

Academic Writing and Identity Constructions

“Academic writing and identity constructions is a breath of writing-fresh-air. Written with freedom and courage, and curated with imagination and energy, the book’s contributors invite the reader to think and write otherwise. They conjure new possibilities for writing as they consider its place within, beyond, and in resistance to, the academy. At once lyrical and political, theoretical and raw, this gorgeous collection is a welcome, urgent, vital intervention.”

—Professor Jonathan Wyatt, *University of Edinburgh, UK*

“This book fulfills a much needed gap in research about the complexity of academic identity construction. By exploring the notions of writing as performance, different perspectives come to light to show the ever changing landscapes academics navigate as they move between multiple roles and shifting contexts. At the centre of the book is the foundation of the ‘self’ as becoming.

As I read the stories, the positioning of ‘writing as inquiry’ and ‘science as art’ opens to a transformative space for dichotomies to be shaped and reshaped. The exploration of writing allows creative border-crossing in sometimes straight, sometimes messy and sometimes multimodal approaches. The genre allows the authors to break free of traditional rules, styles and academic language to produce a new art-form that takes the reader on a self-reflective journey.

The final section provides opportunities for ‘continuings’ rather than ‘conclusions’ to offer a continual sharing, questioning and reflecting within a democratic ontology of knowledge. This innovative approach allows space and place to be fluid and resists any privileging of knowledge systems.

Overall, the book is important for academics to share, question and reflect on the power and importance of writing. As the book concludes, the potential for writing is to speak for acceptance and speak for hope.”

—Professor Susanne Garvis, *University of Gothenburg, Sweden*

Louise M. Thomas • Anne B. Reinertsen
Editors

Academic Writing and Identity Constructions

Performativity, Space and Territory in
Academic Workplaces

palgrave
macmillan

Editors

Louise M. Thomas
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane, QLD, Australia

Anne B. Reinertsen
Queen Maud University College
Trondheim, Norway

ISBN 978-3-030-01673-9 ISBN 978-3-030-01674-6 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01674-6>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018960833

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2019

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: © Michelle Patrick / Getty

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To Larry and Børre

Preface

Academic life forces in universities are volatile – ever changing experiences in a multiplicity of shifting contexts. Such volatility is a global phenomenon. With such worldwide shifts in the contexts and terrains of universities, the traditional domain of academia, there are opportunities to question what it means to engage with and in the work of being academic. Through processes of questioning what may once have been taken-for-granted expectations and ways-of-being in academia, academics can work to position and re-position themselves as writers, thinkers and researchers within the broader contexts of their academic work. Through the art and act of academic writing, academics can also both work with and resist the traditional spaces and places of being academic. This book is a response to possibilities of multiple theoretical, cultural and contextual takes on notions of working as writer/thinker/researcher, both inside and outside the traditional understandings of the academy. We take as a point of departure, universities and, more broadly, academic writing work shaped by an increasing dominance of commodification, measurement and cultures of accountability determined by outputs – performativity. From this standpoint, the general purpose of this text is to provide academics with opportunities to engage with their personal and professional responses to these shifting contexts and expectations as they write and re-write their identity constructions as writers/thinkers/researchers – as academic.

A positioning of universities as hierarchical, corporatized management structures, which work with and through processes focussed on a performativity outputs/audit-culture, has produced a myriad of responses from academics. These responses have often focussed on critical or damning reactions and have variously taken multiple forms: contributions to academic literature; industrial actions; withdrawal from employment in the sector; accessing health and well-being supports to manage stress levels, and more. Simultaneously, there have been responses from academics which have taken on the changing expectations of academia, with academics engaging with a performativity culture, driven by production of outputs through which the value of the individual is measured. We are not wanting to present a binary because we believe there is much more; there are still more responses and more questions being asked in and of these shifting dynamics of academia. Responses and questions that ask to be heard through this book. We hear being asked: what could/would the dominance of such structures and processes within universities mean – for experiential academic writing/thinking; for taking different paths for our academic writing/for our academic work; for what it is to be academic – to be an academic, differently? We hear speculation of responses that may allow for joy/laughter/playfulness/collaborations to be built into academic writing processes; of responses which allow for slowness and textures in academic writing; responses which make spaces for listening, for being *with*, for being *other* and being *together* while also apart.

Further, and related to this possibility of multiple ways of engaging in academic writing as a response to the volatility of universities, there is within and through the shifting contexts of academia, a strong rhetoric of diversity/unity/collaboration despite a real emphasis on division, silos and competition. Do such contrasts ultimately lead to labels and categorizations that position what it is to be academic and what is expected in this being-ness. And again, we work/hope to avoid any move towards binaries. We take up (and invite others to take up) the opportunity to wonder, to theorise about what effects such labels and categorizations may have on internal trust and accountability in the activities of academic work, of academic writing in particular, and what the logistics of such labels and categorizations may eventually produce. This book is both a response to this opportunity and an actioning of this opportunity.

Additionally, we attempt to, through this book, theorise our wonderings. There can be multiple approaches to the theorising of such wonderings: discussions of Derridean deconstruction, Deleuze/guattarian material discursive action of symbols and Foucauldian docility, governmentality and self-technologies, bio-politics and auto-ethnographic theorisations of lived-experiences of academia. By theorizing what it may mean to be/become academic-writer, can writing be used to open ourselves to think and become otherwise?

Political-power relations at work in current university contexts can drive commodification of academia/ideas/thinking/writing. That is power relations that are embedded in a context of corporatized/commercial ownership of the individual by the collective/institution rather than a context of mutual, autonomous collaboration between individuals and collectives. In such a context of inter-relationships academic writing can be positioned as a way to work through the entanglements of power relations at work in contexts that construct identity as an academic writer – in this case the power entanglements at work in deciding what is deemed as academic contexts and what gets to be labelled/categorised as academic and academic writing. It is worth considering through and in academic writing what/who influences these power entanglements.

An ever-increasing engagement with online opportunities for academics to share their experiences of academic writing, identifies a growing global interest in writing as an auto-ethnographic performance. As our entanglements expand and deepen, strengthen and weaken, we become more and more aware of (and at times blind to) both the subtleness and complexities of everyday phenomena that ultimately speak- not only for epistemic shifts in our thinking, but for showing such subtleness and complexities with/in our thinking, ultimately in our academic writing, and continually our becomingness as academics. This book responds to a perceived need to, not just write *about* and state subtleties and complexities of being academic, but it also opens and positions these subtleties and complexities for examination and question. In a way performing onto-epistemic shifts through a performance of writing.

The evolution of this text has been driven by a desire to problematize requirements to work with an acceptance/dominance of ‘certainty’ in how a ‘self’ is categorized – in this work specifically a self categorised as

academic. In society we are continually required/asked to identify according to a range of categorizations: e.g. gender (job applications, opening bank accounts, booking airline flights); one specific category for those contributing to this book is as ‘academic’ – what makes you so – the organizational space in which you work – or the type of work you do, another category is that of ‘writer’ – what is it to be/ become categorized as a writer? Focused on a notion of ‘curiosity-driven’ academic-writing work, this text invites an opportunity to step back from all these categorizations, not to argue the right/wrong, good/bad of these categories, but to problematize. To ask what it may mean to break apart these categories and pull them back together in ways that reflect/question what it means to have ‘spaces and places’ in which to do the work of a particularly categorised/labelled academic-writer. How can variously considered and resisted concepts of ‘space and place’ within a performance-driven academic environment of the modern, neo-liberal university problematize and critique what it means to be and become academic? Critique being neither about legitimate or justified criticism per se, but as a form of life or a confirmative immanent critique praxis through a state of virtuality or constant abstractions in which one asks questions – resisting normative ways of thinking, being, writing, always.

Brisbane, QLD, Australia
Trondheim, Norway

Louise M. Thomas
Anne B. Reinertsen

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the contributing authors for a wonderful collaboration. Without you there would be no book. We also want to thank Palgrave Macmillan for trusting our visions and ideas expressed through this publication.

Contents

- 1 Stepping into the Flow... Lif/ve De-comforting Academic Writing: Smooth and Striated Spaces for Being Becoming Performances** 1
Anne B. Reinertsen and Louise M. Thomas

- 2 Territories and Categories of Academic Writer: Possibilizing Through the Act/Art of Writing** 13
Louise M. Thomas

- 3 The End of Criticism Producing Unconscious: Non-personal Activist Academic Writing** 31
Anne B. Reinertsen

- 4 Editing Academic Writing: Productive Erosion and Corrosive Processes** 55
Felicity McArdle

5	Being Ourselves, Naming Ourselves, Writing Ourselves: Indigenous Australian Women Disrupting What It Is to Be Academic Within the Academy	75
	<i>Bronwyn Fredericks, Nereda White, Sandra Phillips, Tracey Bunda, Marlene Longbottom, and Debbie Bargallie</i>	
6	Academic Writing from the Depths: An Autoethnographic and Organisational Account	97
	<i>Agnes Bosanquet</i>	
7	Working with Text(-ures) in Academia: <i>Be Fast, Even While Standing Still!</i>	115
	<i>Ninni Sandvik, Ann Sofi Larsen, Nina Johannesen, and Bente Ulla</i>	
8	Making Sense of Reflexivity: A Posthumanistic Account	135
	<i>Nina Lunkka and Katja Sutela</i>	
9	Technical Female: A Gender Studies Academic in Silicon Valley	151
	<i>Melissa Gregg</i>	
10	Writing Together at a Distance	169
	<i>Linda Henderson and Louise M. Thomas</i>	
11	A Democratic Ontology of Knowledge, All of Us Slipping Out the Back Door	195
	<i>Anne B. Reinertsen and Louise M. Thomas</i>	
Index		201

Notes on Contributors

Agnes Bosanquet is Associate Dean (Course Quality Assurance) in the Faculty of Human Sciences at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. Her focus is qualitative research in critical university studies and changing academic roles and identities. With a PhD in Cultural Studies, she uses critical theories and creative methodologies to explore questions concerning power relations, discourses and practices of inclusion and exclusion, locations of knowledge and constructions of subjectivity. She blogs as theslowacademic.com

Bronwyn Fredericks is Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement), The University of Queensland.

Melissa Gregg is Research Director in the Client Computing Group at Intel Corporation, USA. As a Principal Engineer, her main focus is understanding the future of work, and the implications of changing user behaviour on established PC categories. Prior to joining Intel, Melissa was on faculty in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney (2009–13) following successive postdoctoral fellowships at the Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies, University of Queensland (2004–8).

Linda Henderson is a Senior Lecturer and feminist early years researcher in the Faculty of Education, Monash University. She positions her work within a post-qualitative space and aims to foster connectedness with all living matter. Both her personal and professional lived realities inform her work and underpin her desires for a world that values connectedness, heterogeneity, and multiplicity.

Her work includes poetry, narrative, and arts-based methods with the aim of generating new and just imaginaries for education and society.

Nina Johannesen is an associate professor of Early Childhood Education at Østfold University College (ØUC), Norway. Johannesen and her colleagues have developed a Master's Program in Early Childhood Studies (0–3 years). Her lectures and research have progressed, with a particular interest in children under the age of three years. Dr. Johannesen is working through ethics as a first philosophy to challenge the understanding of young children and their position in society and pedagogical institutions.

Ann Sofi Larsen is an associate professor of Early Childhood Education at Østfold University College (ØUC), Norway. Dr. Larsen and her colleagues have developed a Master's Program in Early Childhood Studies (0–3 years). Her lectures and research have progressed, with a particular interest in children under the age of three years. Dr. Larsen is working through continental philosophy in her studies of professions, searching for diverse ways to issue ethics in pedagogical institutions.

Nina Lunkka is a PhD student at the Research Unit of Nursing Science and Health Management, University of Oulu, Finland.

Felicity McArdle is a scholar in the field of early childhood education and care, with particular focus on pedagogy, arts, curriculum, and teacher education.

Anne B. Reinertsen is professor in philosophy of education, qualitative research methodologies, knowledges of practice and evaluation research. She has worked as teacher, teacher educator and leader. Her research interests are subjective professionalism, leadership, materiality of language, poetization of research and academia. She has been visiting scholar at Stanford University and University of Illinois. Her publications include national and international books, journals and book chapters.

Ninni Sandvik is a professor of Early Childhood Education at Østfold University College (ØUC), Norway. Prof. Sandvik and her colleagues have developed a Master's Program in Early Childhood Studies (0–3 years). She has a particular interest in children under the age of three years. Prof. Sandvik is working through posthumanist theories with pedagogics and didactics concerning the youngest children in kindergarten.

Katja Sutela is a PhD student at the Community of Research in Education, Music, and the Arts, University of Oulu, Finland.

Louise M. Thomas is an academic, consultant, researcher and writer in areas of education and professional identity. She has worked as teacher, teacher educator, consultant, manager and policy officer. She has held academic, administration and leadership roles in multiple universities across Australia. Her research interests are identity constructions of teachers, leaders and researchers; ethics and professional practice. Her publications include national and international journals and book chapters.

Bente Ulla is an associate professor of Early Childhood Education at Østfold University College (ØUC), Norway. Dr. Ulla and her colleagues have developed a Master's Program in Early Childhood Studies (0–3 years). Her lectures and research have progressed, with a particular interest in children under the age of three years. Dr. Ulla is working through continental philosophy in her methodological approaches, searching for diverse ways to problematize bodies, knowledge and power.

Nereda White is a retired academic. Previous position: Director, Centre for Indigenous Education & Research at Australian Catholic University.

List of Figures

Fig. 4.1	My mapping of our home in the gorge	59
Fig. 7.1	Handwritten student text	121
Fig. 7.2	Translated and poeticized student text	123
Fig. 7.3	Student text turned into 'Book poetry'	125
Fig. 7.4	'Cleaned' student text	128
Fig. 7.5	Ultimate student text	130