of living and engaging with a range of others. One major claim that emerges from the chapter is that we are entangled with others when we write, and this relationship reveals both radical asymmetry—we are indissolubly different—and powerful alignment across differences.

The conclusion proposes that writing research reveals, above all else, the beautiful mangle of practice that defines writing as an activity. In addition, I reflect on the relevance of studying paratexts—including and exceeding acknowledgments—for writing studies scholarship. Finally, the postscript threads together excerpts from acknowledgments that, much like an exquisite corpse, constitute an assemblage of parts that become something altogether different than their original referents, exceeding the intentions of individual creators. My purpose is to illustrate and enact a rhetoric of partnership that deliberately plays with subjectivity, experience, authorship, and memory, thereby dramatizing the idea that writing is a populated act impossible without others. This book is essentially an experiment in paying attention to a paratext that seems especially fertile even while consistently overlooked by scholars of writing and rhetoric, not to mention scholars in just about every other field, and scorned (but secretly and regularly read first) by readers and critics alike.