Voice, Archive, Practice:
The Textual Construction of
Professional Identity

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If educators are to include stories of teaching in the pages of professional research journals, they ought to become more aware of what happens when experience is represented in text. In this paper I argue first, that the case for teachers' stories will not be strengthened by appeals to voice metaphors; second, that since we already possess an extensive archive of stories about teachers we ought to subject them to a searching rhetoric of inquiry in order to ascertain how they have constructed plausible representations of teaching; and third, that any hope for creating a space for this literature must be deferred until current conceptions of the purposes and practices of the research journal are radically reconsidered.

Si les enseignants acceptent d'introduire des anecdotes d'enseignement dans les revues professionnelles, ils devraient réaliser ce qui se produit lorsque c'est l'expérience qui est livrée au texte. Dans cet article, je voudrais d'abord souligner que la question d'anecdotes des enseignants ne trouvera personne pour prendre sa défense en raison de ses métaphores. En second lieu, étant donné que nous possédons déjà un grand nombre d'anecdotes d'enseignants, nous devons les soumettre à une recherche rigoureuse en vue de savoir comment elle ont construit une représentation plausible de l'enseignement. Finalement, il serait important de différer la publication de ces anecdotes jusqu'au moment ou sera reconsidérés en profondeur les objectifs et les manières de faire des revues de recherche.

In his response to Clandinin's (1992) recent position paper, "Creating Spaces for Teachers' Voices," Milburn (1992) raises a number of important and provocative questions with respect to the advisability of making professional research journals the place where teachers' voices can be heard and where "we can begin to create a literature of teachers' stories" (Clandinin, 1992, p. 61). Some of Milburn's reservations are procedural and concern the editorial dilemma of assessing, for example, the quality of teachers' writing. Others are narratological and raise matters concerning the matrix of genre, rhetoric, and ideology that arise in the construction (and interpretation) of stories anywhere. Still others are concerned with

whether some topics might still be taboo, an indication, perhaps, that some might consider stories by gay or lesbian teachers either inappropriate or too controversial to appear in the pages of a research journal. Thus, in my view Milburn rightly tempers Clandinin's otherwise excellent suggestion by asking us to sort out more clearly what is at stake here before this particular Pandora's box is opened. In this paper I discuss three interrelated issues that emerge from my reading of Clandinin's suggestion and from Milburn's response to it. Expressed as propositions these issues are first, that the case for teachers' stories will not be strengthened by appeals to voice metaphors but only by consideration of what happens when experience is transformed into text; second, that we need to subject the already extensive archive of stories of teaching to a searching rhetoric of inquiry aimed at disclosing *how* stories of teaching persuade us of their plausibility and coherence; and third, that unless we collectively rethink the nature and purpose of the research journal as a linguistic and cultural practice sustained by a system of textual politics, any future proposals for making teachers' stories more widely accessible to the profession are doomed to fail. Thus, my focus in this paper is on those issues that seem to me crucial to this debate, a focus aimed at keeping the conversation going as we begin to consider the consequences of Clandinin's professional call-to-action.

Voice, Text, and Narrative Identity

I interpret educators' need to find evidence of a genuine voice, to locate the "person" in or behind the stories of teaching, as a need to identify a human presence in the writing, a discovery which is thought somehow to guarantee both the sincerity and the authenticity of the story and of the teller (Trilling, 1971). However, this neo-Romantic search for voice is grounded in a metaphor which links speech with writing, a link which seems so natural to us in Western culture that we have come to mistrust texts that appear "disembodied" or "detached," texts in which we can find no markers of an authentic human presence. For example, much of the writing instruction in our public schools and universities promotes the notion that voice is "that part of the self that pushes the writing ahead,

the dynamo in the process" (Graves, 1983, p. 277) and that "voiceless" texts are in important ways also lifeless texts.

It is worth pointing out again that what too often gets overlooked in discussions of this sort, and what literary theorists have long been at pains to demonstrate, is that the *illusion* of spontaneity, reality, or human identity can be textually produced and that it is a function of our literary competence as *readers* that we come to understand that certain textual conventions signal reliability or unreliability, sincerity or untrustworthiness in a narrator (Booth, 1961, 1988; Culler, 1975). The points arising from this that are germane to Clandinin's project are therefore twofold. First, voice may be an unhelpful and misleading metaphor for beginning to think about the value of teachers' stories because it is premised on a view of language as a transparent medium which provides an unobstructed view of an authentic human presence. Rather, if we follow through on the premise that all stories of teaching are constructions and hence are texts produced by human acts of intention with an eye to their shape, manner, style, and effect, we will be that much closer to considering their broader value as particular *kinds* of stories. The curricular significance of these stories is that the authors draw emblematic attention to the ethical dimension of teaching as "storied experience" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991). In this respect one can scarcely disagree that Angela, the student from whose journal entry Clandinin quotes in her paper, is "unique ... as a person" (1992, p. 60); but her story, *as a story*, borders on the banal and is one we've all surely heard many times before. While Angela's discovery of the usefulness of journals as a curricular tool may have come as a welcome surprise to her, I submit that its more general contribution to "how curriculum is made and lived out in classrooms" (p. 60) lies not in its uniqueness but in its typicality and familiarity as a story of a particular kind, in this instance as a minor epiphany on Angela's larger spiritual quest to make sense of herself and her work with her students. Thus, if teachers' experiences are to become texts in the pages of our research journals, their force as suasive acts of communication would entail that as writers teachers must make provision to ensure that their readers are led to accept the *form* of their texts at the same time that they are led to accept their view of schools and teaching as both recognizable and plausible (Chatman, 1990).

With this in mind, one way of addressing the issue of teacher voice when experience becomes text is to begin talking about the construction of story as a social, rhetorical, and linguistic practice, rather than to construe it as a vehicle of personal expression whose major interest lies in facilitating access to the "real" person behind the text. In other words, stories of teaching outside of those produced for coursework or as an aid to private reflection (i.e., stories aimed at a public audience of fellow professionals) must be seen as forming part of a discursive network whose existence is neutral neither in intention nor effect. Yet, if we continue to insist on the status of stories of teaching as "unique" expressions of authentic private experience buttressed by ethical appeals to "voice," we preempt any critical or rhetorical comments about their quality as suasive discourse. Consequently, I believe that the stories of teaching for which we might create spaces in our research journals can only be read and understood against a background of other similar and dissimilar stories of teaching, stories that take many discursive forms as they circulate within our society and culture (Graham, in press).

Second, an inordinate concern with voice may signal, as Gray (1982) notes in commenting on our contemporary fascination with autobiography, "an admission of powerlessness, for one turns everything into personal history only when one fears that some larger collective history has no place for one" (p. 32). Voice metaphors thus seem to suggest that for teachers to find their own personal voice is at the same time for them to discover heretofore hidden sources of self-esteem, confidence, and professional authority, an authority that Clandinin feels teachers lack at present, but one that can be created by having their stories published in research journals. Clandinin would erase teachers' sense of being excluded from the elitist conversation of educational researchers (whose symbol of exclusion is the research journal itself) by ensuring at least that, as members of the academy, the very presence of teachers' stories will make us "*listen* to teachers' stories" (1992, p. 61) [italics added] in ways with which we apparently do not listen at present. Ironically, though, listening to teachers' stories in the pages of our journals means *reading* them; if learning to read for voice means learning to recognize certain textual conventions associated with the production of voice, writing for voice means that teachers must

become skilled at creating reading positions for their audience from which both the form and the content of their stories can be judged both plausible and coherent. If research journals make up the discursive sites where teachers' stories are to appear and if publishing these stories is to be a "first step in creating a collaborative agenda for educational research shared with teachers" (Clandinin, 1992, p. 61), then everyone, teachers and researchers alike, needs to evince a greater concern for a rhetoric of inquiry, that is, "with the gestalt created through considerations of ... our methods of sense-making, our metaphors and other figures of speech, and our ethical, moral and political interests" (Sirotnik, 1991, p. 253). One way of evincing a concern for how the multiple images and stories of teaching that circulate in our culture and that do the work of shaping teachers' perceptions of their profession is to examine the extensive literature that already fills the archives of what Schubert and Ayers (1992) call "teacher lore."

Stories of Teaching as Secular Scripture

As I see it, one of Clandinin's main concerns is that for too long the work of teachers has been written *about* by others rather than by teachers themselves. This insider focus is required presumably because it is thought that more conventional kinds of research present the possibility of being both irrelevant to the needs of teachers and at the same time exploitative in that publishing research findings generally advances the researcher's career but rarely advances the teacher-subject's (Hammersley, 1992). However, this is not the place to begin an excursion into the politics of personal knowledge or the teacher-as-researcher movement; rather, it is important to reiterate that there already exists in the public domain an extensive literature by and about teaching that forms what Schubert and Ayers are calling "teacher lore." The contours of this public textual territory have been shaped over time by a variety of forms: novels, films, ethnographies, biographies, autobiographies, and investigations of the "new journalism." These stories and representations of teachers and teaching have been written for audiences larger than a dissertation committee; as Schubert puts it, they are texts that have "[made] it out of specialized, intellectual bookstores and into regular bookstores" (1992, p. 141). These

public documents have helped at specific historical moments to reaffirm, create, or transform particular images of teaching and form part of the rich vein of stories that we have inherited as the secular scripture of our profession.   These stories help us imagine the possibilities as well as disclose the constraints of the institutional world of teaching where we make our living, suffer, succeed, and fail.   We study and become acquainted with this archival lore simply because, to paraphrase Lord Acton, if we allow ourselves to lose contact with this history and the cautionary tales it tells we are doomed to repeat them. So when Clandinin calls for the kinds of publications that "have spaces for the voices of children, researchers, and teachers" in order to "create a literature that records these stories" (1992, p. 61), one can only point out that we already have such a literature in our possession, a popular literature that does not bear the imprint of the academy — a major reason, I would guess, for its very popularity with teachers and members of the general public alike.

While it is clear that this literature has not presented the last word on what the experience of teaching is like, nor in general has it been concerned with exploring, say, the impact of new curricular initiatives on pedagogy as is more academically oriented research, there is no denying its power to dramatize the effects of schooling as a cultural practice on the bodies and minds of teachers. In many instances (for example, consider *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, The Child Buyer, Dead Poets' Society,* as well as *Teacher, Death at an Early Age, Among Schoolchildren*) these texts reverberate as complex verbal symbols and repay many reviewings and rereadings as we come to grips with both the matter and the manner in which they challenge, disturb, or inspire. Therefore, when Milburn (1992) observes that one of "the last questions" he would ask of "the first two chapters of *Hard Times* is whether or not the 'account' is 'authentic'" (p. 63), he, too, recognizes that a teacher who strives for authenticity in a story by remaining as close as possible to the empirical facts of his or her experience may be providing signs of responsible methodological procedure; nevertheless, there is no guarantee that the story will prove interesting.

Therefore, one of the points we must always keep in mind if we wish to promote teachers' stories as a form of social research is that "both the

novelist and the social researcher construct their stories by the use of archetypes and metaphors" (Postman, 1988, p. 14). Thus, as novelists, if Dickens gives us Gradgrind as the archetype of the hide-bound teacher of "facts, facts, facts," while Spark gives us Jean Brodie as the archetypal fascist who creates a cadre of elite students as members of her own personality cult, just as surely Ashton-Warner has given us the teacher as archetypal earth mother and Kozol the teacher as political activist on behalf of children as the oppressed victims of "the system." Consequently, a major reason why I would welcome the appearance of stories of teaching in our research journals is that it would be a public sign that teachers are acting in the important capacity as "creators and narrators of social myth" (Postman, 1988, p. 17) and in this capacity, like moral theologians, that teachers have taken on the task of "[rediscovering] what people once were told and need to be told again" (p. 18). As moral theologians, teachers would then be charged with the responsibility of constructing stories of teaching that bear emblematic testimony to the consequences of curricular decisions, of creating images and pictures of educational environments that might change the way we think about our schools and classrooms, and of extending the imaginative boundaries of what can be said and thought about teaching as a caring profession.

In making a case for the recovery of the sources of teacher lore I am getting at something of which Clandinin (and her colleague Connelly) are fully aware, for they have spelled out in detail elsewhere many of the caveats as well as many of the hopes that they entertain for the use of narrative inquiry as a research methodology and for the place of story more generally within education. In one of their more recent statements, Connelly and Clandinin (1991) favor the use of narrative inquiry that produces stories which are "explanatory [and] invitational" (p. 135), stories that are to be judged "good" by a reader when "a reader of a story connects with it by recognizing particulars, by imagining the scenes in which the particulars could occur, and by reconstructing them from remembered associations with similar particulars" (p. 135). Thus, the writing of narratives of teaching, narratives which are to be judged good by readers on the plausibility and associative power of their representations, is offered as part of the "dialectical balancing act" (p. 136) between the writer and the

reader of these stories. It is a balancing act in particular for the academic researcher who labors under the responsibility of remaining faithful to the lives of his or her subjects and to the empirical data; it is an equal responsibility for the teacher/writer who must resist the temptation to "fake the data" or fictionalize the facts of his or her autobiography. Consequently, for Connelly and Clandinin (1991) even the inevitability of interpretation at every stage in the collection and writing up of the data "does not make narrative into fiction even though the language of narrative inquiry is heavily laced with terms derived from the literary criticism of fiction" (p. 128). Yet even as Connelly and Clandinin caution that narrative inquiry as a research methodology is to stop short of producing fictionalized accounts, they concede that readers of these accounts must still borrow a great deal of their interpretive vocabulary for understanding these accounts from the language of literary criticism. Hence, if one applies, say, formalist criteria of interpretation as I am suggesting, then the story must convince on both the level of its form and of its content. Thus, when Clandinin claims that stories of teaching can add not only to our understanding of teaching but can also "encourage change in practice" (1992, p. 61), she is committing herself to a belief in the transformative power of stories, a belief in which the role of the storyteller is grounded as the creator of a social mythology.

It is worth reiterating that educators are already possessed of a body of texts that is the repository of a spectrum of competing and complementary myths, archetypes, and images of teachers and teaching. We should not therefore anticipate that as teachers and researchers we will create, *ex nihilo*, an entirely new mythology, one that is essentially different from the stories that presently form the archive of teacher lore. Rather, by beginning to subject the images and texts we have inherited to a continuous process of reinterpretation and ideological appraisal, by looking through a variety of interpretive lenses at both the matter and the manner of their cultural work (and, one need hardly add, by publishing these commentaries as exemplars of a particular kind of inquiry), we will be put in touch with a largely neglected body of work within the tradition of narrative writing on education. The stories that Clandinin would have us publish would then not only supplement this literature but might also be

judged more fairly in the light of this tradition and its central myths of concern, not with the purpose of making invidious comparisons but rather to restory for a contemporary audience the kinds of myths that we have inherited from the past, myths that might have tempted some into thinking that they are telling the whole story of teaching or others into only seeking out the kind of myth that forever retells the stories of teaching they want retold.

Research Journals: Textual Politics, Cultural Practices

Clandinin's call for the appearance of stories by teachers in our research journals not only asks for a restructuring of what has traditionally counted as publishable research but also challenges the very notion of the textual practices of research journals themselves. For example, as many of us have doubtless experienced, submissions to professional journals that do not adhere strictly to the conventions of such style guides as *APA, MLA,* or *The Chicago Manual,* to name only the more obvious, are not only regarded as acts of professional discourtesy but are generally returned unread with a disciplinary reminder that, if we want to be published, we must play by the rules. Thus, the professional journal itself as social construction and cultural practice already places limits on what can be said and in broad terms how it can be said, on what will count as knowledge, and on how that knowledge is to be conveyed as warranted belief. As a particular form of pedagogy, then, the professional journal teaches us what are acceptable as valid contributions to knowledge; in this respect authors of stories of teaching leave themselves open to the charge that, like literature, their conclusions are "mere" opinion, for as we know literature "nothing affirmeth." Thus, as a form of what Giroux (1991) calls "textual politics" (p. 26), the attempt to include stories by teachers in research publications may turn out to be a process which involves "a pedagogical struggle over the relationship between knowledge and power as well as a struggle over the construction and development of the political subject" (p. 27). Clearly, the narrative of Clandinin's own project is not encoded this way as professional and pedagogical warfare replete with military metaphors; rather, she characterizes it more organically as a slow process of accommodation, a situation where those already seated in positions of

editorial power will make room for stories of teaching since they have become persuaded that "stories function as arguments in which we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual community or life as lived" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991, p. 136). However, like Clandinin, I am less than certain that this will "occur quickly or easily" (1992, p. 61); much work remains to be done to raise editors' awareness to the potential, and researchers' awareness to the limits, of narrative approaches to teaching.

One of those limits, from the storytellers' point of view, is that writers who turn to stories of teaching as a research methodology which can add to our knowledge of teaching must become more aware that in spite of their best efforts at expunging the fictional elements from their narratives by turning, say, to the meta-fictional techniques of postmodernism which "expose the device," (Atkinson, 1990), their stories will still retain the tendency to assume a particular shape. Thus, although Connelly and Clandinin (1991) consistently warn against creating narratives that employ what they call "the Hollywood effect" (p. 142) where everything works out all right in the end, they have yet to consider the possibility that for strategic and ideological reasons a teacher or researcher might consciously elect to prefigure the empirical data as a particular kind of story and after so doing mobilize, for example, the structure of tragedy or romance as part of his or her overall narrative and rhetorical strategy (White, 1973; Graham, in press). For me, the existence of these rhetorical choices and literary avenues of expression brings with them the corresponding requirement that the editors and gatekeepers of our professional journals will have to develop a greater sensitivity to "the content of the form" (White, 1987); as well, they might consider actively seeking out manuscripts that deploy an entire range of styles and genres as teachers and researchers alike avail themselves of this new-found discursive freedom. It should go without saying, of course, that even if these utopian speculations should come to pass, it will not spell the end of the traditional journal article as we know it; rather, like the present-day *College English, English Journal,* or *Language Arts,* many of our professional publications might develop into an eclectic mix of approaches and ideological persuasions, where the traditional research article exists cheek-by-jowl with stories and poetry, a

mix that reflects, celebrates, and legitimates the diversity of the journal's readers and their research interests and methodologies.   Under this scenario, research journals may then become more genuinely pluralistic and democratic and hence may then appeal to a new and expanding audience of teachers and researchers, many of whom at present feel excluded because they cannot recognize themselves and their concerns in their pages.

Over the years many of my students have wondered, as I have, how professional journals get started, who starts them, how and by whom editorial boards are chosen, whose voices really count when it comes to accepting or rejecting submissions, why we see the same names cropping up over and over again in the same journals, and why, generally speaking, teachers feel that they have nothing to contribute to these conversations. One reason might be that teachers are too busy teaching to write for journals that don't seem tuned in to their real concerns; another might be that teachers don't want to talk to us because *we* have nothing to say to *them*, that for them, journals are simply expensive ways for professors to talk to each other and to construct professional reputations (Lehman, 1992).   Sadly, a great many of these criticisms are true; this is why Clandinin's suggestions are likely to prove slow to catch on and why the democratization of educational research and the manner of its publication will take many years yet to evolve.

Conclusion

My own warnings in this paper have been aimed, ironically and by necessity, not at an audience of teacher/researchers but at their supervisors. By intervening at this level of the debate I hope to have addressed what seem to me some of the thorniest and most pressing procedural and political issues involved if the experience of teachers is to become text in the pages of our research journals.   Clearly, my own sympathies are with Clandinin; yet if we are to begin to take Clandinin's proposal as seriously as I believe we should, we also must begin to consider what will assist and what will impede the success of her project.   To this end, I have suggested that in clearing a space for teachers' stories in our research journals we would do well to abandon arguments for their inclusion by recourse to

voice metaphors, however politically expedient or appealing that may seem in the short run. Rather, we should move to consider the stories of teaching that might appear in research journals (written, of course, with a view to constraints of space) as secular parables, stories of a particular kind both in intention and execution. As case studies in miniature, their ethical import as moral theology would be to illuminate, say, how certain theories of teaching are embodied in the lived experience of the classroom, or to draw emblematic attention to aspects of the gendered nature of teaching that we have never considered in quite that way before or that we have forgotten and need to be reminded of again.

Thus, I am suggesting that one way to develop an appreciation for what kinds of stories of teaching have been told, how they have been told, and how a particular telling has enabled or constrained what can be said and thought about teachers and teaching is for us to develop our collective historical consciousness by reacquainting ourselves with many of the stories and representations of teaching from the archives of teacher lore. Only by becoming deeply familiar with the kinds of stories that have been mobilized at various historical junctures to reaffirm, challenge, or create certain images of teaching can teachers and researchers as storytellers themselves begin to ascertain how their own restoryings affirm or oppose previous images and restoryings. Consequently, we must encourage the pursuit of a rhetoric of inquiry which takes the texts of teacher lore as its object and subjects them to critical reinterpretation from a variety of perspectives. In this way not only will we begin to recover a neglected area of writing on education, but we will thereby become more familiar with the range of rhetorical effects that are available to us as we formally construct our own narratives into a recognizable form as stories of a particular kind.

Finally, this clearing of a space for narrative approaches to research and teaching can only begin to accomplish its cultural work if there is a corresponding and general reevaluation with respect to the purpose and function of our professional research publications. From the perspective of developing a collaborative research agenda this is where, as Clifford Geertz once remarked about the work of anthropologists, "the writing comes in." At present, as Clandinin knows, the burden of proof rests not

with the editors and gatekeepers in the profession (although one detects even now a slight loosening of the editorial reins) but ultimately on the demonstrated narrative abilities of teachers and researchers as individuals committed to pursuing the difficult and delicate balancing act of creating artful accounts of teaching. I believe that at all levels of education we need to become convinced that art creates its own kind of truth and that we ought not to shy away from the truths it tells. I also believe that these are the kinds of truths about teaching that our research journals must begin to reflect in the future as teachers go about producing texts of their teaching as a way of writing themselves into, and hence of rewriting, the social text of teaching.

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