

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Both of these traditions are inherent in me. I cannot disown the white tradition, the Euro-American tradition, any more than I can disown the Mexican, the Latino or the Native, because they are all in me.

—“Toward a Mestiza Rhetoric:
Gloria Anzaldúa on Composition and Postcoloniality”

In the last decade, some Composition scholars like Joel Haefner, John Trimbur, Douglas Hesse, Thomas O'Donnell, and Paul Heilker have critiqued the textual and institutional practices of the essay. For example, Joel Haefner contends that essay scholarship reinforces institutional and patriarchal hierarchies by privileging essayists from elite Western European backgrounds. John Trimbur, in his study of Western European essayist literacy, finds that essays by Bacon and Locke created a literacy that encouraged, through its seemingly unproblematic plain style, the illusion of a neutral essay text. Their emphasis on empirical experience created a new locus of authority in the text that served to conceal “the social processes of producing and using texts” (“Essayist Literary” 80). Within the composition field, Douglas Hesse dissuades compositionists from dabbling in the essay by examining how it is historically used as a self-indulgent endeavor that leaves little room for studying its social and historical context. He sees some teachers use of literary nonfiction with

their students as a “naive celebration of ‘the literary’” that ignores “important issues in rhetorical, genre, and cultural theory” (324). The concerns of these essay critics writing in the early 1990s revolve around the fear that researchers, teachers, and students will somehow ignore the social and historical aspects and instead indulge themselves in its aesthetic literary qualities. In *Composition*, it is a fear of backsliding to the expressivism of the 1970s that James Berlin and other social constructionists so ardently argued against.

By the mid 1990s, however, scholars like Thomas O’Donnell and Paul Heilker begin to study the personal essay as a more radical form of writing that may indeed have social and political implications within the classroom. Thomas O’Donnell asks *Compositionists* to take a second look at what he sees as “attacks” on expressivism by social constructionists. O’Donnell argues that an expressivist rhetoric can enhance a student’s understanding of the “doctrines and ideologies” presented in class. Students need an outlet for “understanding and investigating” the political discourses presented in the classroom, and the personal essay is one writing method of pursuing this (427). Paul Heilker proceeds one step further by investigating the historical/theoretical aspects of the personal essay and its significance to teaching this form in first-year writing classrooms. He encourages compositionists to embrace an active form of the essay (skeptical, nonlinear, antischolastic, and anti-Ciceronian). This form contrasts with the thesis/support essay form (a linear, thesis driven, mechanically organized, positivistic, closed writing style). He contends that the thesis/support essay “is inadequate to the developmental, epistemological, ideological, and feminine (and thus more fully human) rhetorical needs of both students and instructors in the contemporary composition classroom” (11).

These scholars’ studies of the essay’s historical contexts instead of exclusively exploring the essay’s aesthetic form are in keeping with a recent trend in U.S. scholarship to place more emphasis on a text’s historical, cultural, and political facets. Although they raise important issues on the essay’s contexts, their critiques of the essay have focused primarily on Western European and Anglo-American writings. In literature, numerous articles and books have critiqued Montaigne, Bacon, Locke, Emerson, Addison, Arnold, and others within the traditional canon. In composition, scholars trace the historical and institutional practices of a primarily Anglo-American educational system.

Although these critiques of the essay are invaluable to understanding our current literary and educational system, they do not adequately address how nontraditional scholars have productively transformed the essay to meet their personal and political needs. Until recently, there has

been only one book within the literature fields outside of Latin American scholarship entitled *The Politics of the Essay* (an essay anthology) that exclusively addresses how nontraditional writers like women and minorities use the essay's form. In their co-edited book, Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres and Elizabeth Mittman (both from German Literature Departments) note that the nontraditional essay's use is perhaps one of the more radical forms of writing: "It take a certain degree of radical thinking to appropriate a literary form unintended for you and to make it conform to your own wishes" (14). The anthology examines the politics behind Latin American, African American, English, French, and German female essayists.

German influences for examining the essay's social and political contexts in relation to its form derive from radical interpretations of the essay by early- and mid-twentieth-century German scholars like Lukacs, T. W. Adorno, and others from the Frankfurt school. T. W. Adorno, as a German-Jewish intellectual, condemns a German culture that thrives on positivistic systems, systems that create repressive orders through departmental specializations that leave little room for interdisciplinary discoveries. He sees the essay's freedom from specialization and genre boundaries as one way to destabilize these hierarchical divisions. These German essayists, however, still placed significant emphasis on studying the form of the essay as can be seen from the titles of Lukac's work *The Soul and Form* and Adorno's article "The Essay as Form." Both essay scholars grounded in Western European academic discourse perceive the essay's spontaneous form as conducive to critiquing established and archaic German institutions.

Until recently, U.S. scholars in the twentieth century, like their European counterparts, still emphasized studying the form's relationship with the author, as we see in William Gass's words:

The mechanics of the mind must not be allowed to show; yet where else, if not here, may they reveal themselves, for the hero of the essay is its author in the act of thinking things out, feeling and finding a way; it is the mind in the marvels and mysteries of its makings, in the work of the imagination, in the search for form. (333)

Even current prominent U.S. essay scholars like Carl Klaus, Chris Anderson, E. M. Duval, William Gass, Graham Good, Philip Lopate, and G. Douglas Atkins continue to somewhat follow the Western European tradition of studying the essay form. However, the study of form among U.S. scholars is never far from the study of U.S. issues concerning democracy, citizenship, and nation building. In some respect, their scholarship follows the lead of early American essayists such as Emerson and Thoreau.

In contrast, the most prolific Latin American essay scholar, Martin Stabb, pays little attention to the study of form in his two scholarly groundbreaking books *In Quest of Identity: Patterns in the Spanish American Essay of Ideas, 1890–1960* and his more recent book *The Dissenting Voice: The New Essay of Spanish America, 1960–1985*. As he says in the introduction to his first book, “. . . the focus of this study lies more in the area of ideas—of intellectual history set against the backdrop of the total culture—than it does in the area of literature per se” (11). Doris Meyer’s groundbreaking anthology on Latin American women essayists again emphasizes how the study of the essay in these areas must take into account their histories: “Indeed, one cannot appreciate the literary and intellectual history of this region without reading its essayists” (*Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay* 10). The entire collection works to establish a historical literary place for these Latin American women essayists rather than to mainly focus on the intricacies of the writers’ form or style. The leaders in Latin American essay scholarship consider the essay whether it be personal or not as paramount to understanding the historical, cultural, and political complexities of these nations. The study of form therefore becomes much less significant in Latin American scholarship.

Consequently, the different emphases between essay scholarships create academic divisions of study. In one work on the personal essay, Claire de Obaldia, a Western European scholar, dismisses Latin American essay scholarship for her study because it “reflects the history of ideas and the cultural identity of their countries” rather than exploring the essay’s form (2). Although over two hundred books and articles have been written on the Latin American essay (some in English) and Latin America is globally known for its fine essayists, essay scholars in English Departments according to my research findings very seldom cite these sources or essayists in their research.

Divisions such as these consequently create a gap in U.S. essay scholarship that serves to undermine a deeper understanding of the essay’s benefits to today’s scholarship. Given literature and composition’s recent interest in cross-disciplinary areas like cultural, women, and multicultural studies (areas of research that emphasize the historical, social, and political), essay scholarship in English Departments would benefit from the research on the Latin American essay.

Perhaps those who come closest to putting into practice the strengths of these various essay scholarships are nontraditional essayists in academia, some of whom search for ways to problematize divisions within the academy, especially divisions that create distance from their private experiences. For them, the essay becomes a tool for transform-

ing the private experience into a critique of public social institutions. Consequently, the essay in its more personal form, can serve to question academic, cultural, and political issues:

Far from entailing aestheticisms or isolationism, insistence on the personal has historically meant for criticism an active engagement with culture and a substantial investment in politics: no shirking of larger responsibilities, in other words but, on the contrary, an embrace of them deriving from awareness of the socially as well as constituted nature of selfhood. (Atkins 37)

Atkin's interpretation of the personal essay's function may help explain why many nontraditional scholars and students see these writings as a tool for connecting their home culture with academia. As Ruth Behar notes, one's personal identification with academic studies produces an "interesting" and valuable contribution for nontraditional scholars:

To assert that one is a "white middle-class woman" or a "black gay man" or a working-class Latina" within one's study, say, of Shakespeare or Santera is interesting only if one is able to draw deeper connections between one's personal experience and the subject under study. ("Dare We Say I" B-2)

As a biethnic academic, I too feel compelled to make connections between my mixed identities and my academic studies. At a time when I began to celebrate my mixed Latina/Anglo heritages, I noticed how difficult it became to share my multiethnic identities with academics who bought into ivory tower compartmentalization. To complicate my academic life a bit further, I found it too confining to be a specialist in a certain area of study. I wanted to be an academic interdisciplinary traveler among many English Department faculty who made clear distinctions between Literature and Composition. In politically charged academic environments that sometimes foster polarized communities, biethnic/biracial academics such as Cherrie Moraga, Elena Creef, Ruth Behar, Cecile Ann Lawrence, and Brunetta Wolfman to name just a few feel pressured to enter a monolithic cultural closet and choose one of their identities. Often, they are made to feel ashamed of their dual biological/cultural makeups. The personal essay represents one way for them to express the oppressions that people of biracial/biethnic heritages experience within society. However, the study of any groups' use of the essay's more personal form offers many complex challenges.

In order to begin tackling these challenges, the study must examine how scholars define the essay. What is it? How does it differ from traditional academic writing? How does it benefit teachers, students, and communities?

In Western Europe, early influential scholars like Montaigne criticized the scholarly writing conventions of their day. He, along with more contemporary essayists like Adorno and Lukacs, see much of academic writing as totalitarian in form: definitive, formal, linear, distant, quote ridden, and indecipherable to all but a privileged few.

In contrast, the more personal essay offers an escape from the confines of academic prose. By using this antiggenre form that in contemporary essays embodies multiple kinds of writing, many essayists in search of democracy find a freedom for expressing in their writings spontaneity, self-reflexivity, accessibility, and a rhetoric of sincerity. Although certainly this is only a partial list of the essay's possibilities for expression, these particular elements (as the chapters will show) foster a study that takes into account the Western European/U.S. emphasis on form as well as the Latin American emphasis on the history of ideas that shape both their personal and collective identities. These particular elements of the essay may also be found in other genres (especially as postmodern writers have blurred the distinctions between various literary genres). However, essay scholars like myself who are well aware of the essay's marginalized status in both Literature and Composition, must diligently work to create a more fair and democratic study of this genre. As Alexandra Butrym points out in his introduction to *Essays on the Essay*, "The essay is associated with the facetious, the trivial, and the anecdotal on the one hand and with the learned treatise and useful effective expository writing on the other" (4). By examining these particular democratic elements of the essay, it is my hope that I can help lift the essay, especially the personal essay, to its rightful place in academia.

Spontaneity, as a source for inspiration in essay discourse and other literary forms, has been frequently studied throughout literary history. Wordsworth's Romantic emphasis on "the spontaneous flow of powerful feelings" and Woolf's Modernist perspective of a spontaneous moment's value ("moments of being") represent just a few of many writers' works that see spontaneity as a wonderful and powerful vehicle for exploring larger issues. According to T. W. Adorno, the essay's spontaneity "does not permit its domain to be prescribed. Instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically, the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done" (152). Spontaneity thus allows writers to take risks that stray from conventional scholarly prose. Instead of working toward definitive conclusions, as in an article, the essay's spontaneity allows the writer to wander, to make connections in unusual places, to emphasize discoveries instead of conclusions. Spontaneity, with its wandering, connecting, and discovering elements,

allows some scholars to venture into their home communities, draw connections between home and academia, and make discoveries that offer hope for bridging these sometimes polarized settings.

The essay's form also allows writers to reflect on themselves. Some, like E.B. White, equate self-reflexivity with self-absorption. Others like G. Douglas Atkins find the essay's "openendedness, skepticism, and critical spirit" conducive to some of the theoretical components of deconstruction. Postmodern theorists see self-reflection as a way to problematize the unitary self and embrace the multiplicity of selves that make up the individual. For example, Bakhtin sees each word, each utterance, as open to multiple interpretations that are tied to varying social and historical forces. Our voices, our use of language, is therefore multivoiced and multilingual. However, according to G. Douglas Atkins and Gary Hartman, many postmodern theorists use the unitary-voiced article form to talk about deconstructive issues, such as the play of language, antisystematization, interruption, and uncertainty. They see these scholars participating in a confined writing form that negates what they profess to practice. How can deconstructionists practice "openendedness" with an article form that requires them to prove a point? How can deconstructionists openly display subjectivity in an article that encourages writers to use a nonpersonal tone? In more recent years, self-reflection has influenced teacher's practices in the writing classroom such as Donna Qualley's *Turns of Thought: Teaching Composition as Reflexive Inquiry*, Kathleen Blake Yancey's *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, Wendy S. Hesford's *Framing Identities: Autobiography and the Politics of Pedagogy*, and, most recently, Barbara Kamler's *Relocating the Personal: A Critical Writing Pedagogy*. Compositionists' focus on process in the last decade requires a self-reflective stance that sees critical thinking and writing as a recursive process. However, those who champion academic self-reflection confront some criticism by academics. For example, Daphne Patai, in her essay "Sick and Tired of Scholars' Nouveau Solipsism," argues that the new trend of postmodernist self-reflexivity is to blame for scholars "spending too much effort wading in the morass of [their] own positionings" (A52). These self-indulgent writers, according to Patai, contribute little to impacting the grave societal problems of our time.

Perhaps Patai has a point if an egocentric use of self-reflexivity was the only component of the personal essay. However, Patai's argument falls apart when we consider that most essayists strive toward accessibility. An academic's use of accessible writing transcends the personal by encouraging a collective consciousness among academic and nonacademic communities. For these scholars, the essay is inextricably intertwined

with a political and collective purpose. For example, Ruth Behar, an anthropologist of Cuban/Jewish origins, sees the more personal form of the essay as emerging “from the struggles of those traditionally excluded from the academy, such as women and members of minority groups, to find a voice that acknowledges both their sense of difference and their belated arrival on the scholarly scene” (B2). The essay sits well with someone like Mike Rose, whose experiences as an Italian immigrant of working-class origins give personal evidence that refute those composition theories tied to developmental writing. By writing in a depersonalized jargon-laden form, nontraditional scholars relinquish the need for “plain language that will be understood by a large audience” (Behar B2). On the other hand, “Plain language” works well for traditionally excluded members of the academic community like Behar, Rose, and others who feel a responsibility to reach out and be understood by their disenfranchised home communities. For these members, there is a personal/collective stake that has less to do with self-absorption or jargon-laden language and more to do with establishing an academic place for marginalized voices.

The personal essay’s accessibility also inspires both traditional and nontraditional students to feel comfortable in an academic environment that has become increasingly less familiar. Part of their estrangement comes from the excessive educational testing in elementary and secondary schools. These tests have little relevance to students’ cultures or lives and, consequently, leave students disconnected from their educational world. According to G. Douglas Atkins, the essay offers “undergraduates and graduates alike [. . .] opportunities denied them elsewhere in their collegiate and academic careers, a breath of fresh air in the sometimes fetid atmosphere of academe, a positive response to human needs” (15). By reading essayists, students can also learn about writing their own lives in a nonthreatening and sharing way. In “Students and Teachers under the Influence: Image and Idea in the Essay,” Pat Hoy sees essayists like E. B. White, Joan Didion, Loren Eisely, Annie Dillard, and others as collaborators with our students. Their accessible forms of writing “show students what they can do as writers” (291).

Some nontraditional writers also strive for creating a rhetoric of sincerity or truthfulness in their texts. The self that strives toward this rhetoric of sincerity creates for their readers a more true, realistic, picture of his or her life and surroundings. There are certainly exceptions to this authentic disclosure when we look at writers like Zora Neale Hurston, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Maxine Hong-Kingston, and others. They feel quite comfortable mixing autobiography with fiction. However, when some people wish to offer their personal stories as testi-

monies to the injustices that they experienced throughout their lives, the search for an authentic self becomes paramount. This is particularly significant in Latin America, as will be discussed in chapter 4, where writers strive for authenticity to set a contrast between themselves and the corrupt political systems filled with deceit.

In the early part of the twentieth century in Latin America, several highly influential scholars like Jose Ortega y Gasset, Waldo David Frank, and Victoria Ocampo wrote of ways to achieve an authentic Latin American individual and society. Truth was at the heart of these discussions, and they inspired Latin American writers to bring the element of sincerity to their essays. Paulo Freire, the renowned world educator and mentor to many U.S. academics, borrowed this concept of authenticity and applied it to his theories about teaching students. Throughout his works, Freire makes frequent reference to the idea of “authenticity” as a means for the oppressed and educators to liberate themselves from their conditions and begin to connect through dialogue. Many nontraditional academics inspired by Freire, like bell hooks and Victor Villanueva, follow through with his concept of authenticity by frankly addressing in personal writings the injustices they see in academic and nonacademic environments. The element of “authenticity” in essays becomes paramount to many nontraditional teachers and students who wish to testify to the hardships experienced within their multiple societies.

My focus as a Latina is to investigate how they use these elements for critiquing academic and nonacademic institutions. If, as contemporary scholarly essayists, we believe in a self-reflexive practice that acknowledges a fragmented self, then it stands to reason that the Latino(a) essay must interweave through many historical, ideological, and cultural influences. The Latino(a) personal essay as cultural critique must draw on its many academic influences from Western Europe, the United States, and Latin America. Specifically, this book will address the following questions:

- How have the essay elements of self-reflexivity, spontaneity, accessibility, and a rhetoric of sincerity impacted certain Western European, U.S., Latin American, and Latino(a) writers?
- How has the essay been used as historical and cultural critique by certain Western European, U.S., Latin American, and Latino (a) scholars?
- How are these Western European, Anglo-American, and Latin American influences intertwined in Latino(a) essayists who draw from all of these cultures?

These are questions that do not exclusively come from a bicultural Latina/Angla scholar “wading in the morass of [her] own positionings” but from a multiplicity of academic voices that wish to, as Chris Anderson points out, “dismantle the hierarchies and fraternities of scholarship” (*Hearsay Evidence* 305).

In the following pages, I will focus on brief abstracts about each of the subsequent chapters covered in this book.

THE PERSONAL, THE POLITICAL, AND THE RHETORICAL:
MONTAIGNE’S AND BACON’S USE OF THE ESSAY FORM

This chapter will trace the essay’s early influences in Western Europe with an accentuation on its form. The purpose in this section for accentuating form as a primary rather than secondary study is to demonstrate the treatment of the essay in Western European scholarship. For traditional essay scholars, the essay commences with the sixteenth-century writer Montaigne, more specifically known as the “father of the essay.” Montaigne sets the stage for the essay’s separation from traditional academic writing by ridiculing scholars of his century “who amid their nonexistent works scatter whole passages of the ancient authors to do themselves honor” (Montaigne 107). Montaigne needed a personal essay form that served to explore and question the dramatic changes in Renaissance politics, science, and religion. The scholars of his day used a Ciceronian rhetorical style that was inadequate for this process of inquiry. Montaigne emphasized the personal, self-reflective, and spontaneous nature of essayist prose. According to Carl Klaus, essayists from Montaigne, Bacon, and Addison to more contemporary essayists like Adorno, White, and Gass “define the essay, or their own essayistic practice, by setting it off against highly conventionalized and systematized forms of writing, such as rhetorical, scholarly, or journalistic discourse” (156). Montaigne sets the stage for a study of the essay’s form so prevalent among Western European essay scholars. Montaigne’s study and use of the essay form comes from the classical figures and philosophies of Seneca, Plutarch, and Pyrronian Skepticism.

Although Bacon used a less personalized essay form, he remains an important figure in demonstrating the essay’s use for political action. The didactic nature of his essays moves away from the inconclusive skepticism that pervades Montaigne’s form. Bacon’s essays were meant to reach a public audience that would act on his words. The Baconian essay, according to Joel Haefner, “was objective, impersonal, concerned with great social and moral issues, rational, authoritative, methodical, balanced, and argumentative” (“Unfathering the Essay” 260).

Both these Renaissance figures demonstrate two different essay forms that begin to merge together when the essay reaches the New World.

ESSAYING AN AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC IDENTITY
IN EMERSON AND THOREAU

This chapter will focus on Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau's use of the essay form to create an American democratic identity. The study of form becomes less relevant to these particular essayists and those who study them in comparison to their Western European counterparts. Robert Atwan, an essayist scholar, believes Emerson pursued the essay because it met with "a form in which 'everything is admissible, philosophy, ethics, divinity, criticism, poetry, humor, fun, mimicry, anecdotes, jokes, ventriloquism'" (109). This search for a free form ties into nineteenth-century American writers' search for an American identity instead of a reliance on Western European influences. Within his essay "The American Scholar," Emerson hopes for a new American scholar that will not timidly imitate his/her European counterparts, but will set a new course in scholarship that encompasses the ideals of American democratization. For Emerson, who abhorred systems and embraced an American Romanticism, the essay with its anti-systematic qualities and form worked well to foster American democratic ideals.

Thoreau, another prominent nineteenth-century American essayist, furthered the idea of democracy through his work *Walden*. Thoreau justifies his personal essays in *Walden* as an act for himself and his fellow citizens. Many of his contemporaries and more recent scholars suggest that *Walden* extended and critiqued the conversation of "The American Scholar" through examples of personal practices. By examining both Thoreau's political/philosophical views and others' reactions to his essays' elements (spontaneity, self-reflexivity, accessibility, and a rhetoric of sincerity), this chapter will demonstrate the importance of the essay in forming a national scholarly identity for this emerging nation. With the study of Thoreau's essays, the separation between the treatment of form and the surrounding political/cultural history becomes much more fluid and compatible. The essay's elements and Thoreau's characteristics for shaping an American scholar become almost one and the same.

THE ESSAY AS POLITICAL/CULTURAL CRITIQUE IN LATIN AMERICA

This chapter attempts to broaden essay scholarship in English Studies by examining Latin American essayists with a primary focus on the Brazilian educator and essayist, Paulo Freire. Scholarly books and anthologies in English Studies do not address Latin America's role in essay scholarship. Essay scholars such as Carl Klaus, Chris Anderson, Robert Atwan, William Gass, Alfred Kazin, G. Douglas Atkins, William Zeiger, and most

recently Paul Heilker prefer to look to Western Europe (France, England, and Germany) or to the United States for their research. The problem in English studies essay scholarship is its failure to include the profound influences of Latin American essayists who significantly strengthened the interpretation of the essay as historical and cultural critique.

This chapter will seek to recover this gap from English studies by examining the prominent cultural and historical role the essay plays in Latin America. I will look at how Latin Americans, especially Paulo Freire, used the essay as a political and social writing form to further democratic changes. For Latin American activists and revolutionaries, the essay was a writing form that helped them critique the ills of elitism and support democratic ideals that served the oppressed. Paulo Freire figures prominently in this chapter because English studies scholars are quite familiar with his work as an educator. Since he is already a vital part of English Department education, this chapter will expand his vital role by probing his contributions to essay scholarship. Like his predecessors in the previous chapters, Paulo Friere used the essay as a writing form to critique education and nondemocratic societal ills that served to undermine his nation. However, Freire as a Latin American activist, sought to implement the essay, especially its personal form, into personal and political democratic action. The essay and most of its elements discussed in this book takes on a much more serious nation-building role when it enters the Latin American realm. The prominence of the essay in Latin America serves as both a national and personal narrative of Latin Americans in quest of democracy through the essay's elements of self-reflection, accessibility, and a rhetoric of sincerity. The essay element of spontaneity, however, becomes problematic for Latin Americans who equate spontaeity with their chaotic political systems. The study of the Latin American personal/political essay works to strengthen this book's focus that the essay is a cultural/historical writing form which impacts both the individual and nation.

ACHIEVING A PLACE IN ACADEMIA
THROUGH THE PERSONAL ACADEMIC ESSAYS
OF VICTOR VILLANUEVA AND RUTH BEHAR

My last chapter will show the interplay of Western European, Anglo-American, and Latin American essay scholarship through close readings of Latino/a personal texts. I will demonstrate how two Latino/a academics, Victor Villanueva and Ruth Behar, follow similar essay patterns as those in the previous chapters to further this democratic writing form. However, unlike their essay predecessors who came from privileged

backgrounds, these working-class Latinos/as felt compelled to use the personal academic essay to gain acceptance in academia. Victor Villanueva, a Puerto Rican Freirian scholar, comes from the academic field of Rhetoric and Composition. Ruth Behar, a Cuban-American Jew, comes from the field of anthropology and is an outspoken advocate in her field for using the personal essay in scholarly writing. She is an autoethnographer who uses the personal essay to establish her research as well as her identity in academia. Victor Villanueva and Ruth Behar also signify two Latino/a academic scholars with strong ties to the Latin American essayists' emphasis on historical and cultural critique.

The last chapter first begins with the study of Victor Villanueva's *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*. This recent work encompasses a series of personal essays that might be classified as an autobiographical work. However, Villanueva's insertion of complex rhetorical, composition, philosophical, and linguistic theoretical issues is more conducive to contemporary critical essayist prose. Villanueva's personal evidence intermingles with scholastic evidence that either serves to validate or invalidate Villanueva's personal experiences. Villanueva uses the personal essay's elements of self-reflexivity, spontaneity, accessibility, and sincerity as a way to gain respect as a Latino scholar who experiences injustices in and out of academia. His quest through the personal essay is to establish not only his sense of academic belongingness but to pave an easier way for future Latino/a academics like himself. He realizes that in order to achieve this he must reach out through personal essays to a non-Latino/a audience and educate them on Latino/a culture and history.

Ruth Behar's personal essays will offer readers insight into the Latina's academic role as an autoethnographer and essayist. Her essays break with traditional ethnography by drawing connections between her personal struggles as a Latina Jew professor in academia with the struggles of those she observes in her studies. These personal disclosures that draw readers in through the elements of the essay discussed in this book provide readers with greater insights into Behar's subjectivities as a Latina observer of Spanish and Latin American communities. She demonstrates the challenges Latina ethnographers face as they observe communities not so distant from their own. Behar's influences in her ethnographic work play a part in encouraging Latinos/as to see current personal trends in anthropology as a way to mend their historical fractures.