
Anthropological Reflections / Réflexions anthropologiques

Some Remarks on a New Series and on Bruner's "Remembering My Jewish Father"

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We all enter society in the middle.
—Ed Bruner

Ed Bruner's "Remembering My Jewish Father" is the first of what we hope will be an engaging series of "Anthropological Reflections." What do we mean by "reflections"? We shall welcome autobiographical and autoethnographic pieces, photo-essays, poetry, travelogues and experimental writing. The point of our efforts is to broaden the scope of our anthropological writing, publishing and reception.

It seems more than appropriate then that the first piece in a series that focuses on creative endeavours is by Ed Bruner. Bruner's life-long interest in storytelling, narrativity and performance (see selection below) has helped to shape contemporary anthropological writing—its reflexive as well as its more experimental forms.

In a way that is excruciatingly painful and alarming, Bruner writes not only about his relationship to his father but also about the very backdrop that informed his experiences with the man: U.S. anti-Semitism. In revealing his father's identification with German Jewry and its historically elitist relationship to his mother's "Eastern" heritage, Bruner also extends our understanding of the complicated nature of Jewish identification and culture in mid-20th-century America. The narrative arc of the piece takes us through Bruner's identification with his mother—who also loved but feared his father—to the loss he suffered when his father married for a second time.

As Andy Mousley pointed out:

The value of autobiography and biography, according to the criterion of "experience" is that they are forms of history-writing which give us more than "dry facts" or a description of faceless social forces. Autobiography instead puts human flesh on the bones of historical narrative, it gives us the sensuously lived experience, the embodied reality, and all that goes with embodied reality in terms of recognizable human emo-

tions ... History filtered through autobiography gives us precisely this sense of human engagement and existential import. [2009:268-269]

In this autobiographical reflection, Bruner has alerted us to the dangers of ahistorical understandings of "Jewishness" and anti-Semitism, while also helping us to appreciate the personal ramifications at the centre of such experiences.

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