PERSONAL WRITING

This is a scholarly book. In saying that, I begin with a rather banal point. After all, what else should this book be? It is not a novel. It is not a romance story. It is not an adventure tale. Written by a scholar, with a scholarly title, dealing with what appears to be the scholarly subject of writing, should this book claim to be something else? This is a scholarly book about authenticity. Authenticity has long been a scholarly issue. This book's title suggests or anticipates a scholarly output: by aligning writing with authenticity, writing must be a matter for scholarship. Scholarship involves the question of writing (content, method, voice), sometimes questions authenticity (what is or what is not scholarly, what is or what is not an accurate representation or position), and sometimes addresses both topics together. "This is a scholarly book," my opening sentence, is a simple declaration, an acknowledgment, a way to announce a book's content in an up-front manner, but it is also a way to recognize readerly expectation regarding what will follow. Before you—my imagined academic audience—question what content is ahead, keep in mind that "this" is a scholarly book. At least that is what I insist.

I begin with this meta point of self-reflection in order to immediately draw attention to the overall focus of this book, the question of authenticity in scholarly writing, what an authentic scholarly writing might entail, what topics not currently considered scholarly could be considered as authentic scholarly subject matter, and what, overall, authenticity means within contemporary, digital culture struggling with issues of originality, appropriation, repetition, and experience. As Walter Benjamin famously noted, authenticity has long focused on essence. "The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history that it has experienced" ("The Work of Art" 4). Authenticity involves essence.

The essence of scholarly writing is often critique. Scholarly writing, or those who perform and evaluate scholarly writing, often categorizes the authenticity of such writing as critical or interpretive. To perform scholarship (at least in the humanities) is to perform critique, to interpret writings and culture, and to juxtapose the two in discursive output. An authentic scholarly writing resembles Fredric Jameson's depiction of contemporary scholarship as "*hermeneutical*, in the sense in which the work in its inert, objectal form is taken as a clue or symptom for some vaster reality which replaces it as its ultimate truth" (*Postmodernism* 8). Jameson's remarks stand, for me, as representative of what is typically assumed to be the essence of scholarly writing. Traditionally, hermeneutics dominates textual reading, reducing the "text" to forces that demand interpretation or, as Jameson alludes, the unveiling of meaning. As Roland Barthes writes, unveilings reduce discourse to enigmas, which, via the acts of reading and responding, the writer and reader struggle to decipher. All texts are enigmas. The writer must locate the secret key to unlock their mysteries. "A powerful enigma is a dense one, so that, provided certain precautions are taken, the more signs there are, the more the truth will be obscured, the harder one will try to figure it out" (*S/Z* 62). Scholarly writing has long been writing that tackles enigmas: cultural, ideological, philosophical, political, and rhetorical problems and complexities that demand a scholarly voice untangle them for an academic audience. The authenticity of scholarly writing depends on the writer's ability to make the enigma clear. What we thought was *X*, a generic version of this process claims, is really *Y*. Once we discover *Y*, our knowledge of culture or politics or conflict or race or gender or class or anything will finally become clear. Clarity, though, represents only one vision of authenticity. As I show throughout this book's short chapters that authenticity, particularly in its cultural and personal manifestations, often cannot be clear in specific moments or situations. "Many common ideas about authenticity are being overturned," Scott Barry Kaufman argues.

"Turns out, authenticity is a real mess." Writing, too, can be a mess when subjugated to authentic claims and expectations. My purpose in this book is to explore other authentic circulations than those we expect or anticipate. By doing so, I am also proposing an alternative form of scholarly writing, in both form and in content.

In rhetorical and writing studies, where I have worked as an academic, hermeneutics plays a significant role in shaping a definition or professional expectation of what is or what is not scholarly. Writing that defines, interprets, or explains cultural phenomenon, power relations, faulty representation, gender or race, and so on, the discipline declares, is scholarly. If there is a declaration of meaning, the discipline also argues, there must also be a declaration of what the subject is not or what it does not mean. Scholarly work deals with those subject matters outside of the self whose meaning—whose enigmas—supposedly can be revealed.

In this context, then, the discipline would be expected to offer the counter-statement to its definition of the scholarly, which, at its surface, suggests objectivity or an object of study outside of one's self: in other words, writing that is personal is not scholarly. Personal writing, such a definition declares, does not offer a symptom of a vaster reality. Scholarly writing, the discipline believes, reveals that "ultimate truth"—what a text means, what a moment means, what a geopolitical conflict means, what an election means, what an occupation of territory means, what a representation means, what a conflict means, what an economic or educational crisis means, what anything and everything in the world we inhabit means, a revelation of what Michel Foucault called "the fundamental codes of a culture" (*The Order of Things* xx) or what Roland Barthes offered as the belief that everything "shudders with meaning" (*Roland Barthes* 97). With scholarly writing, therefore, there is no disciplinary limit to our desire to reveal meaning, to smash every text into pieces so that another meaning emerges from the shards as revelation or epiphany. In such revelations, interpretation offers an authentic method for academic work. "The life of interpretation," Foucault also notes, "is to believe that there are only interpretations" (*Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* 278). Writing is done in order to interpret what is obscure, to believe that all representations or discourse should be subjected to interpretation. Scholarly writing, Wayne Booth argues, turns "every 'text' into a thoroughly distanced puzzle or enigma," in which "the impassive puzzle solver or symbol hunter or signifier chaser is to some degree caught up in patterns determined by the puzzle—the tale as told" (*The Company We Keep* 142). To be scholarly, it seems, we must be concerned with puzzles and enigmas.

This is not a book about enigmas. Nor is this a book about interpretation.

Our academic tales are, at times, simply interpretations of interpretations. This book reflects my disillusionment with such thinking. The limitations regarding forcing meaning into every breath we take as academics, or for that matter, as humans, have become obvious to me over my academic career. Louis Althusser taught the concept of expressive causality in order to understand how one text's meaning could represent another level of meaning not initially obvious. Our lives are dominated by master narratives, the theory argues, and we must uncover the master narrative as false or as an allegory of another narrative in order to establish the semblance of clarity. Althusser gave scholarly writing the allegory as a method for writing. As Jameson summarizes the effects of expressive causality, "If interpretation, in terms of expressive causality or of allegorical master narratives remains a constant temptation, this is because such master narratives have inscribed themselves in the texts as well as in our thinking about them" (*The Political Unconsciousness* 19). According to Jameson, our collective thinking and collective knowledge is built off of master narratives, and such narratives guide behavior, economics, ideology, belief, and so on. Capitalism. Marxism. Neoliberalism. Race. Class. Gender. Privilege. Hegemony. These are some of the master narratives scholarly writing depends on in order to inscribe specific forms of writing. Uncover the clues or solve the puzzle, often via allegory, and you can better understand ideological systems. Hermeneutics is the guiding force of this process.

Unlike Jameson's proclamation, I do not believe that we are constantly engaging with clues for some vaster reality, as if we are always on the verge of pulling back the Wizard of Oz's curtain and revealing what we thought was *X* instead is really *Y*. Nor do I believe that the texts we engage with daily are nothing more than word search puzzles asking to be solved, whether by interpretation, critical reading, or even the digital humanist's practice of data mining. The hermeneutical tradition, which I represent, fairly or not, in Jameson's work, depends on a scholarly assumption that critique is the only option for writing. To write about a given issue or cultural moment, one must engage with critique, revealing how the issue or moment's representation obfuscates a veiled question of power, oppression, discrimination, or hegemonic activity. Bruno Latour famously noted that critique "has run out of steam" because of its endless desire to show a supposed hidden reality or hidden truth and "to emancipate the public from prematurely naturalized objectified facts" ("Why Has Critique" 227). As Latour points out, within this view, scholarship must uncover. Scholarship must critique. Scholarship must not be personal. Scholarship cannot be banal. Scholarship cannot just observe. Scholarship must liberate meaning from its obfuscation. All around us, we have been led to believe, we encounter blocked meaning. Our task as scholars is to uncover,

to reveal the natural as unnatural, to decode. As Stuart Hall argued, "The transposition into and out of the 'message form' (or the mode of symbolic exchange) is not a random 'moment,' which we take up or ignore at our convenience" ("Encoding" 92). Messages are not random, we are told. They are constructions. Whether we encounter an advertisement, a television program, a song, a political speech, a menu, a photograph, or any other form of digital, oral, and print communication, we are encountering constructions in need of deconstruction. Those who take such messages as natural or random, critics such as Hall have argued, fall victim to ideology and power.

The work of decoding, it seems, is never finished in scholarly writing. For that reason, Latour identifies critique as a limited project since its constant unraveling of meaning leads it down the path not toward greater understanding but rather toward forced interpretations and, eventually, conspiracy theory and paranoia (the ultimate response, I add, to enigma). "What has become of critique when there is a whole industry denying that the Apollo program landed on the moon? What has become of critique when DARPA uses for its Total Information Awareness project the Baconian slogan *Scientia est potentia*?" ("Why Has Critique" 228). Critique, Latour argues, can also lead to arrogance. "Give me the society of Berlin," Latour writes in his metaphoric discussion of the Berlin key, "and I will tell you how the key is shaped!" ("The Berlin Key" 18). In such declarations, we are led to believe that sweeping cultural analysis ("the society of Berlin") defines or reveals all phenomenon, from institutionalized issues to banal mechanical output. Yet, it is not always possible to explain how culture is shaped, how power comes to be, how one side is wrong and another right, or even how a key is shaped. Nor is it always desirable. Toward the end of *Aramis, or the Love of Technology*, Latour's complex investigation regarding the failure of the French transportation system called Aramis, Latour does not offer a solution to the problem. Instead, as the fictional investigator, he states: "I'm not Hercule Poirot—I'm not going to reveal the truth, unveil the guilty party, or unmask anyone. We get the truth only in novels, and this isn't a novel. In real life, reality sets anyone who looks for it quaking all over" (289). This metaphoric detective image is meant to draw attention away from a concrete truth (*X* did it; *Y* is guilty) and more toward the various interactions that comprise any situation, rhetorical act, or problem. Interactions among the various forces that give any moment meaning, Latour has repeatedly written, can be too varied and too complex to settle on one definition or proposed causality. Elsewhere in *Aramis*, Latour's character Norbert realizes how difficult it can be to find an answer to a problem via interpretation: "The farther we go, the more crowded [this investigation] is. Every part of the system is as complicated as the systems as a whole. Every

plate we unfold is itself made up of plates to be unfolded!" (243). These plates/ forces, or what Latour teaches as network thinking, do not settle, for Latour, on matters of critique or analysis but on description. Description, Latour notes, offers a more complete understanding of how forces interact in order to produce meaning (or how they do not). "If a description remains in need of an explanation," Latour claims, "it means that it is a bad description" (*Reassembling the Social* 137). In lieu of critique, Latour argues for description. Details. Moments. Events. Interactions. And, I add, banality. Banality is a major focus of this book. As is description.

Latour's argument acts against the writerly gesture to explain, to push the world through a lens of what Jean-François Lyotard called "the grand narratives" of discourse, those topics that provide overarching frameworks for analysis (Marxism, education, democracy, etc.). Instead of relying on grand narratives, Latour advocates for descriptions of power to demonstrate connectivity, or what we commonly call networks. When one describes, Latour argues, one doesn't unveil but makes visible connections that were, because we were not focusing on connections, invisible. Writing, in this case, is not interpreting but merely describing. Descriptions provide insight. "If connections are established between sites, it should be done through more descriptions, not by suddenly taking a free ride through all-terrain entities like Society, Capitalism, Empire, Norms, Individualism, Fields, and so on. A good text should trigger in a good reader this reaction: 'Please, more details, I want more details'" (*Reassembling the Social* 137). One force often missing from such discussions and from the details—and even from Latour's work—is the personal. The personal, too, is a force within networks producing meaning and one that deserves details. In any given moment—whether it is textual, political, emotional, economical, educational—there is the person writing about the moment and the person experiencing the moment. That person interacts with the subject matter, as well. The individual, as reader, writer, parent, beer drinker, foodie, traveler, academic, and so forth, is also an actor in a given network of interactions.

The personal's scholarly validity, though, has long been questioned in scholarly writing, at least since (according to Walter Ong), Peter Ramus invented the outline and separated the individual from the object of study. With that simple organizational gesture, the personal diminished and eventually became an object of scorn within scholarly work. Jane Tompkins, for instance, writes about her own desire for personal writing and the tension she experiences making it scholarly. "The problem is that you can't talk about your private life in the course of doing your professional work, You have to pretend that epistemology, or whatever you're writing about, has nothing to do with

your life, that it's more exalted, more important, because it (supposedly) transcends the merely personal" ("Me and My Shadow" 169).

Despite the personal's overall absence in scholarly writing, one could argue that the age of social/digital media has made the personal more important than ever before. In the late 1960s, Marshall McLuhan observed that "as new technologies come into play, people are less and less convinced of the importance of self-expression" (*Medium Is the Massage* 123). McLuhan identified the overlap of communication and technology as one of reproduction, where any idea or image may be reproduced at ease, and authentic selves yield to these reproductions, whether in work (what McLuhan called "roles") or in textual reception. "The rising consumer-oriented culture became concerned with labels of authenticity" (122). Where does self-expression fit—as it is understood as authentic voice—within a new media age devoted to reproduction (a supposed drift away from the unique, authentic voice and a settling with "labels" of authenticity). McLuhan isn't arguing against self-expression, but he is noting how self-expression's role in written communication is dramatically challenged by technological innovation. While critique is not necessarily a by-product of technological innovation, the repetitive nature of critique might be traced out within the overall network of reproduction that Benjamin famously highlighted. Aura, or the supposed authenticity of the text, idea, or writer Benjamin worried about, becomes lost within the repeated critical gestures we encounter in contemporary moments. Aura, like a self, supposedly is authentic. Or is it?

Even in the age of reproduction, we are more personal than ever before in our writing interactions. The ability to express one's self easily and to share that expression across multiple platforms at once challenges the hegemony of critique, which often proposes itself as "objective" and isolates expression into a specific academic category hostile to anything that appears "not professional." Professional, in this case, indicates a repetitive stance accepted as "natural" in scholarly writing. Social media has altered whatever we might mean by that "natural" state of writing by concentrating on the personal and on personal interest—whether in the sharing of children's photographs, travels, anecdotes, complaints about work, political discussion, entertainment news, or other issues. The personal is authentic online however it is shared or presented. "All media are extensions of human faculty," McLuhan wrote (*Medium Is the Message* 26). Social media, I note, is an extension of the personal (as McLuhan attributed other media to different aspects of the human condition: the food, the nervous system, the eye). When I share an image of my son's drawing of the "university of butt" on Facebook, for example, I participate in digital authentic expression as an extension of myself. I do so in order to
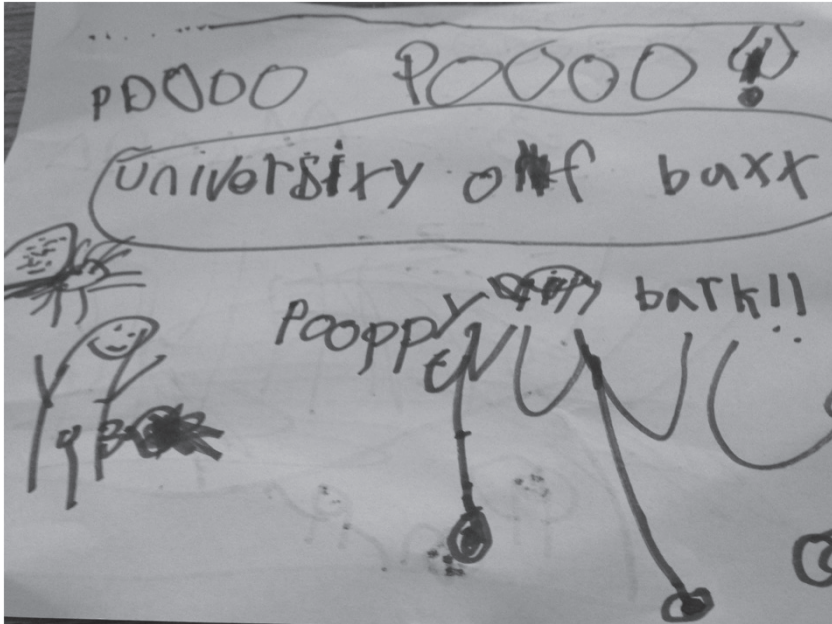
FIGURE 1 My son's self-expression

demonstrate his awareness of his parents' careers (we work in the university) but also possibly to express my own frustrations with university practices and politics—from the administrative to the political. I also share the image as some form of commentary on my supposed parenting skills. Only a parent as cool as me, I seem to think, could raise a son with such understanding and usage of the word *butt*. This public sharing, then, is highly personal. His drawing becomes an extension of the personal. Facebook is an extension of my expression. We can doubt that expression's authenticity (Is he joking? Is he serious? Does he think it is acceptable to share his children's art on social media? Did he put his son up to this? How dare a department chair post such trivial nonsense!). But this is my reproduced expression.

This is not a book about social media. But like many contemporary works, it assumes social media influence on contemporary expression and writing as it navigates questions of authenticity and what it means to perform scholarly writing in an age dominated by personal, shared, and social expression. A moment like "the university of butt" stands out for me, an academic trying to make sense of a social media–influenced writing and environment in which the banal and the personal are always present but often denied as authentic in academic writing. How can I avoid the supposedly inauthentic personal in an age of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the university of butt? This

book's structure—short chapters; movements from spaces as diverse as Philadelphia's Chinatown, Brooklyn, and Tel Aviv; moments of academic citation mixed with popular culture; riffs on craft culture and condiments; discussions regarding salad and frozen garlic bread; personal photographs providing context; highlights of hybrid fusion contradictory moments in food and travel—reflects some of the fragmented spaces of personal and professional discourse that occur over different social media platforms. Each chapter builds off of its predecessor as I explore these topics as moments of self-expression. Self-expression is important. Self-expression, this book claims, is authentic writing.

Jameson, like many academic writers, avoids the personal or self-expression, as does a major portion of the body of critical thought his work belongs within. After all, postmodernism (and, in turn, critical theory) alerted readers to "the disappearance of the individual subject" (*Postmodernism* 16) in favor of analysis of institutional and bodily effects. The difference between what Jameson represents (hermeneutics) and what Latour represents (networks) for scholarly writing, though, are vast despite this one common lack of interest in personal expression. My academic and scholarly disillusionment, as I show in this book, is a struggle between these two polarities, often drifting between the two vast perspectives regarding what one should write about as an academic. To rephrase my first sentence: this is a scholarly and personal book. I could also have written: this is a book about scholarly disillusionment. With these rewritten sentences, I echo the compositionist Jim Corder, who aligns with neither Jameson nor Latour.

Jim Corder always seemed disillusioned to me. Whatever topic he approached, I often read his tone as disillusioned. In the preface to his memoir *Yonder*, Corder writes, "I wanted the book to be a scholarly sort of work written in a personal sort of way. As deliberately as I could, I made it personal, but I don't much think it's ever just personal" (x). Despite this disclaimer, a great deal of Corder's scholarship is personal. He wrote about mowing his lawn, searching through an old Sears Roebuck catalog, his army service, and depression, among other topics. When Corder writes "I don't think it's ever just personal," he identifies the problems of reducing writing to one's experiences; he understands that no matter the counterdesire for a personal writing, no writing is *only* personal. In "Notes on a Rhetoric of Regret," Corder problematizes the complexity of personal writing, negotiating a balance between personal and nonpersonal writing. "I have longed, and sometimes still do, for an essential, integrated self that would be present to others—present, altogether acknowledged, and acclaimed. Significance, however, always seems to be elsewhere. In the midst of an action or event, I long for words and pictures telling the action or event, so that I might have it again and again when I come to

words and pictures, I long for the action or event" (97). Where resides meaning? Corder asks. In a story? In an event? In an image? In a piece of writing? Alongside the self? The integrated self and the projected self speak to the dual experiences criticism concludes can be found in texts. Corder reconciles this tension in his teaching. "My teaching schedule this term complicated matters for me. I'm working in a graduate course in modern rhetoric and in a course in the personal essay. Each course has its own set of rhetorics. Sometimes I get them mixed up. I sack up the modern rhetoric rhetorics and take them to the personal essay class, or sometimes I sack up the personal essay rhetorics and take them to the modern rhetoric class. When I last saw my personal essay class, we were in considerable disarray, you might even say a fine mess" ("Rhetoric of Regret" 100). Which is which? Corder asks. What is rhetoric, and what is the personal? How do you differentiate between the two? Can you?

Authentic Writing resembles Corder's schizophrenic pedagogy: rhetoric and the personal. Sometimes I, too, mix them up. Is the subject of this book rhetoric, scholarly writing, authenticity, me, eating, or all of the above? Near the end of his career, literary scholar Lionel Trilling asked a similar question about his work. "In a long career of teaching," Trilling began a 1971 talk at Purdue University, "this is the first time that I have been the subject of my own instruction" (*The Last Decade* 226). Trilling traces his scholarly trajectory to the belief that teaching English "allowed one to escape for the established professions" and that teaching offered "intellectual activity, of dealing with ideas with theories—and could there be a more appropriate place for this enterprise than the university?" (235). That intellectual activity, however, has often diminished the personal. Texts—literary or cultural—should not be an escape from the personal, but rather a part of the larger network they occupy with the personal. *Authentic Writing* follows trajectories that allow for this larger network and tease out a space for a different, and yet always present, intellectual activity.

Indeed, the intellectual tradition that Trilling found himself attracted to is the one I was initially attracted to: the place of intellectual work, complicated thought, ideas. The university often is also the place that excludes the personal, which long prevented Trilling—until that Purdue talk—from thinking of his own life as scholarly subject matter and as complex as the texts he studied. Trilling traces this tradition to studying Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, who, for him, are the two most influential critical thinkers in scholarly work and in his own thought process. "As exponents of the unmasking principle they were surely pre-eminent. They taught the intellectual classes that nothing was as it seemed, that the great work of intellect was to strike through the mask" (*The Last Decade* 237). The mask, embodied in contemporary critics such as

Jameson, has led us to believe that the world needs an unveiling. Who or what is behind the mask, the enigma, the puzzle, the code? I begin this book, however, with an alternative proposition: The world is not masked. Or, to be more explicit, it does not need to always be masked, nor does it always need to be depicted as a site of unveiling, nor does it always need solving. Writing can explore topics and subject matter without always revealing the greater, hidden reality we have failed to perceive.

My first gesture, in this introduction, is toward a type of personal writing that I could offer in contrast to the stereotypical academic view of the scholarly and the personal. In the introduction to their volume *Personal Effects: The Social Character of Scholarly Writing*, Deborah Holdstein and David Bleich outline the problem of the personal in academic writing as one of distance. Distance, as well, was Benjamin's concern with reproduction (technology moving us further away from aura). The academic, Holdstein and Bleich note, distances itself from the personal since the personal does not contribute to knowledge, which must be objective. Objectivity represents authenticity. "The adjective 'academic' has meant, among other things, that scholarly writing about language and literature assumes that the subjectivity and social memberships of scholars are not factors in their humanistic knowledge in the same sense as physical scientists assume that their subjectivities are not factors in their knowledge of science" (1). Holdstein and Bleich remind readers of Cathy Davidson's argument that "whether we put ourselves in or think we are leaving ourselves out, we are always in what we write" (1072). Despite this admission, Davidson does not embrace the personal as *the authentic* scholarly writing. Instead, she draws attention to the fictive, or we might say hybrid, nature of personal writing when it is situated in a scholarly context. Corder, too, in his graduate seminars promoted hybridity, and with both positions, the personal is not necessarily authentic but a mishmash that leaves us unsure of what we should be writing. Fiction? Nonfiction? With its uncertain status, personal writing works against justification. Being personal, Davidson notes, does not equate being true or more true than what is not personal. We are in what we write, but what we write is in us, too. When I write about myself to make a scholarly point, I am not necessarily engaging in a confession nor am I writing a memoir. I am merely writing. "The I in personal writing is a highly stylized presence, a character as fleshy as a character in a work of fiction. The personal is strategic and synecdochic, both individualized and, if it works, generalizable. Finally, a memoir is not a transcript. It is certainly not the same story someone might tell a shrink" (1070–1071). The surest way around the confusion regarding the personal's status in scholarly writing is to transform it into another form of unveiling or to make the personal merely a vehicle of

criticism. Don't tell the same story you would tell your psychiatrist; instead, tell the story of critique. That position, which returns us to hermeneutics, has been attractive to some academics interested in the personal. Academic memoirs, Cynthia Franklin writes in her examination of the genre, "serve as a barometer for the state of the humanities during a period of crisis" (2). Franklin's project is not to recognize the personal for its value in writing overall, but to transform personal writing by academics, the memoir genre, into another form of Jameson-inspired hermeneutics or criticism. Franklin wants memoir to expose the grand narrative of cultural oppression in order to promote "a collective politics" and "the struggle for human rights" (6) as well as those memoirs that "disrupt as well as support institutional hierarchies" (7). The personal, in other words, is allegory.

Franklin is clear that she wants memoir to speak from "a location that is clearly marked institutionally and geographically as well as in terms of the more typical subject positions of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation" (24). In scholarly writing, the holy trinity of race, class, and gender, then, cannot be denied. Even with personal writing, this commonplace lens of criticism must be employed in order to reveal the greater reality we, as readers, are supposedly ignorant to. Franklin's project, however, is not my own. To subject the personal to yet another race, class, gender critique (as if the personal is merely another text to tear apart for what it does not adequately represent) is not to explore or understand personal writing (or memoir writing) as anything other than what we already know—the supposed coded world that we inhabit. To do the kind of academic work Franklin advocates would be to revisit a familiar grand narrative and to treat that narrative as the only authentic one worth writing. I hear that familiar grand narrative when Susan Talburt and Paula Salvio warn, "The very act of making public the seemingly private may not create sustained critique of the relations of institutional life and self but may encourage and end in personal consumption" (19). Or we reveal the hidden institutional codes or we end consumption or we . . . we do something other than describe, as Latour reminds us. I want the end of writing, at times, to be in personal consumption. I'm not afraid of consuming. I've spent a great deal of my life consuming: ideas, texts, beer, food, ideology, pedagogy, bourbon, and an endless array of other products. How could I end consumption? I cannot. Thus, I will write about it here.

Corder is suspicious of mixing criticism with every form of writing imagined. He refers to the process of always critiquing as "clinging to the sacred," in which academic writers such as Franklin praise "tribal virtues" and "tribal gods" above insight or perspective ("Hunting for Ethos" 305). In other words, the mere presence of a god such as critique is enough for many scholarly writ-

ers. One challenges the familiar objects of critique, such as consumption, and, in turn, one clings to the sacred (the end of capitalism, the exposure of desire, racism, or something else). In the case of Franklin's work on academic memoir, the sacred clings to race, class, and gender as a worshipped god of writing. To write the personal, one becomes obligated to write this trinity as well. "What I see at work near the ideological center of the new work I have referred to— scary to me, even while I think I begin to understand the good that eventuates from it—is a powerful reductive and tribalizing force. This force, to me, gives hope and takes it away, brings gloom, loss, and, at least to me, terror. Gives hope and authenticity, that is, to the reader, but denies hope and authenticity to the reader if he or she wishes to be the writer" (302–303). As a writer, I need my hope, too. I need to believe in the writing I perform and that I read. But I do not discover that hope in the authenticity Corder rightly acknowledges criticism providing. By framing even the personal as an always coded experi- ence, criticism allows hope to evaporate for me because, as Franklin desires, it turns the personal into something grand and beyond the banal or everyday. Exhaustion, instead, settles in for me. I am exhausted with making everything a question of critique and grand narrative. Critique is the grand narrative we need rest from. As Nathan Robinson writes, "Cultural critics often display an unfortunate tendency toward 'Zeitgeistism,' the borderline-paranoid belief that there are Zeitgeists everywhere, massive social and historical essences to be found in all kinds of everyday practices and objects." *Authentic Writing*, instead, points in the opposite direction. It offers a scholarly writing outside of the massive or grand. It offers a scholarly writing of the everyday.

I compose this book in segments, small fragmented chapters that connect to one another via the question of authenticity. Rather than offer a sustained argument spread out over four or five chapters whose organization I would foretell here in this introduction, I offer many small stories, each a part of a larger story of academic writing, my children, travel, food, authenticity, and the details and descriptions that I engage with and encounter daily. These chapters ask for a rethinking of what an authentic academic writing might entail, but they also ask for a rethinking of the broad concept of authenticity in general. "I've always felt conflicted by the notion of authenticity," Louis- ville chef Edward Lee writes (217). I share such sentiment. I am conflicted. I am conflicted about the practices my professional identity relies on, and I, as an academic with tenure, often enforce and encourage. *Authentic Writing* attempts to work through that conflict. *Authentic Writing* does not claim to be the authentic approach to scholarly writing. It does, however, ask readers to suspend the expectation of one type of scholarly writing based on one type of organizational scheme focused on one type of critical methodology. *Authentic*

Writing, as a book about authenticity and its presence or lack of presence in contemporary culture, proposes an alternative approach to the scholarly as well as our understandings of parts of contemporary culture. Not a radical approach. Not a revolutionary approach. A *different* approach.

In the following chapters, as I explore the conflicted state of authenticity as an academic and nonacademic issue, there will be characters who appear and then reappear across chapters—people, writers, objects, places, things, and ideas that move from one city to another, from one condiment to another, from my children to me, from my writing to theory, from theory back to my writing. These characters allow my narrative to network across a larger concept called authenticity. I don't consider this book to be a memoir, but it does contain personal moments and experiences. I don't consider this book to be a critical examination, but it is very much about rhetoric and authenticity. I don't consider this book to be palatable to an academic audience accustomed to decodings or unveilings, but it is very much a book about scholarly exploration written with an academic audience in mind.