

Writing as Relationship

Kenneth J. Gergen

To be able to dance with one's feet, with
concepts with words: need I still add
that one must be able to do it with the
pen too?

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

Primary words do not signify things but
intimate relations.

Martin Buber, *I and Thou*

A variety of disparate dialogues usher into presence the communal - as opposed to the cognitive and expressive - dimension of discourse. From ordinary language and speech act philosophy, the pragmatic turn in semiotic theory, ethnomethodology and linguistic sociology, the renaissance in rhetorical analysis, contemporary discourse analysis, and critical concerns with hegemonic ideologies and power/knowledge relations, we gain increasing appreciation of the functions of linguistic form in shaping the contours of cultural life. Traditional concerns with syntax and semantics give way to what is performed with and for others in the process of conveying content. My attempt here is to extend these concerns into the realm of writing, and in particular to explore the relational implications of various genres of scholarly inscription. As I shall propose, writing is fundamentally an action within a relationship; it is within relationship that writing gains its meaning and significance, and our manner of writing simultaneously invites certain forms of relationship while discouraging or suppressing others.

If writing is constitutive of relationship, it behooves us to ask what forms of relationship are invited by existing traditions of scholarly writing? How do such forms of writing affect relations among colleagues, between participants in disparate scholarly communities, and between teachers and students? Of specific relevance to the present colloquy, how do these traditions of inscription contribute to the development of disciplinarity; what do they harbor as potentials for breaking the boundaries now separating the disciplines? And more broadly, how do existing forms of writing affect the society more generally? To appreciate what is at stake, consider John Shotter's commentary on contemporary academic exchange:

Is there a kind of violence at work in intellectual debates and discussions; in the university colloquium, seminar, or classroom; in academic texts? Is there something implicit in our very ways of us relating ourselves to each other in academic life in present times that makes us fear each other? Is there something in our current circumstances that makes us (or at least some of us) anxious about owning certain of our own words, or taking a stand? Speaking from my own experience, I think there

is. (1)

If forms of writing do contribute to the kinds of social worlds we inhabit, how does this process occur? In the present case I will be particularly concerned with the ontological and valuational presumptions - along with forms of social organization - implied by given genres of writing. As I shall propose our styles of inscription not only carry with them conceptions of the person, but as well images of ideal character - that to which we may properly aspire. Where content or topoi may change radically across time, forms of inscription often remain stable. Thus, for example, while in recent decades scientific psychology has undergone a major change in its emphasis on behavioral as opposed to cognitive models of human functioning, the forms of scientific writing have remained relatively obdurate. And this mode of inscription not only harbors a conception of the ideal person, but also establishes a particular condition of relationship - between writers and readers, and by implication, for us all.

The present offering takes the form of a narrative in three parts. As I shall first propose, our major traditions of writing within the social sciences were born of a particular historical ethos, and their societal implications are today deeply troubling. Having thus sown the seeds of drama, I will then explore several forms of writing that now begin to subvert the debilitating effects of our longstanding traditions. In the final part I shall touch on developments in representational practices that suggest bold revisions - both to our conceptions of ideal human subjects, and our modes of relationship.

Before proceeding, three caveats are required. First, my chief focus is on writing traditions within the social sciences. While I do believe there are significant implications for both the natural sciences and humanities, there are particular circumstances within these latter realms that prohibit easy generalization. Further, in considering the pedagogical implications of these remarks, I am presuming at least a rudimentary level of skill has been achieved by students in question. My remarks should not be construed as antithetical to the development of at least minimal skills in grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and so on. Finally, while I will be critical of our major traditions of writing, this is not to argue for their wholesale abandonment. My purpose here is to champion an expansion of our potentials for representation and resulting relationship, not a diminution.

Encapsulated Selves: Privilege and Pejoration

In significant degree the social sciences are progeny of Enlightenment discourse, derived from presumptions about the nature of human knowledge, cosmological order, and the potentials for human betterment through systematic inquiry. Most significant for present purposes, important elements of the Enlightenment conception of human functioning make their way into the forms of writing now prevailing in the sciences. With respect to images of human functioning, I am speaking here of the dualist tradition in which we presume the existence of individual minds capable of acquiring knowledge about the surrounding material world. (2) The central ingredient

of the mental world, from Descartes to contemporary cognitive psychology, is the capacity for rational thought (now "information processing"). In particular, when reason is linked with the sensory capacities of observation, the individual can accumulate objective knowledge of the world. Objectivity is impaired to the extent that desire, motivation or emotion (all expressions of one's material or animal existence) alter the processes of reason and observation. It is on the basis of individual knowledge that the common person can rise above the animal kingdom, disclaim the authority of kings and popes, and survive - if not thrive - in the material world.

This view of individual functioning also carries with it significant implications for our forms of scholarly writing. As many have noted, Enlightenment conceptions of objective, value free knowledge contributed to the decline of rhetorical study. In a world where knowledge is the byproduct of careful observation and impeccable reasoning, the arts of persuasion are deligitimated ("mere rhetoric.") Seduction, whether by words or bodily display, leads to unsoundness of mind. More importantly for present purposes, the Enlightenment conception of mind is reinstated in primary features of social science writing. Of particular prominence are the desiderata of verbal economy, logical coherence, clarity, dispassionate demeanor, comprehensiveness, and certainty. First, the suspicion of rhetoric and the demand for efficient thought conduce to Occam's insistence on "no unnecessary words." Because logical minds contain no inconsistencies, coherence of argument is essential. And, inasmuch as the knowledgeable mind is discerning, clarity of exposition is required. With desires and values suspect, a plain, flat, non-emotive style is prized. With vision of cumulative knowledge in place, then comprehensiveness of one's account is at a premium, and certainty (or the reduction of the realm of the obscure) esteemed. It is not the well wrought urn that serves as the guiding metaphor of social science writing, but something more akin to the perfectly appointed gunboat - powerful in resources, flawless in operation, insistent on purpose, and beyond defeat by anyone. Consider, a few specimens:

- If P's only want in C at t is to achieve G, and if P believes that trying to do A in C at t is the alternative with the highest likelihood of leading to G, if P believes that he or she can perform A in C at t, and if the alternative acts that P believes he or she can perform are believed by P not to involve less exertion than A, then P will try to do A in C at t. (3)
- It is also predicted that when silence (in communication) occurs, it will be differentially assigned, on the basis of the rules as either (i) a gap before subsequent application of Rules 1(b) or 1 (c), or (ii) a lapse on the non-application of Rules 1 (a) (b) and (c), or (iii) a selected next speaker's significant (or attributable) silence after the application of Rule 1(a). (4)
- People who were induced to recall their own behaviors relevant to a personality trait were not faster than people who merely defined the word to answer a subsequent question about whether they had the trait (Klein et al., 1989). Had recalling specific behavioral instances been part of the self-assessment process, the second question would have been answered faster

after autobiographical memories than after a semantic task. (5)

It should be pointed out that the social sciences are scarcely univocal in their preferred forms of enunciation. There are numerous traditions extant, with myriad sub-disciplinary tributaries. For example, in certain realms of the social sciences - primarily humanist, romanticist and idealist - there remain strong elements of pre-modern genres of writing. (6) Yet, I propose whether modern or pre-modern in posture, these various forms of writing share important similarities in their relational implications. At the outset, they sustain the presumption of the bounded mind - whether rational or inspired. The words find their origin within the psychological interior and serve as conduits for rendering the interior manifest. In this sense, the forms of writing create and sustain a social world of division. The writing reflects the contents of one's own mind, distinct from the mind of those who have preceded (and thus the severe sanctions against plagiarism), along with those who may subsequently read. The writer is the Ursprung, the seer, the knower.

In addition to the implicit division of society into autonomous entities, there is a structure of privilege built into the form of writing. Such writing represents itself as an "advance in knowledge," that which has never yet been said, that which renders one's own discernment superior to others. In contrast, the audience is positioned by the writing as ignorant or unaware. The rhetor never addresses an equally enlightened colleague. The form of address is that of revelation - of truth, reason, or inspired insight; a reader is thus required who "has yet to see." (The present writing is exemplary; the manner of my articulation creates me as a knowledgeable source, separated from the reader who is interpellated as uninformed about these matters.) The hierarchy of privilege is also, by implication, an order of adequacy. When writing represents itself as knowledge, so is the writer defined as adequate (rational, discerning, advanced), and the audience as less so. In effect, we inherit and sustain forms of writing that contribute to alienated relationships, the creation of inadequacy, along with an atomistic and hierarchical conception of society.

How then do our traditional forms of writing affect the structuring of academic disciplines and the potentials for crossing boundaries? To the extent that our forms of writing construct a world of bounded and alienated being, the individual writer finds him/herself in a condition of potential solipsism. There is no means of verifying the accuracy or rationality of his or her cerebration, no means of gaging its value as a contribution to knowledge. Or more broadly, the solitary individual lacks the capacity for self-authentication. Required, then, is a responsive audience, but more specifically an audience that adheres to the role of the ignorant, and largely owing to this state of ignorance, will respond appreciatively. It is largely through the existence of the appreciative audience, either real or imaginary, that the scholar is authenticated as an acceptable human being. Of course, by virtue of curricular demands one may secure a certain degree of approbation from one's students. Further, because colleagues understand the cultural rules of reciprocity, they may offer a certain degree of support: it is largely by providing affirmation, that one can secure it in return. Thus, by rationalizing a certain form of curriculum, and building a network of

professional support, the isolated individual achieves a sense of value. Or more broadly, in order to sustain one's conception of self as a worthy being (within the Enlightenment mold), something approximating an academic discipline is required.

This centripetal lurch is aggravated by further factors. Self-authentication, as we have seen, typically (though not inevitably) requires an audience willing to accede to a role of subservience. Yet, for a scholar to fill this role is simultaneously to define him/herself as an incomplete vessel, unable to "deliberate for him/herself." Thus, the scholarly landscape is populated with those set against the writer (unless deceased or apostatized). For the mature scholar, critique is thus the principle form of rejoinder to one's colleagues. Inhering in our common forms of scholarly exchange, then, is essentially a vast undermining of confidence in individual worth. The scholar is confronted by an essential condition of self-uncertainty: "who am I, what is my value, how good am I?" To relieve the uncertainty, the cycle is repeated - new inquiry, new writing - but now in a more advanced form. New concepts may be constructed, unknown works brought to light, more obscure vocabulary extricated, new populations explored - in effect, increasing the range of "what there is to know." Such increments enhance one's position in the hierarchy, and in turn, send others into a spin of refutation and refurbishment. Rapidly the conceptual, terminological, and methodological world expands, and to maintain the sense of individual value, there is little means of exiting the process. It is through continuous reading, critique, and re-creation that the shaky grasp on worthy being is maintained. At the same time an otherwise impenetrable wall of words is erected by the community. Should the stranger struggle to enter this house of language, and employ the discourse with less facility, he or she risks derision. Contained within our mode of writing is thus our form of academic life and a telos of disciplinary separation.

Connective Writing: Opening to the Other

How, then, do we write ourselves into our texts
with intellectual and spiritual integrity? How do
we nurture our own voices, our own
individualities, and the same time lay claim to
"knowing" something?

Laurel Richardson, *Fields of Play*

Over the past decade I have become increasingly sensitive to these issues, and in my own writing have searched for means of breaking the confines of tradition. There is professional risk attached, and I have not always been able to "find my voice" in the experimentation. I have also been fascinated by the brave efforts of many others to open the door to new modes of expression in the social sciences - and thus to new forms of relationship. Especially relevant to my present concerns are writers who have tried to foster a more richly laminated relationship with the reader. Rather than positioning themselves as fully rational agents, bounded, and superior, the effect of these writings is to generate a more recognizably human persona, one to whom the reader may sense a shift from the division of me vs. you to "the two of us." In terms

of the Enlightenment conception of the person, such writings reasserts the significance of the otherwise marginalized domains of the psyche: desire, emotion, bodily sensation. Carolyn Bochner captures the spirit of such writing when she speaks of her writing on the mother-daughter relationship as "showing the connections among the seasons of a woman's life and encouraging readers to sense what I am feeling as well as hear what I am thinking. And to express their own feelings and think about their own experiences." (7)

Here is but one example from a steadily expanding genre -sociologist, Carol Ronai detailing aspects of what it is like to be parented by the mentally retarded:

I resent the imperative to pretend that all is normal with my family, an imperative that is enforced by silence, secrecy, and "you don't talk about this to anyone" rhetoric. Our pretense is designed to make events flow smoothly, but it doesn't work. Everyone is plastic and fake around my mother, including me. Why? Because no one has told her to her face that she is retarded. We say we don't want to upset her. I don't think we are ready to deal with her reaction to the truth.... Because of (my mother) and because of how the family as a unit has chosen to deal with the problem, I have compartmentalized a whole segment of my life into a lie (8).

In a variant on this auto-ethnographic account, sociologist Karen Fox fashions two, first-person narratives derived from interviews with a child sexual abuser (Ben) and his victimized step-daughter (Sherry) (9). The author simultaneously adds her own voice to the mix, as she can also speak knowingly as a victim of childhood sexual abuse. The individual voices are arrayed three columns of consecutive expression:

Ben-Sex Offender

I love her, you know. You see
we really have a good relationship.
She loves me, she told me that.

Karen-Researcher

I want to believe Ben. I guess.
I've always hoped that I meant
something to my abuser.
that he really did love me;
that he really did feel I was
special.

Sherry-Victim

I never felt romantic love for
him. That area disgusts me....I've had
feelings of love for him, like for a
father. (10)

Fox's triadic form of writing not only inserts a personal (and simultaneously

"knowing") voice into the account, but creates a certain diffusion of identity. She makes it clear in her work that she has selected and refashioned the narratives of Ben and Sherry; in doing so she also colors these voices with her own. The writer thus expands for us as readers; the unified and coherent personality coveted by the modernist tradition gives way to multi-faceted being. Further, these facets contain other voices, just as we may now ingest the voice of the writer. Still other writers have been more frontal in their display of their polyvocal character. One of the earliest and most provocative adventures is represented Michael Mulkey's 1985 volume, The Word and the World. (11) The work is particularly interesting, as it demonstrates how abstract theory - virtually a private reserve of modernist formalism - can be rendered personal. For example, in the introductory chapter the voice of a querulous interlocutor is interspersed throughout. The expository Mulkey speaks formally of "extending the range of analytical discourse to include forms not previously considered appropriate." (12) Mulkey as the impious Interlocutor replies *"That sounds very attractive in principle, but it ignores the important distinction between fact and fiction..."* (13) Mulkey goes on to explain to the interlocutor that even within science, "what is fact for one (scientist) is no more than fiction for the other." (14) The interlocutor rebuts, *"Aren't we in danger of confusing two different meanings of 'fiction?'..."* Later chapters include an exchange of correspondence between Marks and Spencer, letters from these individuals to Mulkey himself, and a discussion among a group of inebriated participants at the Nobel ceremonies.

Adopting multiple voices isn't the only way to remove the restraints of singularity and invite the reader into a richer relationship. Living a normal, complex life also means that most of us possess the potential for participating in a range of different genres. I was first struck with the power of genre multiplicity in listening to a presentation by the African American theorist, Cornel West. West held me in thrall as he moved deftly mixed the rhetorics of formal theory, middle class straight talk, and the argot of the black preacher. Where one voice didn't reach me, another did; the combined force was enormously compelling. In terms of written work, I have also been spellbound by Stephen Tyler's 1987 book, The Unspeakable. (15) Like Mulkey, Tyler wishes to advance a range of theoretical ideas. But in generating these word/pictures Tyler draws from a rich palette of genres. For example, in one attempt to dislodge the scientific view of language as carrying specific meaning (and therefore transparently revealing truth), Tyler playfully deconstructs a phrase from semiotics ("movement along the syntagmatic axis...") by showing that when the meanings of each word are fully traced, the phrase actually means, "the second world war pitted the anally fixated Germans against the orally fixated British." In a mirthful burst, Tyler then rapidly heaps one discursive tradition on another to animate the argument:

The simultaneity of paradigmatic implication interrupts the urgent forward flow of signifiers in the singularity of time. Don't follow forking paths! Don't fork! Get thee behind me Borges! Time marches on! (16)

If this were not sufficient, I found the final lines of the chapter moved me from into a

register of rapture. Weren't these echoes, after all, of all that I loved about 19th century romanticist poetry:

Beneath the glimmering boreal light, mirrored polar ice groans and heaves, the flame flickers feebly on the altar hearth, in the later heart, into the moldy breathing darkness of the anti'podal night. (17)

What has happened here to the traditional criteria of excellence in scientific writing? Somehow as the personhood of the author expands in dimension these criteria seem to diminish in importance. For example, there is little demand in these writings for verbal economy; is it possible that austere writing generates the sense of diminished personhood? These writings are anything but dispassionate; isn't this superior to hiding one's investments beneath a misleading cloak of neutrality? Nor is there a strong demand placed on logical coherence; in fact, polyvocal writing stands as a critique of the criterion itself. In these writings clarity and certainty of the traditional variety give way to ambiguity and ambivalence; in reaching for a full relationship through writing there is no "comprehensive account" for space must always remain for the added voice of the reader.

Most important than what is missing in these experiments is what they create. As I experience them, they seem to strike up a different form of relationship than what I have commonly encountered. Rather than the cold, brittle, and intrusive rationality of the autonomous other, I often find warmth, spontaneity, and the admission of foibles - all of which draw me to the writer. It is not his/her position as against my seeming ignorance or against the position that I must defend in my name, but rather we find here an invitation to something akin to a shared subjectivity. By writing in the fullness of the first person I as reader am invited to imagine myself as the writer, to feel and think with. Thus the boundary between author and reader is diminished. Further, with the substantial reliance on affectively charged language - discourse of values, desires, emotions and spirit - I come to experience the writing in a different way; unlike my reaction to traditional writing, I may come to experience my entire body joining with the words. Further, the sense of hierarchy and competition induced by traditional writing also subsides. With reasoned argument, the dimension of superiority/inferiority is always at hand; however, when you speak from experience we are likely to participate as equals. With the admission of foibles (such as personal bias), I am no longer positioned as an inferior; with the expression of multiplicity I am no longer so protective of my own incoherences. We are not competitors in this world of inscription but linked in the project of inquiry.

I am also struck by the way these iconoclastic adventures affect my sense of disciplinary boundaries. By writing in a way that gives me the sense of the writer as a full person, concern with disciplines seems thrust aside. The writer first of all seems to be a human being engaged in inquiry; that he or she happened to have a PhD in a given area seemed quite secondary. Much the same subversion of disciplinarity occurs when an author moves toward polyvocality and/or multiple genres. When writers represent themselves as collectivities, how should I go about identifying their

"true discipline?" And, if I resonate with one or more of their voices, why should I care?

Relational Representation

We then no longer need...the "endless safety" of ideologies but prize the "needless risk" of acting and interacting.

Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theater*

The concrete language of the theater can fascinate and ensnare the organs. It flows into sensibility. It liberates a new lyricism of gesture which, by its precipitation or its amplitude in the air, ends by surpassing the lyricism of words. It ultimately breaks away from the intellectual subjugation of language...

Anton Artuad, *Theater of the Absurd*

Whose words are my fingers now tapping into place? Certainly not my own. If they were mine alone would they even qualify as words? Would they not be nonsense? Is it possible that my words are, then, borrowed from others - and I but a counterfeit personality? As Mikhail Bakhtin might put it, each moment of speaking is a form of ventriloquation. But this answer cannot suffice, for we should soon find ourselves spinning into infinite regress. If my words are those of others, where indeed did they acquire them? From others? Ah, now we are in for it...No, these words - if they are to be meaningful at all - must be born within relationship. Not mine, not yours, but ours...and not ours alone...all playing the game of language together but without an ultimate referee, generating endless variations on a themes that are themselves transposed by the variations. I make no sense without you, nor you without me. And if this is so, then what are we to make of these pronouns, "I" and "you?" Are they not misleading, creating artificial distance and disconnection? No, we are not one: "one" is itself a defection. But we may pay homage to that primordial process of relationship to which we owe all possibilities of you, me, and us, and without which there would indeed be no sense of the real or the good, no reason for writing at all.

How can our modes of representation bring relatedness itself into common consciousness? In exploring alternative forms of writing, so do we open the door to new modes of relationship. Thus to hammer out forms of relational representation may bring into being new forms of action. Distance, alienation, competition, hierarchy...all may recede. In their place we might hope for relational dances that celebrate communion, invite exploration without fear, and enable a conjoint construction of better worlds. (I fear the words now become inflated, naively optimistic, sophomorically idealistic...but then again, if we are to live in meanings of

our own making, why not chose zest?)

Let's sample a few possibilities, for example, dialogic writing. Rather than writing as a singular agent, controlling the meaning, defending the sanctuary of self, why not write with others, and to do so in a way that there is no singular message, but a weaving of disparate strands to generate a whole, complex tapestry? Here is an excerpt from one such exploration, a triologue, in which I (in my scholarly role) join two practicing therapists (Lynn and Harlene) to speak out against a new movement in managed care in which therapists are to diagnose illness of relationship. Most of our conversation has been an attack on diagnostics. Here we begin here to reflect on our conversation:

KJG:One hope that the three of us shared in this effort, was that the triologue as a form of writing would itself demonstrate some of the advantages of a constructionist orientation over relational diagnosis. What happens if we depart from monologue (which parallels the singular voice of diagnostic labeling practices) and approach a multi-vocal conversation (favored by the constructionist)? In some degree I think we have made good on this hope, inasmuch as each of us has brought a unique voice to the table, drawing from different experiences, relationships, and literatures. Our case is richer by virtue of our joint-participation. At the same time, because there is so much general agreement among us, the triologic form hasn't blossomed in fullest degree. We have not yet cashed in on its catalytic potential.

To explore this possibility, I want to focus on a point of disagreement. How can we treat conflict within this conversational space in a way that is different from a monological orientation (where the interlocutor typically shields internal conflicts in favor of achieving full coherence)? The fact is that I do not in the case of diagnostics favor Lynn's preference for joining "what is already in place." As she points out, "the process of definition is the primary framing act of any kind of therapy or consultation," and, by virtue of our various critiques, proposes to multiply the range of definitions, even to include those of the clients themselves...

Now I realize that it is perhaps easier for me to take this strong position, because I am not a therapist and do not depend on maintaining the therapeutic traditions for my livelihood...

HA: Ken suggests that our triologue has not created the catalytic potential that he hoped to achieve. For me, it has created more thoughts than my written words reveal. I have more of a dialogue in my head about diagnosis, and I frequently bring the issues of diagnosis into my conversations with colleagues and students. As in therapy, is the catalytic potential ever visible? Can our words on paper further the dialogue about diagnosis for others? I hope so.

I will tell a story about a case that vividly illustrates the complexities of human problems and how diagnosis and diagnosis driven treatment can oversimplify and

exacerbate them...

LH: It does seem that the conversation is now taking us into new spaces. The question I have is whether the shift would have happened if I had not "joined the opposition" or if Ken had not chosen to "disagree"? If we had used a debate format from the outset, with each person taking a different side, could we have reached this point earlier? Catherine Bateson said at a recent conference that to have the kind of improvisational conversation she finds useful, people first have to establish that they have a common code. So perhaps it is a matter of stages. What do the two of you think?

In response to Harlene's last comments it seems to me that therapists struggling to find a niche in managed care apparently see no other way out but to stay within the diagnostic framework. Although I have opted out of this framework. I felt that I should put myself back in to represent their "side." But I think Harlene is right to say that this shift toward the medical metaphor not only distances us from our customers but makes us less effective... (18)

To be sure, the triologue has its imperfections. But what inspired me in this effort was the fact that I was able to work together with professional practitioners, subverting the otherwise self-serving binary of "pure" vs. "applied." By layering our voices in this way, a far more powerful case could be made, and yet a case that also admitted its incapacity to grasp the whole - much the same as we were arguing in the case of diagnosis. Further, I learned from the writing; it was not a matter of articulating a position already held, but of adding complexity to my understanding through interchange. And as well, the process itself helped to generate bonds that continue to be nurturing and productive. I have now introduced dialogic writing projects into several of my classes, and with occasionally stunning results. To write from within the context of on-going conversation grants a sense of importance to one's contributions: one writes to others who rely on him/her to sustain and expand the discussion. Further, students are freed to employ wide-ranging genres - not only academic formalities, but street talk, intimate talk, irony, humor and more. The composite breathes life into the relationship, and creates a sense of excitement: the process has not been prefigured.

One interesting feature of dialogic writing is its consciousness of address. Rather than the impersonal form of address so characteristic of traditional social science writing (presuming a single knower speaking outward to a faceless community of the unknowing) dialogic writing is "for someone" in particular - namely one's interlocutor. In this sense, the writing calls attention to its performative or illocutionary character; we see it more clearly as a constituent of an ongoing social practice. This performative feature may be accentuated in many different forms of discourse. Some courageous social scientists experiment, for example, with poetic forms of inscription. While not addressed in the same degree as dialogic writing, poetic writing is performed for an audience, and typically in such a way as to invite others into a richer and more fully embodied relationship. To illustrate, here feminist

scholar, Laurel Richardson, reflects on the nature of her own scientific writing:

While I was Writing a Book

my son, the elder, went crazy
my son, the younger, went sad
nixon resigned
the saudis embargoed
rhodesia somethinged
and my dishwasher failed

my sister, the elder, hemorrhaged
my brother didn't speak to me
my ex gurued and overdosed
hemlines fell and rose
texans defeated the e.r.a.
and my oil gaskets leaked

my friend, the newest, grew tumors
my neighbor to the right was shot
cincinnati censured sin
and my dracena plant rotted

I was busy. (19)

The poem is especially engaging in its evocation of academic writing as a form of disconnection, a withdrawal from the swim of particulars that otherwise make up a life. At the same time, while poetry is not specifically addressed, it typically functions to draw readers into a more intimate relationship with the author. What we presume to be deep "inside" the writer, is turned outward for the reader to explore and possibly ingest. The writing implores the recognition of "me too." In a related vein, a small number of innovative ethnographers now experiment with ways of rendering the words of those under study in poetic form. The attempt here is to "portray the essences" of people's accounts of their lives, but to do so in a way that expresses the feelings that "the native" evokes in the ethnographer. (20) Through poetics the ethnographer prepares the way for a similar state in the reader. Speaker-scholar-reader all move toward a unifying subjectivity.

If you scan the dialogic writing illustrated above, you also see that it resembles theatrical script. In a sense the three of us have written a small, though somewhat flat, piece of theater. With the performative characteristic made salient, as in the case of poetic variation, it is but a small step to exploring the possibilities of scholarship as theatrical performance. The relational implications are also compelling. To achieve dramatic effects typically entails far more than words. Strong theater often requires the full coordination of movement, light, sound, objects, and scenery - as well as a rarefied relationship between actors and audience. In comparison to theater, writing is minimalist relationship. Perhaps the key figure in developing a rationale for

considering theater as a vehicle of scholarly expression was Victor Turner (21). As Turner proposed, ethnographic documentation (including film) "fail to communicate much of what it means to be a member of the society filmed. The more adequate mode of understanding would be generated by "turning the more interesting portions of ethnographics in to playscripts, then acting them out in class, and finally turning back to ethnographies armed with the understanding that comes from 'getting inside the skin' of members of other cultures. (22) " The pedagogical implications of theatrical participation have now become well developed in writings on performance studies. (23) Gay and lesbian groups, in particular, have pressed forward the political potentials of performance. (24) Social theorists have also turned to theatrical modalities in order to reach otherwise alienated audiences: the abstraction is concretized. Here is a brief illustration from the work of philosopher/activist, Fred Newman, as he explores complex and dimensions of racism and poverty:

Sam: Hey, Pearlie. How ya doing, Babe?...Oh, hey, I'm sorry, kid. It ain't Pearlie no more, right? What's it now, sis? Teluma? Is that it? Tluma. I like that new name. You say it's African, huh. Teluma. Shit. I got me a damned sister named Teluma. How ya doing, TELUMA (reaches to kiss her; she pulls away.)

Pearlie: You smell like shit. When'd yo last take a shower?

Sam: Hey, I don't want no shower, TELUMA.

Pearlie: It's TAKUMA...and you know it...and you STINK. Go take a goddamned shower, brother.

Sam: TAKUMA! Oh yeah. Yeah, I forgot...really I did, Pearlie. Those African names is hard, y'know. Dey sound funny. TAKUMA. I like it, baby sister. It's cool, TAKUMA. Sounds goddamned authentic, y'know. (25)

Dramatic writing such as this is particularly significant in fostering relational consciousness. Here the writer is drawn into a state of alterior being - at once self and other. Much the same condition inheres in an audience which listens empathically. Yet, the exploration of drama also foreshadows an even more radical domain of representation. For, we must ask, if dramatic arts are legitimated as modes of scholarly expression, then why not the full range of communicative activity? If writing is not sacred - and indeed constricting - then why should the scholar not expand the repertoire of representation to include visual arts, dance, music, multimedia, and more? Slowly such potentials are being mined. There is indeed a substantially developed field of visual sociology. (26) Qualitative researchers are also beginning to explore the potentials of dance. (27) In my own pedagogical experiments, I have now had numerous students whose "term papers" took the form of videos, web productions, and painting. One aspiring student gave his "paper" on technology and the self through a dance performance. In these various presentations - typically performed before classmates and friends - I have seldom encountered such a

high degree of enthusiasm, innovation, and dedication to scholarly work.

Finally, I would like to share an illustration from my own work that particularly explores aspects of relational being. For several years I had been attempting to develop a theoretical account of relational process. And, unless one was a participant in a small academic guild, I suspect this work would be found quite arid, opaque and elitist. In an attempt to expand its relational potentials, I thus invited a Zurich artist, Regine Walter, into collaboration. For me Regine's work significantly challenged the tradition of self-contained individualism, deftly subverting the distinctions between self and other. Our collaboration was thus to consist of several of my theoretical ideas - rendered in more evocative and accessible language - set into a relational dynamic with a range of her drawings. In each case, then, a literary rendering would be paired with a visual expression - with the hope that the relationship thus established could be more fully vivifying than the sum of its parts. (28) Here is one exemplar:

Graphic inserted here.

Form and content now merge...writer conjoined with word tissue to reader forged to world...and writing no longer serves as a conduit for hurtling minds through time and space but now constitutes the world itself...both manifesting and creating relationship... and where the disciplining of writing curtails the flow...paralyzing the very process out of which meaning thrusts itself into life...

Footnotes

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4. Levinson, S.L. (1989) Pragmatics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 48.
5. Sia, T.L., Lord, C.G. Blessum, K.A. ,Thomas, J.C., and Lepper, M. R.(1999) Activation of exemplars in the process of assessing social category attitudes. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 76,517-532. (p.520)
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9. Fox, K.V. (1996) Silent voices, a subversive reading of child sexual abuse. In

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 12. Ibid p. 10
 13. Ibid p. 10
 14. Ibid p. 11
 15. Tyler, S. (1986) The unspeakable. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
 16. Ibid, p. 6
 17. Ibid, p. 59
 18. Gergen, K.J., Anderson, H. and Hoffman, L. (1997) pgs.
 19. Richardson, L. (1997) Fields of play. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. pgs. 203-204
 20. See, for example, Glesne, C. (1997) That rare feeling: re-presenting research through poetic transcription. Qualitative Inquiry, 2, 202-221.
 21. See, for example, Turner, V. (1982) From ritual to theatre. NY: Performing Arts Journal Publications.
 22. Ibid p.90
 23. See, for example, Marving Carlson's 1996 text, Performance, a Critical Introduction. London: Routledge.
 24. See Case, S., Brett, P. and Foster, S.L. (1995) Cruising the performative. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
 25. Newman, F. (1999) What is to be dead? In L. Holzman (Ed.) Performing psychology. New York: Routledge. pgs. 206-207
 26. The major site of such work is the journal, Visual Sociology, published by the International Visual Sociology Association.
 27. See for example, Blumenfeld-Jones, D.S. (1995) Dance as a mode of research representation, Qualitative Inquiry, 1, 391-401.
 28. For a more complete explication, see Gergen, K.J. and Walter, R. (1998) Real/izing the relational. Journal fo Social and Personal Relationships, 15, 110-126.