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# Finding Academic Voice

## A Critical Narrative of Knowledge-Making and Discovery

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The narrative in this discussion article portrays the quest by two researchers to find their scholarly identity in their craft. The central issue in this narrative piece as design type of this inquiry is the *space* of knowledge crafting—distinguishing between adopted knowledge from the theories that sustain our thinking and the realities that they encounter in the research fields where knowledge grows in dynamic ecosystems that they wish to engage with and try to explicate and to understand. The central conundrum or the academic puzzle in this narrative is thus that they receive mixed messages about the interface between them, the researchers, the presented empirical world, and the theories from which they have learned. They are not sure where or when they speak in their own voices or portray their own identities.

**Keywords:** *narrative inquiry; epistemology; academic socialization*

We present this article as a conversation piece with a view to soliciting academic debate with regard to the place and role of the academic's voice, especially in qualitative research. What we intend doing is to bring more than just our ambivalent experiences as academic starters—out to this debate. We want to present an analytical discussion using particular constructs like voice and signature. We do this to make our academic struggle in the academy all the more understandable to our peers. In trying to come to grips with the academic-writing obstacles that confront us and to become fully fledged scholars of our craft, we use these constructs to unpack our struggle of becoming. We wish to give an honest account of our journey

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thus far, without discounting who we are in this process. Therefore, we made a methodological choice of writing up our experiences in a metaphorical style using the constructs of voice and signature.

## Introducing Our Narrative

The narrative in this discussion article portrays our quest to find our scholarly identity in our craft. The central issue in this narrative piece as design type of this inquiry is the space of knowledge-crafting—distinguishing between adopted knowledge from the theories that sustain our thinking and the realities that we encounter in the research fields where knowledge grows in dynamic ecosystems that we wish to engage with and try to explicate and to understand. Thus when we write about the researchers, we are referring to ourselves and others like ourselves who traverse the land of novice scholarship and try to find where, in the ecosystems of the empirical dynamic and the theories that have informed us, we may speak with honesty. The central conundrum or the academic puzzle in this narrative is therefore that we receive mixed messages about the interface between us, the presented empirical world, and the theories from which we have learned. We are not sure where or when we speak in our own voices or portray our own identities.

Forthcoming is our argument that, firstly, we need to be well informed; we must have the knowledge and the craft of scholarship at our fingertips. Second, we need to proceed with honesty as we traverse the field where we will capture the texts that will inform and change our knowledge. Subsequently, we need to find the fit between our now various sets of knowledge. Then, and only then, can we integrate what we have come to know and speak in our own, interpretive, and critical voice. Prior to that, we import and we copy, but if we have toiled the land in which we research deeply and know the theories that have explored this land, we may emerge as voiced speakers of our craft.

How we use voice in our own unique way constitutes a closely related metaphor of signature. We understand Clandinin and Connelly (1994, pp.423-425) that the real dilemma for scholars is to decide how vivid or how subtle the signature (“being there in the text”) should be. They explain that the

signature can be too thin because other texts and other theories, rather than the writer, sign the work. Equally, the signature can be too thin because the

researcher imagines that the participants and their field texts author the work. In gaining voice and a signature for it, the researcher puts his or her own stamp on the work.

In the remainder of this conversation piece, we narrate experiences of our journey, narrating as a male and female researcher searching for our space and then our voice, our signature (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp.177-179). We believe that unless we manage to locate our academic space (including the research traditions and the theories that have granted us the space), we will not be able to express our scholarly identity, which takes many years of reading and understanding and practising the craft. We agree that voice comes from knowledge, from self-confidence, and from a compassion for our fields of inquiry and the participants who inhabit them. Thus to find voice, we postulate, is to find knowledge and understanding that is blended into our identity (Ivanič, 1997) and setting up new understandings that have the goodness of fit.

### **On a Methodological Note**

The fear and stark reality of continual rejection, the daunting academic presence of the other (usually well-established scholars in the field), the lack of sufficient self-belief, the ubiquitous plethora of mundane—yet necessary—academic and quasi-academic duties, and so forth, preclude us from voicing our own claim to academic real estate. We tend to think that this is precisely the effect that we have on our students, which makes them feel that our world (even as academic novices) is impenetrable. That is why we use metaphors to articulate this space of knowledge-crafting. How does one get academically socialized without someone who accompanies one along this road? To feel authorized and to be authorized to voice our own contributions to the body of scholarship in our field, we are in daily dire need of authoritative scholarly accompaniment. In this regard, we recognize the fact that we should authorize our students to present their own voices—this, we believe, should be our solemn duty—even as academic novices! It has a ripple-effect. If we are authorized to do something, then we have the inner locus of control. If we are not authorized, then we are in limbo. In this article, therefore, we speak to the Academy in general—although it is mainly aimed at other novice academic practitioners like us who are perhaps also struggling to find their own academic voice and to tender individual academic signature.

## Voice and Signature in Research Texts: Traversing the Space Between Ventriloquism and Heteroglossia

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) argued that the metaphors of voice and signature were two significant ways in which we could be present in the research text. They claim that the novice researcher may move from a position of silence, from merely summarizing and rewriting others' work, to a position of independently having something to say on his or her own behalf. This view is shared by Hodges (1997) who contended that when novice academics first encountered theory, they invariably seemed to meander through a phase where they employed parrot-speak to try and ventriloquize the academic voices of the established authors in their field. Although we would argue that this kind of ventriloquism does in fact provide vital rehearsal space to novice researchers, where we may practice crafting our own knowledge, we also agree with Hodges that ventriloquism inevitably represented a kind of self-generated silencing of the academic voice that we were expected to speak yet which is still pretty much alien.

One reason why we may choose to silence our own voice and to ventriloquize the recognized leaders in our field may be that the journey to acquiring our own (academic) voice and signature (being there in the text) is not unlike learning to master a foreign language. Not being able always to express ourselves adequately and coherently, we are constantly wishing to return to our native tongue (Hodges, 1997). Consequently, we tend to squelch our own voice with the result that we (often unwittingly) leave our readers little choice but to ask whether there is any distinguishable relationship between our attempts to emerge as voiced speakers of our craft and our attempts at creating our own, unique academic signatures.

In this regard, we are reminded of the old Russian pub riddle that goes,

When the doll is speaking, the ventriloquist is speaking and when the ventriloquist is speaking, the doll is never quiet. Who is speaking?

Reflecting on our own publication record thus far, we submit that a more convincing account of the reasons why we sometimes ventriloquize other, more experienced authors, may include not only the fact that our claim to our own academic voices is still very much shaky but also our belief that we did not generate this shakiness all by ourselves.

It seems that when we were still studying toward our PhDs, our professors and supervisors were usually quite happy to grant us renting privileges (Toohey, 1997) on our own academic voices. However, after having completed

our PhDs, we soon understood that attempting to claim our academic voices and hallmarking our academic signatures is not only extremely challenging and complicated, but that such attempts are also frequently adjudicated by (peer) reviewers to be inadequate and, sometimes, even derisory or inappropriate. For instance, the rejection notices we often received from the editors of accredited journals over the past few years, can attest to the veracity of this statement.

This also seems to back up the central conundrum in this conversation piece, namely, that we continue to receive mixed messages about the interface between us, the researchers, the presented empirical world, and the theories from which we have learned. We are confused because we do not know where and when we may speak in our own voices and portray our own identities.

This confusion furthermore draws attention to the essential relationship between our academic voice and those of the rest of the academic community who have already voiced their opinions in a particular sphere of scholarly specialization. It is against this décor that the work of Clandinin and Connelly (1994) proves to be particularly informative. Besides claiming that we may move from a position of silence and ventriloquism to a position of independently having something to say on our own behalf, they also maintain that even for experienced researchers there are dilemmas about voice in moving from field to research texts—in balancing our own voice with those of other researchers who have already published in a particular discipline. This reminds us of Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) notion of heteroglossia—finding our own (academic) voice when the other voices and the roles they express in the social structure are perceived to be in conflict (Toohy, 1997).

According to *The Literary Encyclopaedia* (<http://www.litencyc.com/php/stops.php?rec=true&UID=510>), heteroglossia is a translation of the Russian noun *raznorecie*, which literally refers to polyvocalism or multilingualness. With reference to academic voice and signature, we propose that heteroglossia offers a particularly useful heuristic for making sense of the multiplicity of (academic) voices within the apparent unity of any particular academic idiolect (language of specialization). As such, heteroglossia embraces more than academic linguistic diversity. It refers to the coexistence of multiple academic voices within a particular field of specialization but then specifically as it pertains to their coexistence in a state of discursive tension and (academic) competition. In particular, it alludes to the tension between those forces within a specific academic idiolect, which are pulling it toward some kind of standard, central version, and those

forces that are tugging it away from such a standard, central version toward a more demotic (colloquial) or even dialectal use of academic voice.

We would therefore argue that any academic utterance exists at the intersection of these centripetal and centrifugal forces and positions itself in relation to them. Although we acknowledge that this may be interpreted as a suggestive, albeit somewhat condensed account of academic voice, we propose that it nevertheless has particular importance for a Bakhtinian account of the academic essay, which we believe can be viewed as the academic genre best able to exploit heteroglossia. It seems to us as if the publishable academic essay is taking its linguistic energy from the peer group-accepted, even academically agreed upon, centrifugal forces within a heteroglossia. The academic essay thus seems to be reproducing within itself the very tensions and diversity which characterizes the academic and linguistic situation from which it emerges.

To us this phenomenon is not only interesting but also somewhat confusing. As we see it, we who wish to publish the findings of our research must also balance that which is said with that which is not said; the implicit versus the explicit. We need to be aware that we can have multiple voices as well. In this regard, we are of the opinion that Martin Heidegger's notion of *das Ungedachte* (the unthought) provides valuable assistance as far as our attempts at understanding the importance of academic voice and signature is concerned.

### **Voice, Signature, and Heidegger's "das Ungedachte"**

We propose that having something to say and the right to say it, are different issues altogether. As far as academic voice is concerned, it seems that it might essentially be determined by the fact that we do—indeed—have something to say and having something to say suggests that we who say it, are the owner of that which is being said. Now, if academic voice is then understood to be the audible and readable outcomes of our *thoughts* as researchers, it follows that we are also the owners of these thoughts. As far as we can tell, this kind of ownership is, however, something much more profound than merely possessing these thoughts. It means that we essentially *inhabit* these thoughts from the inside out and that a very personal, intimate relationship usually exists between ourselves as researchers and our thoughts.

What intrigues us, then, as we traverse the swampy lowlands of messy academic ambiguity (to quote Piantanida et al. 2002, p.2 slightly out of context), is our observation that the audible and readable voice of established

researchers is not necessarily always the distilled, thick outcome of the intimately and personally inhabited thoughts owned by these researchers. Instead, on our hiking expeditions through the deep-rural countryside of Academia over the past four years or so, we have slowly come to the realization that what we eventually voice in academic publications may in fact depend much more on what we did not say or did not have to say (to say what we in the end did say) than on what we may actually have said. To us it would seem that the scholarly road from having something to say to eventually being able to voice it successfully has been built to run through the central business district of the unthought (what Martin Heidegger refers to as “das Ungedachte”). For established researchers the unthought—as we understand it, anyway—is what they do not even have to think to formulate their thoughts (Visker, 1999).

This realization highlights the central issue in this narrative, namely, the space of knowledge crafting. For us who are trying to find our scholarly identity in our craft, this space between what is said or sayable and what is not said or unsayable, seems to contain much intellectual matter and energy which we are as yet unable to appreciate fully. In trying to clarify the pathways and processes through which our knowledge can be crafted and accomplished scholarship attained, we persistently endeavour to make sense of the established academic voices and identities in our field of specialization. The more we read, however, the more it becomes clear to us that this is extremely hard to accomplish. If our voiced part of research can be interpreted to be the audible and readable outcomes of our thoughts, then what we eventually voice represents only the ears of the hippopotamus and this is, unfortunately, the only part of the beast that we ever get to study—the ears. We can only speculate about the amount of academic water that the bulk of the submerged body of scholarship may be displacing, but we may never get to comprehend and appreciate its full size. If the voiced outcome of research is based on an undisclosed number of organized thoughts that are not only owned but in fact also inhabited by us and if a very personal, intimate relationship exists between us and the thoughts that we inhabit then our unthought, in attaching itself to our thoughts, renders to a certain extent the body of the hippopotamus, inaccessible to those of us who seek to understand and investigate it (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996, p. 21).

So if we wish to take seriously a notion like *das Ungedachte*, it seems that we should be extremely cautious before we start commending ourselves for having made the thoughts of established voices in our field of specialization accessible and try to reach for that point where, although we

no longer have the feeling that we fail to understand what these established voices are trying to communicate or fail to see what they are trying to show us, the distance between them and us is greater than it was before, simply because in trying to understand them we have to keep taking into account what they had to leave out of their writings to write them at all (Visker, 1999). Indeed, we should definitely not flatter ourselves for having made the thoughts of other researchers accessible, when all we have in fact done, was to have restored their property rights (*ibid.*). In this regard, we experience something disconcerting and even objectionable in having to admit that notwithstanding our best efforts, in the end (but then again, how will we ever know when we have reached it?—for we should never rule out the possibility that we did not read well enough), communication between them and us is interrupted because the unthought for them is what they did not even have to think to formulate their thoughts, whereas for us, it is exactly what we should try to think of at all costs, if we are to avoid merely becoming disciples who mistake the thought of another for a thought of our own.

We feel that this may indeed be one of the major reasons for the phenomenon of academic ventriloquism—especially among novice researchers—and we therefore wish to repeat the old Russian pub riddle quoted above—albeit with just a bit more exigency this time:

When the doll is speaking, the ventriloquist is speaking and when the ventriloquist is speaking, the doll is never quiet. Who is speaking? As such, the whole notion of voice, thought and *das Ungedachte* seems also to strengthen the central conundrum in this narrative, namely,

that we keep on receiving mixed messages about the borderline between us, the researchers, the presented empirical world, and the theories from which we have learned. We are confused, because we do not know where and when we may speak in our own voices and portray our own identities. This brings us to the issue of “having the right to speak.”

In Dutch, when people say that someone has the right to speak, they usually mean that a person is capable (through his / her position or experience) of considering and judging something in a sensible, sagacious manner (Pattyn, 2005, p.173). What is important for our narrative is the flipside of this. Pattyn (*ibid.*) describes it in the following manner:

*Van mensen waarvan men vermoedt dat ze onvoldoende op de hoogte zijn van een bepaalde kwestie zegt men dat ze dat niet hebben.* (Translation: “If people suspect that someone might not quite be on top of a particular issue, they will say that he / she does not have the right to speak.”)

This is precisely our predicament. Although we try our level best, it seems as if any expert in our field of specialization may claim, at any point in time, that we are not yet quite on top of our game, and that we therefore have no right to air our voices. As we see it, this is the main difference between academic voice (having something to say) and signature (being there in the text). One of the many (confusing) messages we receive from the field is that, because we are novice researchers, our being there in the text is comparatively insignificant—even though we may actually try very hard not to ventriloquize the established voices, but to present a unique, original profile of our thoughts in the texts we produce. So, what are we left with? If we haven't yet earned the right to speak (according to the Dutch point of view, anyway), it may, in fact, mean that we actually don't have something to say after all. Or does it? If this is the case, we have no rights to the academic signatures that we are trying to imprint on our writings, which means that we also do not have anything to say to the scholarly community—we do not have a “voice.” And, if we do not have a voice, we also do not have a scholarly identity, because one's academic signature (“being there” in the text) is perhaps one of the best indicators of one's scholarly identity!

So another way of looking at our central conundrum might be to acknowledge that the other side of voice is silence, some of which is present in an aware and chosen form and some of which is present in an unaware form. Temporality, we grant, is also another issue of voice which needs to be made apparent. Mixed into the cauldron of our central conundrum, the question may now well be asked whether our academic voice should necessarily be a current voice, speaking about how things seem from the present, or whether it may also be a historical voice, speaking about how things seemed at some point in the past?

In response—and given the idiosyncrasies of our country, South Africa, at the present juncture—we tend (for the moment, at least) to use a three dimensional narrative space (Clandinin, 2003) to try and locate our experiences in the (a) situation, (b) interaction and (c) temporality. Finding our academic voice as scholars is a balancing act to express our own voice in the midst of reporting on a research project. On the one hand, we present the voices of our participants, whereas on the other hand, we confront this empirical data, the multiple voices (heteroglossia), with complementing or opposing theories to create a research text that will resonate with the academic community or audience, “in service of others” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 424). When may we as scholars actually *be* in our research reports? When may our voice be heard? When do the thoughts of distinguished academics become our own? When do we become mainframe or do we remain

on the periphery? When will our voice *feel* authorized? When will our research signature be recognized?

Allow us a last observation as far as this particular issue is concerned. In the available literature on academic voice, there is, according to Bowden (1999) a school of thought that defends the idea that academic voice, *per se*, belongs to a Westernized ideology of individualism. She maintains (Bowden, p. viii) that “academic voice epitomises a logocentric, Eurocentric, patriarchal approach to discourse that . . . remains stubbornly embedded in our conversations about texts.” Later on (Bowden, p.109), she follows it up with an even more contentious proclamation: “Voice, evolving as it has from its 1970 affiliations with powerful writing, carries with it connotations of an authentic and unitary self.”

For us who both work in South Africa and who both understand (from first-hand experience) the verifiable reality that prominent local scholars prefer to reject to this day, a Westernized ideology of (academic) individualism in favour of an indigenous African altruistic collectivism, this Bowdenian portrait of Academia is at the same time both perplexing and disconcerting. If what Bowden is really trying to get across is the idea that—in the end—only the lonely voice and signature of the individual scholar has any chance of standing the test of time, then we are of the opinion that Academia, as we know it, may just have been suffering from a serious bout of an Ayn Randian rational self-interest (1961) for a very long time now. This may be one of the underpinning motives behind Academia’s obsession with the idea that only individually written articles and books should count toward promotion, and not coauthored articles or books.

The work of Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999, p. 47) brings a useful contribution to this debate when they argued that “the core notion underlying this social practice<sup>1</sup> seems to be that, as individuals, we all have essentially private and isolated inner selves, which we give outward expression to through the use of a metaphorical voice. We claim that the premise of academic voice, as belonging to a Westernized ideology of (academic) individualism, needs to be revisited. Living in Africa, we would like to problematize this issue by arguing that (a) the notion of academic voice is not necessarily tied to the ideology of individualism and that (b) it is not necessarily foreign to students who come from so-called collectivist cultures.

Be that as it may, we intend not to leave this academic place in a depersonalized, cold, unsigned and voiceless manner. On the contrary, we cannot work with participants without sensing the fundamental relational connection among us; nor can we create research texts without imagining a relationship with our audience. As such, “Voice and signature make it possible

for there to be conversations through texts among participants, researchers and audiences” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, p. 424).

## **Our Narrative Self of Finding Voice and Signature**

Finding voice resonates with our choice of narrative inquiry and the method of research that is congruent with our commitment to a respectful and sensitive approach to research. This embraces our interactiveness that involves our whole being, intellect, intuition, feelings, and spirit. Such intricacy and complexity of human interaction involves sensitive awareness of the process as well as a long look at the relationship and the communication with the respondents, which are inseparable. We can know another only to the extent that we know ourselves. This attentiveness, together with emotional reaction, physical sensation, thoughts, habitual responses and reactions, shapes our voice. Our openness to experiences and responsibility to be fully present facilitates our aptitude for congruence, genuineness, unconditional positive regard and empathy—such qualities enable us to ‘be there in the text.’ Importantly, finding our voice means becoming finely tuned and critical of our own inner working,—this is our struggle, where we try to negotiate our way into this academic space. In a sense, this has to do with the way in which we supervise our own students, perhaps a struggle for other scholars too.

Appropriately, we are reminded by the words of Abraham Maslow (1962, pp. 202-203):

We are still forced by academic custom to talk about our own experiences in about the same way as we might talk about bacteria, or the moon or about white rats, assuming the subject-object cleavage, assuming that we are detached, distant and uninvolved, assuming that we (and the object of perception) are unmoved and unchanged by the act of observation, assuming that we split off the “I” from the “Thou,” assuming that all observation, thinking, expression and communication must be cool, never warm, assuming that cognition can only be contaminated or distorted by emotion, etc. We must make explicit what we all accept implicitly that our kind of work is often felt deeply and comes out of deep personal grounds, that we sometimes fuse with the objects of the study rather than splitting from them, that we are usually profoundly involved, and that we must be if our work is not to be fake.

We have discovered on our journey that we first need to be able to lock onto the vehicle that carries that voice. Academic voice itself is forever dependent on the intelligent consciousness that introduces it to the scholarly ether and such intelligent consciousness dwells only in individual scholars.

Each scholar is the embodiment of an exceptional, irreplaceable intellectual identity. Each identity lives inside a self and it is this self that grants the voice of that individual clearance to taxi to the launch pad from where it will eventually take off into the densely populated skies over Academia.

Stripped of all nonessentials, voice is nothing but sound and the sound of a voice can only find its fleeting moment of meaning when it is specifically used as the transmitting agent for speech, that is, as the packaging material for pouches of organized and classified information that come in three sizes: words, phrases, and paragraphs.

Finding our voice in our academic writing then involves (in an almost metaphysically profound sense) a journey in search of the self. In the case of a novice arriving at the customs desk of Academia, it would seem that this journey in search of our own scholarly individuality leads—all too often—straight to the gates of Hades where we struggle in an eternity of suspended space-time to snatch our beloved identity from the pale, anaemic arms of a very distant and emotionally cold academic Pluto.

The previous three paragraphs were initially drafted in the first person singular. When three senior, well-established and respected scholars were asked to comment on these three paragraphs, their individual verdicts were, in a very uncanny way, almost exactly the same—as if prearranged,

Your writing appears somewhat forced. It smacks of self-important superciliousness and conceited scholarly adolescence. Sincerity is good, but you should remember that most academics tend to get nervous in the presence of too much unguarded self-defense. You must learn to tone it down.

Of course, we were bowled over. How can these people, independently from each other, issue virtually the same ruling based on the evidence of only 240 very ordinary English words that were braided into a declaration of, what we originally thought was, frank, truthful honesty with just a dash of metaphorical spice?

Language is the apparel in which we parade our thoughts before others but we are only allowed to be academically honest and expose our scholarly viscera to the extent that we are prepared to adhere to the strict dress code prescribed by the cherubs who guard the gates to our academic guild. Was that it?

Hovering at the periphery of our recollection, we can still trace the hazy outlines of what we were brought up to believe that academics were some kind of sophisticated community of hermits where the residents all live cosily in their own, private ivory towers and where they are permitted to

mumble softly to themselves in their own secret language. But these three people? Who are they? Are they members of the same lodge of academic freemasons who happen to share the same sociolect and who specialize in assigning predetermined appraisals “judge-by-checklist” to the virginal, unsullied and forthright endeavours of all honest-to-goodness outsiders who may desperately try to acquire their own plot of academic real estate in this exclusive suburb? Is it, perhaps, a case of what Glynda Hull, (1998) Director of the *College Writing Programs* and an associate professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California in Berkeley, refers to as the maintenance of “an insider-outsider status quo”? (<http://www.grad.berkeley.edu/publications/thegraduate/fall98/f98voice.htm>) If Hull is right, we can confidently declare that this is where our journey in search of the elusive “we” in the concept “ourselves” is supposed to start. This is a dialogical process. We propose, however, that this should also be mutually *diagogic* process: Not only are we—as academic novices—sure to benefit from the collective wisdom of established academics, but they are also sure to benefit from the unique manner in which we struggle—within our own tempero-spatial situatedness—with the same conundrums of past academic starters-out. We are outsiders and we want in. How do we accomplish that? Do we have any realistic hope of our voices singing along one day in the same choir of which the above-mentioned three scholars are all long-standing members? How long will it take before we will also be able to converse in the same scholarly sociolect?

## In Conclusion

In traversing the land of novice scholarship and in trying to find where we may dare to speak with honesty, we, the lone neophyte researchers soon realize that what may appear to be a thematically rich and semantically stimulating tapestry of undulating scholarly midlands is, in fact, something of an oxymoron. Available evidence points to the fact that academic writing still seems to have a reputation for being stilted, colourless, and difficult to understand. The rule still seems to be that the more convoluted the sentence structure and abstruse the language is, the more serious the scholarship is judged to be (<http://www.grad.berkeley.edu/publications/thegraduate/fall98/f98voice.htm>). So, before we can even begin to think about how to plot our narrative courses in terms of our Clandinian navigational beacons, we need to reach closure on a number of fundamental quandaries that are, at the moment, precluding us from receiving start-up clearance from

Academia's air-traffic controllers. The first of these includes the dilemma of locating the essence of scholarly being, which we suspect, is enjoying academic asylum in the kingdom of I which, as we described above, is located beyond the gates of Hades where the ethereal despot, Pluto, reigns. Having successfully isolated the phenomenon of self, the second conundrum would then be how to extract the essence of scholarly being from the reassuring comfort of its primary identity and then to charm it into voicing its first gurgling syllables. The third challenge would be to transport both the self and the newly born scholarly being back to academic suburbia across the curvature of individual historicity and via the temporal-spatial corridors of present-day communal *Zeitgeist*. The fourth—and most difficult—hitch would be to identify a suitable space where the self and the newly born scholarly I can manage their knowledge crafting enterprise. As stated in the second sentence of this article, it should preferably be a space somewhere between the knowledge we have adopted from the theories that sustain our thinking, on the one hand, and the realities that we encounter in the research fields where knowledge grows, on the other.

We close our narrative “when the veil of silence is lifted and the writer knows he or she has something to say and feels the power of voice, that person still must find a way of saying what he or she wishes to speak” (Clandinin and Connelly 1994, p. 424). Finding our voice and signature in our academic work would seem the very fabric from which our writing is crafted. In our search we cannot afford to be inaudible but we have to advance and risk our academic voice to grow as scholars for the collective good and larger society.

## Note

1. (Academic) Individualism

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