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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

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*Acknowledgments are now a constitutive and almost compulsory part of academic productions. This essay, based on some 1,000 books in the humanities and social sciences, traces the sociogenesis of this academic genre. Focusing on the paratextual nature of acknowledgments, it examines the following questions: What do the lists of names in them mean? What effects are expected from these carefully written, or at least calculated, pieces? Acknowledgments reveal authorial strategies, the staging of a public persona, the pursuit or display of symbolic capital in a highly competitive world. But they can disclose more than that. They may also show a private person, depict an imagined Eden, recall a generosity. Acknowledgments involve a complex discourse. What they tell us is that the intellectual field is also a community, that in the "battleground" of learning there is a place for the gift, indeed that the giving of gifts still remains one of the means—perhaps even the principal one—of the advancement of learning.*

"It is customary, particularly in works devoted to the social sciences and humanities, to name the many individuals to whom one is indebted for an idea, a criticism, a comment, some information or material, emotional support."[1] This observation quoted from the acknowledgments in a recent book contains two key words that illuminate the use of academic acknowledgments today. The first is "customary"; it denotes a common use, a general practice. Nowadays, acknowledgments can be found in most works in the fields mentioned above, and not only in books, but also in articles published in collective essays or in journals as well as in other academic publications (theses, reports, etc.). Acknowledging is not restricted to the humanities and social sciences. Scientists write acknowledgments in their articles, and indeed are obliged to do so. The "authors' form" in biomedical journals has a section called "acknowledgments" which reads as follows: "All persons who have made substantial contributions to the preparation of the manuscript, but who are not authors, are named in the acknowledgments section and have agreed in writing to be named. No contributor

1 J. T. Godbout, in collaboration with A. Caillé, *The World of the Gift* (Montreal, 1998), vii.



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has been omitted."[2] Nor is acknowledging merely a Western practice; in Japan and in China, both scholars and scientists write acknowledgments.[3] One can speak of a generalization of acknowledgments.

The second interesting word is "many"; it refers to the numerous names of people and institutions whose help is acknowledged. This aspect, one of the most striking, is the main target of a witty article published in the *New York Times* in 2003.[4] The journalist gives prodigious figures: more than 100 persons and 91 institutions and organizations are acknowledged in a biography of Frank Lloyd Wright, 250 people in a secret history of the CIA, 795 in an unauthorized biography of Nancy Reagan. In such figures we see the inflationist tendency of acknowledgments. The comparison with credits for films comes to mind: they too include more and more names—16 for the 1922 vampire classic *Nosferatu*, but 701 for the third instalment of the *Matrix* series.[5]

Though generalization and inflation are two major features of today's academic acknowledgments, scholars have paid little attention to these texts. They admit to looking at acknowledgments immediately upon opening a book; they write them with great care; but they do not study them.[6] Acknowledgments are representative of those cognitive schemes, techniques, protocols and forms that are so common that they are taken for granted and consequently not analysed. Pierre Bourdieu, in one of the last issues of the *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* he edited before his death, stressed the necessity of objectifying these schemes, techniques, protocols and forms.[7] My interest in acknowledgments—not mentioned by Bourdieu among the many examples he gave—aims to contribute to this program of exploration of the cognitive intellectual *inconscient*.

Acknowledgments are staring you in the face. Their location in the work can vary, but it is always a prominent place and a place that is more or less expected. Acknowledgments can be an autonomous text put, generally, at the beginning of the book, seldom at the end. When they are not an autonomous text, they consist of one or several paragraphs at the end of the introduction. For

2 D. Pontille, *La signature scientifique : Une sociologie pragmatique de l'attribution* (Paris, 2004), 161; the quoted text is from *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2003).

3 Personal communications from Sachiko Kusukawa and Adrian Hsia.

4 S. Roberts, "On Acknowledgments: The Inquisition Was Easier", *New York Times* (Nov. 27, 2003), 1 and 16 (Arts pages). From this article, where examples are not borrowed from the academic world, it is clear that acknowledgments have a broader diffusion than the one I consider here.

5 R. Kennedy, "Who Was That Food Stylist? Film Credits Roll On", *New York Times* (Jan. 11, 2004), section 1, p. 1, col. 4.

6 The entry "ringraziamenti" in C. Demaria and R. Fedriga, eds., *Il paratesto* (Milan, 2001), 176 is very brief and has no bibliography.

7 Issue 135, "Inconscients d'école" (Dec. 2000).

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an article, acknowledgments are put in a first or last note. Several devices increase their visibility: three asterisks distinguishing the acknowledgments paragraphs(s) from the text of the introduction, a specific title (more often than not listed in the table of contents) for an autonomous text. Moreover, some scholars put in their index the names of the people they acknowledge in their acknowledgments.[8] Acknowledgments are written in order to be read. The author who writes them decides to express publicly what he has first expressed privately when he said or wrote "thank you" for the help he received. Choosing to acknowledge his debts publicly, he wants his acknowledgments to be seen and easily found.

At this point, we are led to consider the nature of acknowledgments. Dictionaries are of little help. The few definitions that are given are rather poor. Acknowledgments are "the author's list of others to whom he/she is indebted"; they are "an author's statement expressing thanks to those who have assisted in the preparation of a book or an article".[9] These definitions refer to the contents of acknowledgments—"the list" of names, "those who have assisted"—which is not surprising if we recall, with the article in the *New York Times*, that extensive listing has become one of their most striking features. They also make explicit a function of civility: to thank the people one is indebted to. Acknowledgments are full of words meaning gratitude; or, more precisely, as the vocabulary is quite limited, authors repeat the same words: "to thank", "thankful", "thanks", "gratitude", "grateful", accompanied by the same emphatic adverbs and adjectives. It is a confirmation of this function of civility that in French acknowledgments are called *remerciements*.

Dictionary definitions do not convey the *public* character of the gratitude, though that is in fact what generates the "statement". An author could have made do with privately thanking those who helped him: he would have perfectly fulfilled his duties. The question left aside by dictionaries is why an author decides to express his gratitude *publicly*. Here we have to turn from lexicography to literary theory and to the famous work of Gérard Genette, *Paratexts*. Acknowledgments are not expressly mentioned in Genette's study, but they obviously belong to the many elements surrounding the text that he has in his mind. These "paratexts" are "a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that—whether well or poorly understood and achieved—is at the service of a better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of

8 E.g. C. Ginzburg in *Occhiacchi di legno. Nove riflessioni sulla distanza* (Milan, 1998).

9 *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* (Harlow, 1991), s. v.; *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* (New York, 1997), s. v. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Trésor de la langue française* and the *Grand Robert de la langue française* do not mention "Acknowledgments" and "Remerciements" in the meaning considered in this essay.

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course, in the eyes of the author and his allies)".[10] Acknowledgments expressed in a public space are not just a token of personal gratitude. Strategically placed in the work, they are part of an authorial strategy and, as such, are intended to produce certain effects on readers. Readers not only belong to the same world as the author, the huge majority of them are authors themselves. They know the rules of the game and can decode acknowledgments easily and quickly.[11]

## SOCIOGENESIS

This essay presents the results of an inquiry that has no claim to be exhaustive. It is limited in scope to the academic field of humanities and social sciences in the twentieth century, and chiefly to its second half. It is also limited in its agenda: the meaning of a genre in a given milieu and at a given time.[12] The analysis is based on about 1,000 books, most of them published after 1945. Half of these books are French, the other half English and American. Three hundred of the French books belong to one series, the *Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome* (*Béfar*), a series published by the French Schools in Athens and Rome and devoted to history (ancient and modern) and archaeology. I chose this series mainly because, beginning as it does in 1877, it gives us some provisional information on the evolution of the genre over more than one century.

The *Béfar* provides interesting evidence on what are now the two most obvious features of the genre. Acknowledgments are found for the first time in volume 34 (1884). Thereafter they become more and more frequent: in one volume out of three for volumes 34–50 (1887), in one volume out of two for volumes 51–100 (1941). After 1945, they are standard practice, present in nine volumes out of ten. In addition to being more common, they become longer. At the end of the nineteenth century, they consisted of one brief paragraph; now two pages are common, whatever the discipline or sub-discipline.

Choosing this "old" series, I thought that I could reach the origins of the genre. I was wrong. Consulting the *Béfar* in a Parisian library which leaves its old books on its open stacks, I ran across some acknowledgments in the prefaces of works dating back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These examples, found by mere

10 G. Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1987), trans. J. E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997), 2.

11 For this reason I shall give just a few significant examples.

12 I deal with the descriptive aspects of acknowledgments in a paper presented at a conference on "Il paratesto" (Rome and Bologna, Nov. 15–20, 2004), and to be published in its proceedings.

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chance, are just provisional landmarks in a history of the genre.[13] However, the data—ancient and modern—I have gathered give some clues, perhaps not so much about the invention and diffusion of acknowledgments as about their "generalization" more or less after 1945 and their growing inflation.

Acknowledgments can be attributed to two main tendencies of scholarship and science in the *longue durée*. First, their collaborative nature. This is not something new; it originated in Baconian times. It is not uninteresting that the significant "first" acknowledgments I found date back to the central years of the seventeenth century, when a collaborative ideal became a reality in the Republic of Letters.[14] The Sainte-Marthe brothers, Du Cange, Mabillon and other Benedictine scholars acknowledged those who helped them in their monumental works: their collaborators, the institutions and people who gave access to a collection, the scholars who brought them documents, made copies, gave a hand in proofreading, or provided advice but also support when the task seemed discouraging. At this stage of the research, of course, I can only hypothesize that there has been a close connection between the "development" of acknowledgments and a collaborative ideal over the long term. What is clear, however, is that today cooperation is one of the most frequent occasions of acknowledging. I'll just quote the introductory clauses a scholar wrote for the two lists of names of people and institutions he acknowledged: "It is clear that such a research project was possible only in a team and it owes a lot to the co-operation of many people . . . "; and some lines further on: "Doing research today is not possible without the help of institutions and tight collaborations . . . .".[15]

The second main tendency of scholarship and science also emerged in the second half of the seventeenth century when the *polyhistor* gave way to the specialist. Du Cange, whom Mabillon warmly acknowledged in his *De re diplomatica*, was not only a friend but also the leading specialist of his time in mediaeval Latin lexicography. Here too, we can only offer the hypothesis of a correlation between specialization and the emergence of acknowledgments. Returning to the modern period, it is more probable that specialization has

13 I found acknowledgments in the *prefaces* of the first and second editions of the *Gallia christiana* of the Sainte-Marthe brothers (1656; 1716), the several seventeenth- and eighteenth-century editions of the *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis* of Du Cange (1678; 1733–6; 1766), the *De re diplomatica* of Mabillon (1686), the *Vie de Monsieur Des-Cartes* by Baillet (1696), the *Traité de la police* of the *commissaire* Delamare (1705), the *Histoire générale et particulière de Bourgogne* of Dom Plancher (1739). A collective research project on all paratextual elements during the typographic *Ancien Régime* was launched in Italy in 2004. This systematic exploration of several Italian libraries will yield new material for reconstructing the history of acknowledgments.

14 H. Bots and F. Waquet, *La République des Lettres* (Paris/Brussels, 2000), chap. 5.

15 J.-L. Lamboly, *Recherches sur les Messapiens, IV^e-II^e s. av. J.-C.* (Rome, 1996; *Béfar* 292), ix.

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been a factor in their increase. Authors thank people belonging to a sub-field of the same discipline, as Marc Bloch did by acknowledging a historian of medicine who "saved him from innumerable faux pas on a slippery ground".[16] Acknowledgments also go to experts possessing technical knowledge, such as the mining engineers a classical scholar consulted for his study on the Laurion mines in Antiquity.[17]

The disciplinary approach that the *Béfar* makes possible reveals differences between historical sub-fields. Writing acknowledgments has been a more common practice for archaeologists, and the pieces they wrote and write are among the longest. This is easily explained by the "economy" of archaeological work, which adds many more occasions for "debts": permits for excavations, a necessary collective work, days and months spent together in an isolated place in a foreign country, the use of findings made by forerunners, etc.

If we move from an intellectual perspective to a more sociological one, the present inflation of acknowledgments has to do with institutionalization. The amateur or freelance scholar has become as rare as he is suspect.[18] Science is done in institutions. Scholars belong to universities or institutes, on a permanent or temporary basis. They receive funding from private or public institutions or foundations. After 1945 the many invitations to research institutes increased mobility for many scholars. More recently, this tendency has been enhanced by the many invitations to give lectures or seminars and to present papers to conferences, which create as many new occasions for debts and acknowledgments. Moreover, some institutions require their guests to acknowledge them, even providing the proper formula. All this in addition to the numerous acknowledgments to the university, the department (and the chair), the institutions that proffered an invitation or money or both, and to the wider and wider circle of colleagues (kinds of neighbours?) who are acknowledged.

Professionalization accompanied institutionalization. Today academic scholars are warmly invited and advised to behave professionally—maybe more in America than in Europe. There is an abundant—and little studied—production of handbooks, guides and websites generally written by academics considering this topic from a general or particular point of view. I'll take one example from among hundreds. A standard guide on poster presentations has a section entitled "Projecting a Professional Image" which is divided into three parts: "looking like a professional", "sounding like a professional", "behaving like a professional"; its author, Peter Gosling, adds that "much of the issues raised will be as relevant to [the] everyday professional life". This professionalization

16 M. Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges* (Strasburg, 1924), v.

17 É. Ardaillon, *Les mines du Laurion dans l'Antiquité* (Paris, 1897; *Béfar* 77), 2.

18 Philippe Ariès was an exception in French historical studies.

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is not purposeless. Gosling explains that professional behaviour will maximize the scientific impact. He recognizes: "Intellectually we would all like to think that we are not seduced by packaging or advertising, preferring to think that we are persuaded by rational, objective judgment."[19] But alas, that is not always the case. Science has to be sold, the market is very competitive, and anything goes or, at least, helps. Acknowledgments are one of these means. Well-packaged ones can create a favourable impression, as an elegant business card does. A question arises here. As professionalization is now a fact, might the "private" and sometimes unprofessional acknowledgments—we will consider a particularly striking example of the latter—be a reaction against an image that is too formatted? Are they not the little distinctive touch of self-identity? Or have they become, at least in some cases, part of the professional image?

All these elements play a part—which?—in the inflation of present academic acknowledgments. Two less prestigious but not negligible ingredients should be taken into consideration to explain the flood of academic acknowledgments: routine and conformism. They too escape quantitative precision.

## THE INTELLECTUAL "CHAMP"

Acknowledgments are now a constitutive and almost compulsory part of academic productions. What do these carefully written, or at least calculated, pieces mean? At this point it seemed *obligé* to turn to the problematics constructed by Pierre Bourdieu about the academic world and the intellectual "champ".[20] They offer suggestions on how to decode acknowledgments, to "unveil" their instrumental nature.

In his acknowledgments, an author offers a kind of inventory of the help he received during the years—generally many—he devoted to his research. Steven Kaplan, in his book on the bicentenary of the French Revolution, acknowledged more than 100 people; these five full large pages—the format is between in-8° and in-4°—give the impression of a huge concerted effort. In his *Venise au siècle des Lumières*, Jacques Georgelin acknowledged only 90 people, but made it clear that they were a selection among "many" researchers, professors and colleagues who might have been named. Here the same mass effect is produced not only by

19 P. J. Gosling, *Scientist's Guide to Poster Presentations* (New York, 1999), chap. 13, quotation from 89.

20 Chiefly in *Homo academicus* (Paris, 1984); "Le champ scientifique", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 2–3 (1976), 88–104; "Le champ littéraire", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 89 (1991), 3–46.

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the names, but by their presentation in an alphabetical list, with almost everyone deserving his own paragraph.[21]

The people mentioned (nominally or not) cover the vast range of kinds of help received through the entire process of research, from its very beginning to its final stage. Authors tend to acknowledge those who read the several versions of the work; the typists who "typed and retyped"; the publisher—here sometimes many people—who turned a poor manuscript into a beautiful book; and, finally, the people who did the index and read the proofs. Institutions as well as individual people are mentioned: the author's university, libraries, archives and museums where days and months were spent, organizations that bestowed generous fellowships and funding, places where presentations were given.[22] All these names leave the impression that a serious, solid, strenuous work has been brought to completion; they are a guarantee of the quality of the research and of its achievement. They perform the same function as the footnote analysed by Anthony Grafton.[23] They say to the reader that the book he takes in his hands is worth reading.

Names that are acknowledged are not only numerous; some of them are also prestigious. They give the impression that the author is a member of an important network, perhaps even its central figure. The many "colleagues and friends" that Thomas Pavel mentioned in the acknowledgments of his *Pensée du roman* read like entries of a *Who's Who* of literary studies in the Western world, *la crème de la crème* included. These names reveal a wide and prestigious network that only a leading scholar can mobilize "to enlighten his approach". We learn that this professor taught and lectured at many places: the universities of Chicago, Princeton, Columbia, Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), Indiana (Bloomington), Stanford, Yale, McGill, Paris III, Paris IV, the École des hautes études en sciences sociales. These are some of the most prestigious institutions in the academic world; they attest to the eminence of the author. Mentioning the trendy Villa Gillet in Lyon is, at this level, "expected", and the less important universities of Dijon and Cosenza, rather than spoiling the tableau, add a note of chic exoticism.[24] Names of people and places signal the academic status of a scholar to a reader who is aware of the sociology and the geography of this "small" world. Mention of present and former students, a secretary, a research assistant or a high administrative research position also evokes the powerful scholar.

21 S. Kaplan, *Adieu, 89* (Paris, 1993), 876–9; J. Georgelin, *Venise au siècle des Lumières* (Paris/La Haye, 1978), 7–11.

22 For a detailed example of the whole range, see E. L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1980), xvii–xxi.

23 A. Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (London, 1997).

24 T. Pavel, *La pensée du roman* (Paris, 2003), 13–14.

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As used by junior scholars, acknowledgments mark an effort to enter the academic world, their expectations and ambitions. They are not just a guarantee of the quality of their research: they are also the homage paid to a master, purposefully mentioned in the best place, and to some authorities listed in a calculated hierarchy. They can also serve as an alluring CV, displaying seminars and conferences, invitations and fellowships. All the specialists in the field tend to be mentioned; no matter if, as an author wrote before listing the "large number of scholars" she met, "some of them [she] spoke to only once or only briefly".[25]

Though an inflationist tendency is obvious, there are examples of the contrary. A most interesting case is the acknowledgments by Jean-Pierre Perchellet in his *L'héritage classique*. Put on a blank page, just after the title page, aligned right, in order to be perfectly seen when opening the book, they consist of the simple word "Remerciements" followed, after a colon, by nine names in alphabetical order. This layout, similar to the layout of a classical inscription, gives these acknowledgments the strength of something engraved on marble.[26] Authors who prefer concision generally write a collective acknowledgment and then mention just some names. They put the stress either on a few people to whom a special homage is paid, or on a small milieu of colleagues and friends, which is thus represented as an elite. In the second case, strategies of identification and distinction are obvious.[27]

Whether many names or just a few are mentioned, authors tend to accompany them with a compliment stressing the expertise, the generosity or the efficiency of those who helped them. Such qualities offer one more guarantee of the importance of the work: it owes its best aspects and even its existence to these learned, generous and efficient people. These lofty qualities are enhanced by the modesty the author reserves for himself. He presents his own work as a "modest" contribution, writes that it could not have been done without the help of many colleagues and friends, and ends by admitting that all errors and shortcomings are his own. These "modesty formulas" were frequent already in the 1970s. An American historian found them so irritating that he began his own acknowledgments this way: "I do not wish to go so far as to say, in the conventional manner, that this book could never have been written without the spiritual support of a host of friends too large to enumerate. I feel no need

25 A. Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven, CT, 1995), xii.

26 J.-P. Perchellet, *L'héritage classique: La tragédie entre 1680 et 1814* (Paris, 2004), unnumbered.

27 Several names that Gérard Delille mentions in the somewhat brief acknowledgments of his *Famille et propriété dans le royaume de Naples* (Rome, 1985; *Béfar* 259) refer to researchers of the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (where he became a *directeur d'études*) and to the editorial board of *Quaderni storici* (of which he was a member).

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to express astonishment at the disproportion between my own feeble means and the implied splendor of the final achievement."[28] This protest against a "conventional manner" invites us to investigate the "convention", which turns out to be a classical *topos*. Cicero and Quintilian recommend that the orator affect modesty at the beginning of his speech; by doing so, Quintilian explains, he will put his listeners in a favourable state of mind; the audience will experience a natural sympathy for the one who confesses his *infirmitas*. Ernst Robert Curtius reconstructed the "immense diffusion" that "modesty formulas" had in literature from classical Antiquity to the nineteenth century.[29] Today scholars who express their feebleness in acknowledgments at the "thresholds" of their works follow the same goal: to acquire a capital of sympathy among future readers. They do not think that their readers, taking seriously their admission of inadequacy, will despise their work. On the contrary, their hope is that their readers will first evince sympathy for them and be indulgent, and then will be happily surprised when they discover the real scale of their achievement.

Acknowledgments are written for a help that has been lent, a favour that has been done. They refer to the past. They are also designed to control the future. Professors, colleagues, librarians, etc. who are warmly acknowledged can do a favour again, give some support for a job or a fellowship, write a good review, accommodate new requests in a library. If they were not acknowledged, they might prove less helpful in the future. Indeed, the future may be given greater consideration than the past.[30] This explains the advice given to first authors to acknowledge an "enemy" who, of course, did not help at all: he will be neutralized and, for instance, will not write a bad review. This also explains the current and explicit practice of apologizing for any omission. An eloquent example reads as follows: "Although I was greatly assisted by the advice and support of those named above"—two full pages—"I must . . . also extend apologies to those contributors who have gone unmentioned because inadequate records were kept. I may be forgetful, but I am, nonetheless, truly grateful to everyone who helped me."[31] All the egos have to be spared and flattered, as in those increasingly interminable film credits where even the most menial guys on the crew are listed.

28 G. Huppert, *Les Bourgeois Gentilhommes* (Chicago, 1977), xi.

29 E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1948), trans. W. R. Trask (New York, 1953), 83–5; see also B. Mortara Garavelli, *Manuale di retorica* (Milan, 1988), 65–6.

30 A similar remark has been made on cosignatures in scientific articles; some people are listed not so much for what they did in the present work as for what they could do in the future (Pontille, *La signature scientifique*, 111).

31 Eisenstein, *The Printing Press*, xix; here one will note the interesting practice of keeping records.

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Acknowledgments appear as an emblematic genre of the *Homo academicus*. They mark the position of an author in the "champ"—his status and his network; they do so by the mere number or the high profile of the people and institutions that are mentioned. In the hands of a junior author, they record the efforts to enter the "champ", to secure the protection of the authorities he pays homage to, to accumulate symbolic capital. A systematic study rating the acknowledged people and institutions in a given field at a given time would yield an academic "hit parade". Acknowledgments epitomize authorial strategies. The writer puts himself and his work in the most favourable light. In this paratext, one of the last pieces of the book he writes,[32] he is intent on attracting and capturing the attention of readers who belong to the same world. This staging of the self refers to a highly competitive world, which in return explains this authorial strategy. Anything goes in the campaign to conquer power, to affirm status and to gain prestige. If the invidious comparison with and distinction from the other is implicit, it is nevertheless real. Acknowledgments are the expression of a world driven by self-interest, strong competition and, sometimes, violent confrontation. Such a conclusion is not surprising; it will even seem self-evident, given the very widely diffused interpretation of the academic field as a kind of battlefield. And that is what it is.

## "CONTRECHAMP"

This view is not, however, fully satisfactory. Not because it refers to such a harsh and unpleasant world but because it does not encompass the whole picture. The problematics of the "champ" is reductive here: it does not explain entire paragraphs I found in some acknowledgments. Unless we choose to accuse Marc Bloch of hypocrisy, the acknowledgments that he put in *Les rois thaumaturges* (1924) envisioned a totally different world: friendship is here the key word, and right from the first sentence. At that point, instead of remaining in the field of sociology and following critiques of Bourdieu's concept of "champ", I found in the cinematographic *écriture* a way that enabled me to encompass all that was offered to my eyes. The intellectual historian reads sociology, but also goes to movies. I saw Jean-Luc Godard's *Notre musique* (2004) as I was preparing this essay and realized the limits of an interpretation based on the concept of "champ". A most interesting scene shows this film director explaining the "champ–contrechamp" technique: the use of a shot that changes the angle of view and reveals subject matter from the opposite direction. The "contrechamp" allowed me to capture other actors and elements, and with them, another part of the same scene; and

32 Many acknowledgments in the *Béfar* are introduced by formulas indicating that they were written at the end of the work.

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to stress the coexistence and combinations of all the actors and elements that are present in acknowledgments.

## (and Kola)

The actors we see from another angle are often quite numerous—as are the many friends and relatives that an author tends to mention in acknowledgments. I will focus on the family. Members of it, it is true, can be acknowledged for an intellectual debt, chiefly when they are themselves academics and prestigious ones.[33] More often than not, however, they are thanked for material, moral and affective support. The family that in the past was limited to parents, and mentioned only in the dedication, has entered acknowledgments *en masse*. Not only parents but also wife, husband or partner, children, in-laws, relatives and, as one author put it, "all the rest of the family,"[34] are acknowledged. The book can be presented as "a family business".[35]

A most interesting case is the presence of the wife. A wife first appeared in the *Béfar* in 1944: the author of volume 157 acknowledges "the courageous assistance" of his wife in the publication of a work "begun . . . thirty-five years earlier". From this date, the wife is often mentioned in acknowledgments. It would be necessary to check other French and foreign series in order to historicize the origin and the diffusion of a now common practice, and to describe an evolution which tended to give the wife the last place in the acknowledgments—with "last" meaning "best" or "one of the best" in this instance.[36] Thanking the wife became a *topos*, with its standard components of "courage", "devotion", "patience", "abnegation", "sacrifice";[37] the less frequently celebrated "common sense"[38] belongs to the same conservative social vision. A gender comparison is illuminating. When a female author acknowledges her husband or partner, she writes about moral or intellectual support, not about devotion or sacrifice—at least in the sample I used. Nowadays, it is true, authors whose partners are also academics tend to acknowledge moral support and intellectual dialogue. However, the rhetoric of sacrifice is not completely dead: the author of a book published in 1997 paid homage to his wife who had "untiringly . . . reread, corrected, discussed and

33 For example, Jean-Pierre Delumeau acknowledges his father, the famous early modern historian, in his *Arezzo: Espace et sociétés* (Rome, 1996), xiv.

34 Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, xiii.

35 R. Étienne, *Tenos I. Le sanctuaire de Poséidon et d'Amphitrite* (Rome, 1986; *Béfar*, 263), unnumbered; other examples in *Béfar* 237, 285, 290.

36 At this place, the wife is often now the dedicatee of the book; a specific formal dedication can be added on the usual page.

37 For examples, see *Béfar* 162, 205, 211, 223, 229, 235, 236, 262, 282, 285, 289, 290, 292, 296.

38 Kaplan, *Adieu, 89*, 879.

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supported", adding the following comment: "as she herself was writing her thesis, she has accepted many *sacrifices* for my own work".[39]

Some twenty years ago, mentioning the family or some of its members was a "conventional" procedure.[40] It is now routine. This is clear from a review of Remi Lenoir's *Généalogie de la morale familiale* (2003). The reviewer writes that the author "mobilizes . . . the historical method in order to try to pull himself out from the familialist jumble and pathos. Not without having difficulties to pull himself out of them completely." At this point, he quotes a conversation with the author who confided: "I did not do that on purpose, but friends made me note that I dedicated this book to my son and acknowledged members of my family."[41] Lenoir is a sociologist; he uses an historical approach to escape the pathos that he sees pervading contemporary sociological discussion of the family. What is interesting is that he makes quite conventional acknowledgments to his family, thus falling unconsciously into the very pathos he is intent on avoiding. To add still another irony: Lenoir is a former disciple of Bourdieu, and as such has been trained to "objectify" social practices.

Family members and friends are mentioned for moral, affective or material support. Their names are sometimes followed by justifications for their inclusion, explaining how they contributed to the progress and the completion of the work: they provided financial means, allowed the author to devote himself to his research, created a pleasant and cheerful environment, gave a hand with material details. These many aids are not negligible at all, and it is fair to say thank you. The expression of gratitude can become something of an apology: one scholar confessed that his seemingly endless work on his book was "a burden" for his relatives.[42]

Clearly relatives and friends are not on the same footing with the players in the intellectual field. They belong to another world: the private sphere. It would have been possible to offer them private thanks. So why are these people publicly acknowledged? Moreover, as they tend to be mentioned by their first names—and this occurs in printed publications as well as in unpublished theses—the reader who does not belong to the author's little milieu is somewhat puzzled. I would have been this reader, stumped by the name Kola (also put, rather mysteriously, between brackets), if I had not been told that he was a dog, and if his master had

39 A. Tallon, *La France et le Concile de Trente (1518–1563)* (Rome, 1997; *Béfar* 295), 16 (italics are mine).

40 Eisenstein, *The Printing Press*, xx.

41 *Le Monde* (Nov. 21, 2003), x.

42 X. Lafon, *Villa maritima: Recherches sur les villas littorales de l'Italie romaine* (Rome, 2001; *Béfar* 307), 2.

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not explained why he was acknowledged: not for his skill in history, of course.[43] The question becomes insistent: why are these private actors given room in a place where they once had no place? Why are they given publicity? At work here is not a display of academic power. It is still a staging of the self, but in a mode that adds a different touch to the authorial image.

Acknowledgments are by their very nature banal: the same words return for the same favours done on the same occasions by the same kinds of people. Authors feel the need to put their own mark on a standard exercise. Mentioning names and situations referring to the private sphere is a sure way of singularizing one's acknowledgments. Another way to add this touch of originality and distinction is to resort to humour. Personal situations are a better and less risky place than professional ones for jokes and witticisms—one never knows . . . These "private" acknowledgments also convey a message to the reader: they tell him that the author is not any author, but an author different from the many others in the same field and, for this reason, an author to be read. They have still another function. The Western intellectual tradition tended to represent the scholar as a monk or a bookworm; some "professional" debts, for instance, towards the very many libraries visited, would confirm these representations. Private details soften an image that would otherwise be too severe by recalling the warm, pleasant environment in which the book was produced. They counterbalance the professional image; they do not cancel it. Moreover, evoking this pleasant environment, they seem to promise the reader that he is going to read something as pleasant. All the dullness of scholarship vanishes when one reads the following happy statement: "It has been particularly nice to have my father working in the North Library with me, where he would read me funny passages."[44] Last but not least, these private details admit the reader into the intimacy of the author, allow him to enter the "Saint des Saints" and to see the real place where fundamental ideas were born. It can be a morning family scene as depicted by Natalie Davis: "Listen, I used to say to my husband, as he was preparing the breakfast and I was reading the *New York Times*."[45] Private details and public persona do not exclude one another. They are part of the same scene.

## An imagined idyllic community

Like the Eden that the "contrechamp" reveals. Opposed to the tough academic world driven by self-interest, there is still another world where everything works

43 " . . . I wish to express my thanks to my family (and Kola)": P. Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, MD, 2003), xi.

44 Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, xiii.

45 In N. Davis, *Pour sauver sa vie: Les récits de pardon au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1988), quoted from G. Noiriel, *Sur la crise de l'histoire* (Paris, 1996), 305.

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well and smoothly as by a kind of internal grace. Authors progressed from one success to another, as in a triumphal march. Their research went easily from the first day in the library to the final publication. They got advice, information, scholarships and invitations. The people they met proved to be excellent. Each one did what he had to do in his own category. Supervisors supervised, colleagues sympathized, friends helped, libraries and archives communicated, publishers published. Moreover, each one did his best. Acknowledgments are full of "teachers and colleagues of extraordinary learning and generosity" and authors express their good fortune to have had "the most conscientious of supervisors", "the most patient of editors", without forgetting "the miraculous speed and accuracy of typists". Learning, erudition, help, assistance are not just great; they are "exceptional", "extraordinary", "incalculable", "immeasurable". Acknowledgments ignore difficulties and failures; conflicts hardly exist. In the very few cases I found, the negatives were blurred or a positive consequence was deduced.[46] They were even sublimated: the "often noisy presence" of the young Jean-Laurent, Guillaume and Aurore was presented by their father as "the best incentive to finish his thesis".[47] Acknowledgments depict a blessed world, which goes some way toward explaining their cheerful atmosphere.[48]

A counter-example—the *Disacknowledgments* that a student from the University of Santa Barbara wrote in 1999—is revealing. Instead of the customary thanks, Chris Brown put in his thesis a page beginning with these words: "I would like to offer special *Disacknowledgments* to the following degenerates for being an ever-present hindrance during my graduate career." The dean and the staff of the graduate division were labelled "fascists"; the entire management of the Davidson Library was blamed for giving students "incomprehensible fines" and for its "unwillingness to help" and "incompetence"; a professor was denounced for his "arrogance" and "cruel treatment"; the former governor of California was charged with "ineptitude" and, more concretely, with having "raised tuition fees

46 As did Orest Ranum when he acknowledged two people at the publishing company who "helped by being patient and friendly even when we disagreed as to how many pictures and maps the book should have" (quoted from the second edition of *Paris in the Age of Absolutism* [University Park, PA, 2002], 380). George Huppert used a very moderate language when he wrote in his acknowledgments: "Roland Mousnier cannot be left unmentioned, even if our brief encounters took on an adversary tone" (*Les Bourgeois Gentilshommes*, xi). Agnès Rouveret, in the acknowledgments to her *Histoire et imaginaire de la peinture ancienne (V^e siècle av. J. C.- I^er s. ap. J. C.)* (Rome, 1989; *Béfar* 274), mentioned the criticisms of one of the members of the jury, adding that they were not fully convincing; however, she considered them when she turned the thesis into a book (ix).

47 Lamboly, *Recherches sur les Messapiens*, x.

48 The cheerful dimension of acknowledgments was pointed out by Roberts, "On Acknowledgments", 16.

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fourfold since my first association with the university"; the UC Regents were accused of "corrupt management". Chris Brown had troubles. For four years he battled against his university in order, first, to get his degree and then to have his thesis shelved in the library. To support his claims he produced many documents that are more or less summarized in the aptly titled *Thanks For So Very Little* (2003).[49] In this text, which is more moderate than the *Disacknowledgments*, he offered a Bourdieu-like vision of the UCSB Department of Chemistry, with its dominants—the faculty—and its dominated—students and post-docs. His lab was a binary universe: on one side there was a professor able "to sell science", "to find funding" and to attract an important number of students by offering them financial security; on the other there was the "workforce" steadily doing research on "a hot topic" for the professor. This "power structure" compelled the ones to please the other, not to contradict him even at the expense of science. The *Disacknowledgements* of Chris Brown might be described as the revolt-cry of the "slave", of a "pure" being.

More concretely, they dramatize by contrast the process of idealization that acknowledgments represent. Even if they did not have to work in the lab of the UCSB Department of Chemistry, which Brown compared to a sweathouse, most researchers—senior as well as junior—did not have an easy time for the entire duration of their research: even the most fortunate met difficulties, for example, just in getting documents in an archive or a library. But at the end of the work, they decided not to mention problems, conflicts and failures and instead to depict a perfect world. Why? It would be simplistic to see here the ultimate proof of mere hypocrisy or complete alienation. It would be as reductive to interpret this attitude as the expression of an impossible dream. Turning things upside down or showing just their beautiful side, authors want to leave the image of a united, pacific and reconciled world, maybe just for a while—but the while that matters. Addressing the reader who belongs to the same world and shares the same values, they do not speak any more of individual strategies of power, but of the perfect harmony of a community where all contributed their best to the book that he is going to read. This imaginary community sometimes includes students, even to the extent of acknowledging that the "greatest debt" is to them.[50]

The people who are acknowledged display the highest qualities: intellectual ones, of course, but also moral ones such as benevolence, devotion, generosity, humanity, etc. These qualities belong to an ideal that took shape in the golden

49 Most documents on this affair can be found on the following websites: www.geocities.com/brown;www.disacknowledged.org (C. Brown's websites); www.thefire.org; wwww.ucsb.dailynexus.com (online version of a UCSB's student newspaper); www.ala.org (website of the American Library Association, which was a protagonist in the dispute).

50 G. Parker, *Europe in Crisis, 1598–1698* (London, 1990), 10.

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age of the Republic of Letters when learning became a common cause. The perfect scholar had to promote intellectual communication. The discourses of the modern, international scientific community strengthened this ideal. Each according to his capacities has to collaborate in the progress of learning.[51] This collaboration, implicit in any acknowledgments, is emphasized in some. Archaeologists such as the "Delphiens" who excavated in Delphi or the "Déliens" in Delos presented their individual books as "a contribution to a collective enterprise", "an expression of common efforts"; their own work would not have been possible without the labours and findings of their predecessors.[52] The French historian Daniel Roche stressed the "collective dimension" that his *thèse d'État*, the individual masterpiece *par excellence*, acquired from all those—colleagues, friends and students—who helped him.[53] The American anthropologist Edward Hall went further. Not only did he credit the "obvious contribution" of present and identified people, he also mentioned another group of scholars whose contribution, although "dissimulated", was no less important. Resorting to the mediaeval saying about the dwarfs standing upon the shoulders of giants, he celebrated his "spiritual ancestors", the long chain of scholars—dead and alive, known and unknown—who "contributed to the elaboration of his own thought".[54]

Acknowledgments stage the self, but as a member of a large body. They say that a book bearing the name of one author also has a collective dimension. To see here a hollow rhetoric, displaying an illusory and deceptive image of a community united in the quest of learning, would be wrong. That would ignore the power these words had for scholars and scientists in the darkest periods of history, for instance, after World War I or during the Cold War. It would lead us to see the intellectual sphere as a brutal world deprived of any feeling of humanity, and first of all of generosity.

## Counter-gifts

The word "generosity" is to be found in most acknowledgments, and sometimes recurs in the same text. "Among my colleagues and masters I wish

51 P. Dibon, "Communication in the *Respublica literaria*", *Regards sur la Hollande du siècle d'or* (Naples, 1990), 160–62; F. Waquet, "La République des Lettres: une idée européenne, d'Érasme à Stefan Zweig", in R. Deloince and G. Pajonk, eds., *Réseaux culturels européens: Des constructions variées au fil du temps* (Paris, 2003), 13–24.

52 See *Béfar* 138, 140, 157, 192, and for other excavation sites, 218, 219.

53 D. Roche, *Le siècle des Lumières en province: Académies et académiciens provinciaux, 1680–1789* (Paris/La Haye, 1978), 12. See also L. Dermigny, *La Chine et l'Occident: Le commerce à Canton au XVIII^e siècle, 1719–1833* (Paris, 1964), i; Lafon, *Villa maritima*, 1.

54 E. Hall, *The Dance of Life* (New York, 1983), foreword.

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to single out those who, in the last several years, have been most generous with their advice", an author wrote; after having nominally mentioned one of them, he added: "whose erudition and generosity may have helped me avoid many mistakes"; and the next paragraph was dedicated to "aid in a more tangible form", as he recalled the "generous aid provided over the years by the research boards and committees of . . . ".[55]

Another word is at least as frequent: "debts", and its adjectival form "indebted". Many authors begin their acknowledgments by mentioning the duration of their work and the numerous debts they have incurred. To provide one example among hundreds: "During these twenty years I have accumulated numerous debts of gratitude . . . " Acknowledgments are the place where these debts are "confessed", "paid", "reimbursed", and the author who did not do that would show himself ungrateful; in fact, "I would be very ungrateful if" is another recurrent formula in acknowledgments.[56] Some authors insist on the enormity of their debts. "In eight years of work on Scaliger I have run up many debts. I can repay none of them, of course; but it is a pleasure to acknowledge them here", confessed A. Grafton in a book he dedicated to the great Renaissance scholar. He then stressed the impossibility of his "repaying" the "endless courtesy and efficiency of the British Library's staff". He was "indebted beyond hope of redemption" to his supervisor and stood "indebted" to three scholars. Last but not least, he had "a vast debt" to Scaliger himself.[57] The words "generosity" and "debt" imply that a favour has been done, that something has been given and received: information, advice, scholarships, access to a collection, publication of the work, etc. Acknowledgments appear as a return for favours that have been done with generosity.

At this point we enter the world of the gift. In recent years, gift-giving has drawn a lot of attention from philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, economists and historians.[58] Jacques Derrida could have put a full stop to studies on this topic when in 1991 he published *Donner le temps*. Deconstructing the gift, he demonstrated its radical impossibility: a true, pure and altruistic gift does not and cannot exist; gifts are always poisoned. This extreme view has been challenged and

55 G. Huppert, *The Idea of Perfect History: Historical Erudition and Historical Philosophy in Renaissance France* (Chicago, 1970), v–vi.

56 A. Stroup, *A Company of Scientists: Botany, Patronage, and Community at the Seventeenth-Century Parisian Royal Academy of Sciences* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1990), xiii. Many examples with as many variations in *Béfar* 73, 101, 110, 116, 119, 125, 147, 148, 150, 158, 185, 218, 236, 237, 240, 243, 257, 296, 307.

57 A. Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship. I. Textual Criticism and Exegesis* (Oxford, 1983), viii–xi.

58 I shall examine these many works in a study on the intellectual ecology of the early modern and modern periods.

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widely rejected. There were in the past and there are in the present practices and behaviours that cannot be referred to commercial exchanges only. Gifts exist, and not only in primitive societies. Economists and sociologists have shown that gift-giving is "all-pervasive" today in our world in which market exchange and the pursuit of self-interest can be seen as dominating. They have insisted on the social role the gift performs: it contributes to the foundation of the social fabric.[59]

Natalie Davis has considered the social significance of gifts for sixteenth-century France. There were many kinds of gifts between people of similar or different status; they were voluntary or obligatory, calculated or made "with a free generosity and with little or no thought of return from the giver". This "gift register" existed alongside other relational modes—the mode of sales and the mode of coercion; and these several modes could be in competition, or in close contact, or could overlap. The academic world presented a most interesting example of interaction between gift- and sale-systems. University professors had stipends and other payments from the university; they also received fees from students for disputations and theses. In addition, students gave professors customary presents on special occasions; these gifts, which could be quite onerous, were not disguised payments. They referred to "the conviction that it was unseemly and somewhat unethical to deliver certain services only for a fixed payment or price". This conviction was based on "the old idea that knowledge came as a divine gift and should be reciprocated by gifts and gratitude". This "old idea" was alive and well in medieval universities; it was expressed in the aphorism *Scientia donum Dei est, unde vendi non potest* ("Knowledge is a gift of God; therefore it cannot be sold"), which was grounded on a biblical passage (Matthew 10:8: *Gratis accepistis, gratis date*—"freely ye have received: freely give").[60] Thirteenth-century canonists and theologians commented upon this aphorism in order to legitimate a remuneration for university professors; they distinguished knowledge (*scientia*), which could not be sold, from the work involved in teaching (*labor*), which could be measured in terms of salary and fees. This distinction, here roughly expressed, left intact the idea of knowledge as a divine gift and consequently of a non-saleable commodity. Medieval doctors also glossed Greek texts that expressed an antinomy between knowledge and money, and condemned a mercenary knowledge.[61]

59 I refer to works of the MAUSS (Mouvement anti-utilitariste dans les sciences sociales) and more precisely to Godbout, *The World of the Gift.*

60 N. Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison, WI, 2000), 131, 44, 47 (for successive quotations).

61 G. Post, K. Giocarinis, R. Kay, "The Medieval Heritage of a Humanistic Ideal: *Scientia donum Dei est, unde vendi non potest*", *Traditio* 11 (1955), 196–234.

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These texts constitute the starting point of the fascinating book by Marcel Hénaff on the *Prix de la vérité*. Socrates taught for free. He could accept presents, however, as a return for the gift he transmitted. He even had to do so, according to Aristotle, as knowledge is not measurable. The Sophists, who received money for imparting knowledge, won in the long run. Today, it is fully accepted that teaching and scientific research activities have to be not only remunerated but also evaluated on the market. Intellectual, as well as artistic, professions accept a compensation and the market conditions. But Marcel Hénaff notes that they also belong to a sphere other than the commercial one; they would not openly confess that the first and main goal of their productions is to make a profit (which producers of current consumer goods openly admit). Connected to a certain suspicion about money received for intellectual creations is a lasting conviction that there is here something immeasurable. "Something of the spirit of the gift remains in relations between intellectual professions and their public", Hénaff writes. And further: "A doubt subsists about the final triumph of the market in this domain. Something resists which has nothing to do with the rejection of modernity." The conception of a non-mercenary knowledge—a conception that rested on two of the most powerful traditions in the Western world, the Bible and the Greek classical texts—has not fully disappeared in the intellectual world. Some goods escape the market and are *hors-de-prix*, though Hénaff remains rather vague on this last point.[62]

The vagueness is due to an overly narrow approach to the intellectual sphere. Hénaff as well as Natalie Davis limited their scope to teaching and publishing activities.[63] The result is a dramatic reduction: the master–student relationship is just one among others, and books are not the most frequent mode of academic communication. Left aside were many other elements. "Our" acknowledgments reveal the more complex fabric of the intellectual world, composed of numerous other actors besides mentors and disciples, and of a wide range of forms of written and oral communication. Acknowledgments speak about information, advice and suggestions, etc. which were given by letter or, more frequently it seems, during personal or group discussions involving people who were not necessarily attached to each other in a vertical pedagogical link—the colleagues, for example, with whom one "shared lively and convivial lunch sessions".[64] These favours and others, such as allowing access to a collection, providing a recommendation,

62 M. Hénaff, *Le prix de la vérité: Le don, l'argent, la philosophie* (Paris, 2002), 385, 497 (for quotations).

63 Hénaff mentions research activities but *en passant* (ibid., 385).

64 A. La Vopa, *Fichte: The Self and the Calling of Philosophy, 1762–1799* (Cambridge, 2001), xii. On the place and function of orality in the intellectual world, see F. Waquet, *Parler comme un livre: L'oralité et le savoir, XVI^e-XX^e siècle* (Paris, 2003).

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giving a hand in proofreading and indexing, are not sold. They are the goods that are *hors-de-prix*. A huge part of what constitutes the "intellectual economy" is still communicated in the "gift mode". The generosity of those who give can be pure; it can also be calculated, even when it takes the form of intellectual pleasure. That does not matter here. I see no reason to question the reality of the gift that Derrida would have made in a conference dedicated to him. The editor of the proceedings, at least, was convinced of it; she ended her acknowledgments by thanking "the one who . . . *fully gave* his work, time, trust, friendship, Jacques Derrida".[65]

Acknowledgments allude to an indispensable generosity that also shapes the world of learning. By mentioning a name, with or without a specific compliment, they are the counter-gift for what has been received. The return is, of course, symbolic. It is nevertheless important, as a certain Steve taking part in an electronic chat in the wake of the Brown affair explained. "All sorts of people have helped the dissertor, usually with little or no recompense (certainly not what they would consider adequate if they were drawing up a balance sheet), and the least they can expect is a mention in the acknowledgements."[66] A more tangible counter-gift can follow: the author sends a copy of his book or an offprint of his article, generally with a written personal dedication. In the seventeenth century, a book sent in return was called in Greek *antidoron*,[67] which means literally counter-gift.

Gift-giving is the expression of a relational mode in the intellectual sphere where everything cannot be sold. It expresses the many kinds of help and support that structure this world. It is an integrative agent in a community where the inter-personal relation—that is, from one person to the other—retains all its importance. It reveals that the generosity of the one who knows or keeps the sources of knowledge is fundamental in the advancement of learning. At its best, gift-giving can be said to work, but Natalie Davis pointed out in her essay on sixteenth-century France that there were "gifts gone wrong".[68] One example is represented by gifts which, because they were too important, laid on the receiver a burden of obligation. Here the gift, instead of easing social relations, creates a painful feeling of subordination. Acknowledgments offer dramatic examples of gifts gone wrong: scholars confess the impossibility of their paying in full their debts, and of returning what they have received; they remain "obliged".[69] Gift-giving and the "power structure" are very close—"champ–contrechamp".

65 M.-L. Mallet, "Avant-propos", *Colloque de Cerisy. Le passage des frontières. Autour du travail de Jacques Derrida* (Paris, 1994), 16 (italics are mine).

66 www.mind-numbing.com/archives (website of an Oxford student; Dec. 2, 2002).

67 Dibon,"Communication", 169.

68 Davis, *The Gift*, chap. 5.

69 E.g. L. Auvray, *Les manuscrits de Dante des bibliothèques de France* (Paris, 1892; *Béfar* 56), iv–v.

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## CONCLUSION: "HORS-CHAMP"

In the conclusion of this essay, I would like to insist on the nature of the genre. Acknowledgments are a note of thanks. This is beyond any doubt. Just think of the many words and expressions that have gratitude as their meaning. The extreme politeness we find in acknowledgments happily contradicts the common opinion that people do not say thanks any more. Pessimists will think of the French saying "trop poli pour être honnête". A question arises here: does the act of thanking mean the same thing for the junior scholar clumsily confessing his incapacity to reimburse his debts and for a Collège de France professor concluding his acknowledgments with the cheerful proverb "qui paie ses dettes s'enrichit"?[70]

Beyond their function, acknowledgments reveal a quite complex discourse. Strategies of power coexist with generosity and intellectual pleasure; the staging of the self is intertwined with the affirmation of a collective enterprise in the advancement of learning. Acknowledgments say many different sorts of things, in combinations that vary according to personal idiosyncrasies and situations; these elements are not univocal and can take different meanings in each composition. Here, of course, a global analysis should be superseded by exemplification and micro-analysis. I shall take as my example the acknowledgments that Fernand Braudel wrote in 1946 in the *Méditerranée*. We need only consider the beginning and end of this forty-line passage, where everything seems to have been carefully weighed. The first sentence is for his masters at the Sorbonne, but with an immediate restriction—"the Sorbonne of twenty-five years ago" (Braudel met huge opposition from the Sorbonne, where he could not become a professor); these masters of the past are simply enumerated and a conventional compliment is paid only to one of them. The last paragraph (and not sentence) is for Lucien Febvre; it follows one briefer paragraph devoted to Marc Bloch and the *Annales*; the tone is different, personal, and reveals his close link, part science and part affection, with the then most important French historian. This paragraph yields its full sense when we remember that in 1942 Febvre dedicated his *Rabelais* "À Fernand Braudel, en espérance". In the very few lines I considered, Braudel settles accounts, pays his debts, does homage and expresses an almost filial feeling. The rest—that is, the main part of these acknowledgments—offers other, overlapping agendas with the display of a network wider than the Mediterranean Sea, the evocation of friendships born during captivity, the recollection of the years spent in Algiers with the lasting memory of the splendid lectures delivered there by Pirenne, etc. Acknowledgments mirror the complexity of the academic world;

70 D. Roche, *Humeurs vagabondes: De la circulation des hommes et de l'utilité des voyages* (Paris, 2003), 15.

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the picture is much more composite than the problematics of the "champ" would lead us to believe.

My focus has been on acknowledgments because these elements of texts have never been studied. Their synergy with other paratextual elements (blurb, preface and dedication) should be explored. Authorities who are acknowledged can write the prefaces of the books or the eulogies called "Advanced Praise" that are printed in the blurb.[71] There are many cases of acknowledgments ending with a dedication to the last person to be mentioned; this dedication can be "repeated" on a special page. Moreover, each paratextual element is not univocal, and neither are their many combinations. The dedication can convey respect, or affection, or both. A mention in acknowledgments can be a mere redundancy; but it can also have a specific function, as one scholar explained in his acknowledgments. He had no words to express all that he owed to his two mentors in the history of Delphi—even if he wrote ten lines about his debt. He preferred to dedicate his book to them, recalling that in ancient Greece, humble works also were dedicated to the God of Delphi: "bearing his mark, they claimed the honor of having been inspired and accepted by him, which engaged a little of his responsibility and then gave them some prestige".[72] These remarks stress the complexity of the "paratext", of this zone of transaction surrounding the text and playing a part in its reception.

At this point we are led to consider what in cinematography is called "hors-champ" (off screen). First, the reader who reads acknowledgments. It is clear that external sources have to be consulted in order to know how acknowledgments are read—as their author wished, or not? I'll give two examples of . . . failures. As is often the case in history, they are better documented than what goes easily. Carnap, in his masterpiece *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*, acknowledged the debt he owed to Wittgenstein. The reaction was not what he expected. Wittgenstein accused Carnap of plagiarism and responded: "I don't mind a small boy's stealing my apples, but I do mind his saying that I gave them to him."[73] More recently, the reviewer of a book of history was not at all impressed by the many names listed in the acknowledgments, or by the glowing blurb written by one of them;

71 For the first case, see M. Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras: L'antiprotestantisme en France de 1814 à 1870* (Paris, 1998): the authors of the "Préface" and "Avant-propos"—the supervisor of the thesis and a member of the "jury"—are warmly thanked in the "Remerciements" (xxv). For the second one, see A. Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800* (Cambridge, MA, 1991): two people eulogizing the book on the blurb are mentioned with "warm thanks" in the Acknowledgments for "their comments on the original plan of this work" (322).

72 P. de La Coste-Messelière, *Au musée de Delphes: Recherches sur quelques monuments archaïques et leur décor sculpté* (Paris, 1936; *Béfar* 138), ii.

73 D. Edmonds and J. Eidinow, *Wittgenstein's Poker: The Story of a Ten-Minute Argument Between Two Great Philosophers* (New York, 2002), 160.

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he concluded his review with the comment that the book was "needlessly marred by some bad habits of academic publishing", among others "the ludicrously inflated assessment supplied by one of the fifty-four people thanked by the author".[74]

A second question arises: how do acknowledgments shape the reading of a book? Many colleagues have told me that acknowledgments were one of the first things they read when they opened a book; they even searched them out. Did they immediately forget what they had read with such interest? An English librarian confessed that reading acknowledgments was a welcome and useful break when cataloguing books: she used it as an easy way to learn about the scholarly milieu of her work.[75] An anonymous referee of this essay who proved to be a keen reader of acknowledgments was more explicit:

> Like most others (I suspect), I always find myself looking at this section first when I open a book, and not just because it happens to come at the beginning. I find that it helps to orientate myself with respect to the coming and presently unknown work. For example, it allows me to understand something of the community that lies behind it, and equally important, the limits of that community. Whom has the author spoken to, and whom not? What kinds of intellectual commitments are implicit in the groups of names recited here? Acknowledgements hint at answers to these important questions very quickly. They are certainly no less germane than, say, the table of contents. And since I never have time to read a whole book (again, I suspect, like most others), their importance is only exacerbated.[76]

For this scholar in a hurry, the acknowledgments in *Béfar* vol. 259 could be decoded in the twinkling of an eye: most names refer to researchers of the École des hautes études en sciences sociales and to the editorial board of *Quaderni storici*; they clearly define the community the author belongs to, and make it immediately apparent that this is a work in historical anthropology.[77]

The other people left "hors-champ" in this article are the scholars who do not write acknowledgments. Why do a minority of authors not write this usual and almost mandatory piece? For fear of corruption, as the present *Promotiereglement* of the University of Leiden would hint?[78] For the sake of originality, as Adrien Baillet pointed out as early as 1696?[79] Maybe Umberto Eco was right when

74 G. Robb, "Adulterers All", *TLS* (Nov. 28, 2003), 9.

75 Personal communication of Jacqueline Glomski.

76 The outside reader kindly granted special permission to quote from his report.

77 Delille, *Famille et propriété dans le Royaume de Naples*.

78 See the website www.promoveren.leidenuniv.nl (art. 30, 4).

79 A. Baillet, after having acknowledged all the people who helped him, commented: "Maybe a more sagacious author would have dissimulated all these great aids in order to look more original to his readers" (*La vie de Monsieur Des-Cartes*, xxxv).

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he remarked in a pastiche: "It can sometimes happen that a scholar, his task completed, discovers that he has no one to thank. Never mind. He will invent some debts. Research without indebtedness is suspect."[80] This last observation would have been a powerful inducement to thank all the colleagues and friends on both sides of the Atlantic who have given me help most generously—if I had not already intended to do so.

80 U. Eco, *How to Travel with a Salmon and Other Essays* (1992), trans. W. Weaver (San Diego, CA, 1994), 188.

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