Validating Arts Research
Reflections on the UK research audit culture and arts 'doing-knowing'

Robin Nelson

Director of Research and Professor of Theatre and Intermedial Performance at University of London (RCSSD) until retirement (Dec 2014), Nelson is also an Emeritus Professor of Theatre and TV Drama at Manchester Metropolitan University where he worked for many years. Twice an RAE/REF sub-panel member, he has himself published widely on the performing arts and media. Recent books include Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances (2013), Stephen Poliakoff on Stage and Screen (2011), and Mapping Intermediality in Performance (co-edited with Bay-Cheng et al.) (2010).

Abstract
This article reflects on the worth of the arts in an academic context partly in the light of the author's experience of formal UK research audit as a sub-panel member (RAE 2008; REF 2014). First the article outlines the emergence and development of UK audit culture, bringing out its upsides and downsides as perceived from different points of view. It proceeds to consider the formal acceptance of practice-based arts inquiries as knowledge-producing within the academy by relating the protocols of UK research audit for handling Practice as Research. Intelligent, investigative arts and media practice may well constitute research but the articulation, evidencing and dissemination of research inquiries and insights pose several challenges. Thirdly, it briefly explores a case for the value of Practice as Research as knowledge-producing in the broader context of interdisciplinary approaches to research within the Arts & Humanities and beyond. It challenges the historic divide between the Arts and Sciences.

Keywords research audit; PaR; doing-knowing; arts; science;

Introduction

This article has three related concerns: the worth of the arts, research audit culture in the UK and the place of Practice as Research (hereafter, PaR) within that culture. Since Part One deals with UK audit culture in general and Parts Two and Three with PaR, it might be helpful for those unfamiliar with the concept to outline what is meant by research submissions through practice. PaR is research undertaken through a practice, the product (and/or documented process) of which is submitted as primary evidence of research in research assessment contexts. Musicians, for example, might submit compositions on CD; dancers or theatre-makers might submit performances on DVD; and visual artists might submit artefacts of all kinds (often digitally photographed for practical purposes of submission). REF fully accepts PaR (see below) and affords the opportunity also to submit a 300-word statement and a portfolio of writings/documentation to help "panel members to access fully the research dimensions of the work" (*Panel criteria and working methods*, Research Excellence Framework 2014, subpanel 35, para 71c).

Part One: research audit in the UK

A research audit culture is not generally welcome. That is to say, most academics - let alone most artists - would prefer it if their efforts were not subject to continuous instrumental scrutiny. Indeed, some would argue that such audit is an infringement of academic freedom and militates against curiosity-driven, 'blue skies' research. Over thirty years, the UK has operated a research assessment exercise (c. every five/seven years) of all academic disciplines in Higher Education. The first exercise took place in 1986 and arose in the context of Margaret Thatcher's initiation of a culture of managerialism, corporatisation and target-setting across the public sector. Indeed, the purpose of the exercise was to determine the allocation of QR (Quality-Related) funding to UK Universities at a time of tight budgetary restrictions.[1]

A subsequent, expanded 'research selectivity exercise' was conducted in 1989 by the Universities Funding Council and allowed for a broader spectrum of subjects and for two outputs per individual researcher to be considered. Thus the broad parameters of assessment of published research outputs (typically journal articles, books and book chapters) and a statement on the research environment by

subject submitted were established. However, criticism remained that too much emphasis was placed, not on research itself, but on contextual factors such as research income and staff and postgraduate student numbers. In 1992 when the distinction between Universities and Polytechnics was abolished, a supposedly more robust and rigorous Research Assessment Exercise was instituted under the auspices of new funding councils (HEFC). Sceptics at the time sensed that the terms were set to distinguish an elite group which would receive a larger share of the limited funding pot from the rest who would receive little, if anything - but it did not quite turn out that way. Pressure increased for greater sector consultation and transparency. Indeed, though a post-1992 legal challenge by the Institute of Dental Surgery demanding reasons for its downgrade was not successful, the judge warned that the system may well need to become more transparent.[2]

In subsequent exercises (RAE 1996, 2001, 2008) the assessment criteria for evaluation and the working methods of panels were made much more explicit and published in handbooks, with each subject sub-panel being afforded the opportunity to determine precise protocols within the general framework and guidance. RAE 2008 brought in a major change: instead of a single grade for an entire subject area (or UOA, Unit of Assessment), a grade was assigned to each research Outcome. Grading of each individual Outcome was introduced to counter the criticism that, under a more general approach, large departments were able to hide a long tail of lesser work and still get high ratings whilst, conversely, excellent staff in low-graded departments were unable to receive adequate funding.

Institutions of HE were invited to submit to as many UOAs as they wished but each individual submitted needed four Outcomes.[3] Structurally the exercise grouped sub-panels in cognate disciplines under the oversight of a main panel in an attempt to ensure commonality of approach and standards of evaluation. The single, summary grades for UoAs were replaced by 'quality profiles' which did not publish Outcome grades for individuals but computed the proportion of each department's research Outcomes as individually assessed against each of four quality categories.[4] The quality profile for Outcomes was then computed against parallel profiles for Environment and Esteem based on written submissions to yield the overall subject profile for each HEI UOA submitted to the sub-

panel. Though established and wealthier institutions continue to achieve under the more inclusive yet rigorous protocols, newer universities, which perhaps have pockets of strong research, can be recognised in respect of standing and funding.

The structure of the re-branded Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2008-2014 remains similar to RAE, grouping cognate subjects into sub-panels under the auspices of main panels. But fewer main and sub-panels, and a slightly more top-down approach to panel chair and member training, aimed to tighten adhesion to published criteria and working methods and to secure even greater commonality of judgement standards across the piece. In respect of the Arts & Humanities in REF 2014, Main Panel D oversaw ten sub-panels covering a wide range of disciplines or UOAs. The requirement over the audit period for each researcher to qualify for submission remains four Outcomes (published works) but Double-weighted Outcomes ('of extended scale and scope') are allowed. Overall, Outcomes counted for 65% of the profile; Environment 15% and Impact 20%.

The truly new dimension in REF 2014, replacing Esteem, is Impact. The new category picks up on a theme implicit in research assessment since its inauguration - public accountability. It is not unreasonable, perhaps, for a government which invests considerable sums in Higher Education to expect the sector to be accountable - and to be able to demonstrate 'value for money' to the public. Though some see such accountability as government interference in HE, without such evidence continued public funding, significantly reduced as it already is, might be further questioned. Critics in the UK over the thirty years, however, have noted a Treasury bias not only towards so-called STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and medicine) but to 'applied' research with its visible public benefits in that applied research solves immediate problems. This disposition has led to a high premium being placed on Impact, and the government has already indicated a likely additional weighting in future audit (perhaps to 40%). UCU, the main university lecturers' union which has always opposed research audit (see below), argued that Impact assessment would undermine support for basic research across all disciplines, disproportionately disadvantage research in the Arts & Humanities, and narrow the research agenda by extending commercialism. The scheme was not tried and tested and

attempts in other countries to measure Impact had failed.[5] At worst it might forge a rift between arts and humanities professors and their science, technology, engineering and medicine counterparts. Viewed more positively, however, Impact assessment may afford opportunities in the Arts & Humanities where many social benefits accrue (see below).

It is no easy matter to make an overall judgement about the UK research assessment process. Over time, there has undoubtedly been more sector consultation, adjustments in response to criticisms, more rigour and greater transparency. Nevertheless, it has been alleged that, rather than crediting and rewarding quality research, UK research assessment has institutionalised the corporatisation and marketisation of learning and knowing. According to UCU, research audit has had:

> a disastrous impact on the UK higher education system, leading to the closure of departments with strong research profiles and healthy student recruitment. It has been responsible for job losses, discriminatory practices, widespread demoralisation of staff, the narrowing of research opportunities through the over-concentration of funding and the undermining of the relationship between teaching and research (UCU Archive: RAE 2008, http://www. ucu.org.uk/rae2008, accessed, 18/01/16).

UCU sees the introduction of the Impact dimension as, "direct interference by government in the content, nature and direction of the research carried out in our universities" (http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/3648/UCU-policy-briefing-Research-Excellence-Framework-REF-Dec-09/pdf/ucupolicybrief_ref_dec09.pdf, accessed 18/01/2016). Over the past thirty years, government-driven managerialism and accountability has become pervasive worldwide in a neo-con drift, and nations have borrowed models from one another. Corporatisation is pervasive across Higher Education in the UK but many of the negative impacts of research audit, arise from the way university research managers (mis-) read the published criteria. Where Practice as Research is concerned, managers ignore the explicit RAE/REF statements that non-written submissions are welcome (see below).[6] Aiming to optimise profiles, universities play

games. They select for submission only those staff who, in their (not sub-panel) judgements will achieve highly, despite the exhortation in RAE/REF manuals to submit all staff who qualify (that is have four Outcomes likely to achieve at least 1*).[7]

On the plus side from the government's perspective, research audit has had positive effects: it has stimulated universities into managing their research and has ensured that funds are targeted at areas of research excellence. The findings serve as an evidence base for claims that UK HE research remains 'world-leading'. Funding is still distributed in relation to REF achievement but, though Arts & Humanities profiles are strong, the amounts yielded to them are relatively small such that some universities are now more concerned about position in the league tables and sustaining reputation than income itself. In the UK, only 3% of total research council expenditure on research and postgraduate funding is allocated to the Arts & Humanities, despite these disciplines representing 31.5% of all UK research-active academics.[8]

Whatever the overall judgement of its benefits and downsides, UK research audit, involving panels of expert peer reviewers, is at once onerous and expensive. At the very least it has caused considerable increased workloads and anxiety for institutions and a large number of individuals over three decades. So, is it worth it?

Part Two: 'taking the positives' – opportunities to validate the arts, including practice-based submissions

For reasons both of space and expertise, address of this question must be limited to the arts and media. UOA 35 (on which the author served in REF 2014) covered Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts (including a significant number of film and television submissions). Whilst the downsides of research audit above are recognised, a relatively positive case is proposed in what follows. The example of Practice as Research (PaR) is offered to illustrate how a quite radical approach to 'academic' research and to the process of knowing has gained credibility through persistent arguments for its inclusion. To speak truth to power, as the phrase goes, it is necessary to engage with institutions in power. Whilst some of the motives for mobilising audit are highly questionable, it is defeatist to assume that things cannot be challenged and changed. Further it is a misunderstanding of the operation of

the hegemonic functions of ideology to assume that negotiations with dominant forces are necessarily unproductive.

As the call for articles for this edition notes, the methods of Art & Humanities continue to be eyed with suspicion in some quarters of the academy. Where funding resource is at stake, sniping from established ground will inevitably take aim at newly-forming territories. Since its height in the late Nineteenth Century, 'the scientific method' has occupied the high ground in the academy and, as Bourdieu has remarked, "the solidarity that binds scientists to their science (and to the social privilege which makes it possible and which it justifies or procures) predisposes them to profess the superiority of their knowledge" (1990: 28). However, the tide is turning, as we shall see, against the historical science/arts binary and towards inter-disciplinary co-operations. Nevertheless, some attention will be paid below to the predicament of arts practice in respect of research and knowledge-production.

The first positive thing to note about formal research audit is that it affords the opportunity for the less established subject domains to be judged alongside - and against the same criteria within a common framework - as the more established. In the UK, arts research has been strengthened overall by submitting itself to scrutiny and showing up well in relation to other subject domains. The core requirement to demonstrate 'originality, rigour, and significance' and to adduce evidence for research inquiries in parallel with all other subjects locates arts research squarely within academic protocols.

In the process new methodologies such as PaR have achieved validation. Indeed, in UK research audits, non word-based submissions are now formally invited:

> [i]n addition to printed academic work, research outputs may include, but are not limited to: new materials, devices, images, artefacts, products and buildings; confidential or technical reports; intellectual property, whether in patents or other forms; performances, exhibits or events; work published in non-print media (*Assessment framework and guidance on submissions,* July 2011. REF 2014, para 106).

This protocol leads directly to the second positive aspect: the opportunity afforded for non word-based submissions by arts practi-

tioner-researchers. The many staff in HEIs whose primary mode of pedagogy and research is through a practice (other than writing) are not required fundamentally to shift to word-based modes and write articles and books but can continue with inquiries through a range of arts, media (and other) practices. However, formal submission of PaR to research audits requires adjustments (see below).

The third positive point to emphasise about UK research audit to date, is the centrality of "discipline-based expert review" (*Assessment framework and guidance on submissions,* July 2011. REF 2014, para 15) in the process. The pressure placed by government to shift away from expert peer review towards citation metrics in drawing up the protocols for REF 2014 was roundly resisted by most disciplines in the consultation process. Metrics ultimately played only a minor, and optional, part in some UOA's. Though the process of peer review is resource-consuming - particularly in the arts and media given the variety of practices under review - the principle of expert peer review remains crucial in recognition that audit is a matter of judgement against transparent criteria and cannot be instrumentally achieved.[9]

The challenges of PaR submissions

The sub-panel chair reports for both RAE 2008 and REF 2014 note that there is room for improvement in PaR submissions.[10] This has on occasion been misinterpreted as indicating that PaR is denigrated and not given a weight equal to more traditional publications. But evidence from service on two sub-panels (RAE 2008 and REF 2014) affirms that assessors are fully open to accrediting PaR where the submission puts them in a position to make a sound judgment. But rather too frequently, opportunities are not fully taken to articulate and evidence the research inquiry in the 300-word statement and accompanying portfolio as invited. The practice - submitted in recorded form, typically on DVD - is frequently left to speak for itself when a few well-chosen words might have given the clue required to the inquiry inherent in it.

There are, of course, a number of challenges to practitioner-researchers.[11] First, live performances are not readily disseminable other than in a recorded form which to some undermines the very ephemerality of the praxis. Peer reviewers are, however, attuned to this issue and able to interpret the context and make appropriate

allowances, precisely because, as members of the subject community, they are sensitive to its various modes. The situation may not be ideal but not to accept it would effectively entail the exclusion of (non object-based) PaR. The second challenge is documentation which, astutely edited, can strongly evidence the inquiry embedded in a praxis. Though documentation may be seen as an additional burden by some practitioners, the requirement is neither for a professional-quality record nor a written article but for "complementary evidence" (of all kinds) which might assist "panel members to access fully the research dimension of the work" (*Assessment framework and guidance on submissions,* July 2011. REF 2014, para 71c). The documentation required is not significantly different from that which many artists undertake for a variety of professional reasons. Rather than presented as a showreel, however, it needs, to be edited and presented to evidence a research inquiry.

Last but not least, is the challenge of articulating the research inquiry in a 300-word statement. As a recent conference call notes, the relationship between writing and arts practices is often, "felt to be one of friction, opposition or paradox. Writing gives an explicit verbal account of the implicit knowledge and understanding embodied in artistic practices and products while at the same time art may escape or go beyond what can be expressed by words and resist (academic) conventions of accountability" (cfp International conference of Society for Artistic Research, 2016). Notwithstanding these concerns, a written element is almost always a requirement of research in the context of 'the academy'. However, particularly to those who may not have been schooled in the modes of traditional humanities and whose primary mode of expression is not words, it is no easy matter succinctly to articulate an inquiry. But assistance with this important aspect might be obtained from research mentors, and the conversation (which should be on-going throughout the research process) is likely to be mutually illuminating and develop skills in writing which, of course, is itself a practice (or set of practices).

The Arts and the 'Impact Agenda'

Arts practices have a strong public dimension and serious consideration is now given to them under the 'Impact Agenda' - the impact of 'academic' research on broader society - new in REF 2014. Institutions are invited to give a generic account of how their re-

search in the given UOA submission impacts on society at large, and to present a number of Case Studies, typically two or three (relative to the number of staff submitted) to illustrate and substantiate the claims made. To qualify in REF 2014, Case Studies must demonstrably be based on research of at least 2* quality, and ideally show how they had contributed to social change.

Though, according to official report, most subject domains were able to demonstrate strong Impact, the arts perhaps have a particular advantage in this context since, typically, arts practices are publicly manifest (in exhibition, installation, media platforms, performance, public art and so on).[12] Moreover, research in other domains has demonstrated the generic impact of the arts and some specific benefits - for example to health, or to empowering disadvantaged communities. Once the research base had been established for Case Studies, the Impact criteria of 'reach and significance' required a documentary case to adduce evidence of the impact claimed. The arts are well-placed in respect of (reasonably) readily available audience/attendance/viewing figures; sales accounts; audience appreciation indices and so on.

Above all, the Impact dimension affords a space in which two values of importance might be celebrated. First, the worth of the arts to society both in the broad terms of a public good and in specific applications ranging from aesthetic pleasure to policy change on significant social issues. Secondly, the required basis in research affords an opportunity to demonstrate the value in acknowledging - and further strengthening - the bridges between 'the academy' and 'the professions'. Links already exist. Many contemporary artists - perhaps the majority in the UK - have benefited from a formal education, typically to first degree level and many to Masters level and beyond. In this sense, they are already 'academics'. Likewise, many staff members in arts HE institutions are also practicing professionals. Educational programmes are invigorated by staff research within academies and by professional feedback. In arts and media academies - particularly perhaps in practice-based institutions - bridges already exist with traffic flowing in both directions.

Though the motives for its initiation may lie elsewhere, the Impact Agenda ultimately affords the opportunity to demonstrate the inappropriateness of the yet sustained discursive distinction between 'theory' and 'practice' when, in actuality, praxis (theory

imbricated within practice) operates both within academies and in the professions.

Part Three: doing-knowing and interdisciplinary approaches
Doing-knowing through PaR

Practice as Research is research undertaken primarily through a practical inquiry; indeed, in establishing whether to proceed with a PaR project, the first question should always be whether the inquiry might more readily be undertaken by more traditional means.[13] Such probing reveals that, in some instances, PaR is the most appropriate methodology to address key issues.

Knowing (as distinct from knowledge) in the contemporary world is emphasized because the early C21 has moved a distance from the height of Positivism in the late C19 when Auguste Comte claimed that the world which science describes is the world, and its method is the method of knowledge itself.[14] In the century since Einstein's and Heisenberg's recognition of relativities and uncertainties in respect of subject-object relations, the sciences have become increasingly more circumspect about absolute knowledge of a stable object world. Indeed, various parallel universes, 'alternative universes', 'quantum universes', and 'interpenetrating dimensions' have today been posited by serious scientists. Moreover, aesthetics has become an important element of quantum physics in adjudging whether the patterns in complex data (such as that emerging from CERN) look interesting enough to warrant further inquiry.[15]

If, then, the case made by researchers across a range of disciplines is accepted, namely, in Noë's terms, that "perception and perceptual consciousness are types of thoughtful, knowledgeable activity" (2004, 03) and, further, "that … perception depends on the possession and exercise of a certain kind of practical knowledge" (2004, 33), then we come to recognise that 'doing-knowing' has a valuable contribution to make. Insider insights drawn from the experience of doing (engagement in a practical inquiry) may not quite meet Comtean standards of testability against the facts of experience as systematically and objectively observed. But, brought out through critical reflection and inter-subjectively correlated, they make modes of 'know-how' manifest and disseminable as research requires.[16] The concepts of 'doing-thinking' or 'feeling-knowing'

challenge, and ultimately break down, an unsustainable binary between theory and practice.

Though arts and media PaR projects may ultimately require documentation and complementary writing, as noted above, the inquiry is undertaken primarily through the practice. That practice may be submitted as primary evidence of knowledge production or, better put, the process of knowing. Not all creative practices are intelligent and inquisitive in a manner conducive to knowledge-production but, as Melrose puts it, "some [but not all] expert practitioners *already theorise* in multi-dimensional, multi-schematic modes… just as it can be argued some writers theorise in writing but not others" (http://sfmelrose.org.uk/justintuitive, 2005, accessed 19 May 2011).

PaR and Conceptual Frameworks

The primary and distinctive modes of knowing in arts and media PaR projects (procedural knowledge or insider insights) frequently find resonance with inquiries in other domains. To be open - typically through reading, but also through engaging with other practices - to parallel inquiries elsewhere affords arts and media practitioner-researchers outsider perspectives in addition to their insider insights. For example, PaR PhD students are known to have been assisted in understanding - and ultimately in articulating - the specificity of their PaR inquiries and insider insights by conscious reference to the practices of others and conceptual thinking as articulated in the writings of others.

It must be emphasized that this is not a matter of seeking a theory to underpin - and justify, as it were - the practice. In Vygotsky's seminal understanding, it is the "dialogical character of learning" - a reciprocal material-ideal engagement moving "from action to thought" ([1934] 1986: xlv). In other terms it is where "know-how" resonates with "know that" (Nelson, 2013, 37*ff*). That is to say, it is where the difficulty of making explicit (for formal research audit purposes) the tacit knowing generated in arts practices (often held, as noted above, to be beyond what can be expressed by words and resistant to academic conventions of accountability) is assisted in its articulation by cross-reference to other parallel inquiries undertaken by other means which have found ways - often, though not always, in words - to make the tacit explicit.[17]

As remarked, writing is itself a practice and researchers who publish by the traditional means of academic papers and books work at them just as artists work at their (other) practices.[18] Clear articulation in words of complex thinking is not easy, and writers grope for adequate and felicitous formulations which do not easily slip ready-formed on to the page. Post-structuralism has taught us, moreover, that words do not unequivocally describe a fixed world but are rather multi-accented, if not slippery, in the construction of possible worlds. Research insights, however articulated, may in part be a matter of discursive aptness or aesthetics: advanced mathematicians find beauty in equations as much as they find solutions.

Traditionally, very specific research inquiries within a discipline, or sub-discipline, have required a literature review to establish what is already known prior to researchers making their own contributions. Arts and media PaR projects tend at the outset to be more open. Though an inquiry must initially be identified, the often playful nature of the early research process is open to a number of inter-disciplinary inter-faces and the insights gleaned by the end of the process may well be several rather singular. A practice review, locating the PaR inquiry in a context of other similar practices, may be more useful than a literature review. It involves accounts of, and critical reflection on, similar contemporary practices such that the distinction of the researcher's insights can be determined.[19] The reading programme undertaken may range across a number of domains in search of the resonances as recounted above rather than be limited to a specific topic within a domain.

In sum, though they are not without method or rigour, arts PaR inquiries proceed along an experiential pathway and adduce and evidence their insights by means which differ from 'the scientific method' or, indeed, the customary hermeneutics of the Humanities. It is worth noting that, in resisting the predominant concentration on hermeneutics in Humanities scholarship, Gumbrecht has sought a movement away from "an exclusively meaning-based relationship to the world" (2004, 77) proposing instead a "presence culture" affording "the immediate touch of cultural objects" (2004, 79*ff*). In positing that affective aesthetics should be recognised in the dialectics of encounter, Gumbrecht's proposition for the Humanities account resonates with an advocacy of 'doing-knowing' in Arts PaR.

Arts in a multi-disciplinary research context: theatre exploring life through the lens of science

The complexity of the contemporary world, and awareness of the many approaches to engaging with it, has led advanced researchers in the sciences to develop multi-disciplinary laboratories.[20] This shift away from specialism recognises that there is not one answer to every question but a range of perspectival possibilities which, taken in conjunction, may advance knowledge provisionally rather than absolutely. Though, in Bourdieu's terms above, 'the scientific method' retains discursive power and some researchers hold on to its privileges, Lyotard has long since called in question the appropriateness under the postmodern condition of the Grand Narratives of the past.[21] New circumstances admit the potential of all disciplines to contribute something valuable and, indeed, many of the most interesting projects render porous the old arts/science binary to become truly inter-disciplinary. Research audit reveals the scope of such collaborations.

In the UK, collaborations between artists and scientists are increasingly common if only because funding awards (from institutions such as the Wellcome Trust and the Science & Technology Facilities Council) have favoured them. Indeed, some investigative arts production companies such as Fevered Sleep and Curious Directive have overtly taken inter-disciplinary research-based approaches to their creative work. Under the Impact Agenda, moreover, scientists are required more widely to disseminate and apply their work and as Laura Barnett, a reviewer of Curious Directive's *Pioneer* (2011), remarked, arts-science collaborations, "speak to the growing pressure on scientists to communicate their research to the public and, of course, to a genuine desire, on both sides, to share information and expertise" (*The Observer*, 03 August 2014).

The tag for Curious Directive's work is "theatre exploring life through the lens of science" (Curious Directive Showreel. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0UY9Hsbkkc, accessed 12/11/15). *Your Last Breath* (2011) looked at climate change and medical innovation; *After the Rainfall* (2012) drew parallels between human behaviour and the architecture of ant colonies; and *Pioneer* (2014) concerns a fraught attempt to establish a human settlement on Mars. Many other contemporary companies have similar track records of working with scientists or with digital technologies.[22]

Conclusion

There may have been a 'blues skies' time when the pursuit of truth and knowledge in universities was unhindered by bureaucracy. In the current political climate, however, research audit such as REF is more likely to become widespread than fade away. Research in the Arts & Humanities is coming under increasing scrutiny in times of austerity but, to be positive, a good case for its worth may well arise out of the increased pressure to justify the domain. Conceptually as well as practically, the Arts & Humanities demonstrably have a lot to offer both to the academy and to society more broadly.

The concepts of 'performance' and 'performativity', for example, have permeated many disciplines in recognition that, whilst we may aspire to objectivity, all knowledge is more or less shot through with our passions and interests. In the complex inter-relations between subjectivity and objectivity, 'doing-knowing' in Gumbrecht's 'presence culture' has found an important place. After the failure of the Structuralist project instrumentally to justify the arts in the data-based, quasi-objective terms of the sciences, we have recognised that it is a category mistake to measure research in the arts against Popper's yardstick of falsifiability and rather to see its insights, in May's words, as "more akin to seeing something from a new perspective, and the different aspects and affordances that result" (2015: 73). Narratology, for example, has made significant contributions to understanding that all knowing is constructed in discourse typically through narrative frames. 'Post-narrative', indeed, parallels the move away from a Newtonian cause and effect approach in the contemporary sciences.[23]

Review by peers as in REF ensures that judgements are made by colleagues sensitive to the specificities of the domain in applying the common framework criteria of 'significance, rigour and originality'. Strong in their 'Impact', the Arts & Humanities show up well in REF in relation to a range of other disciplines with which they are increasingly in dialogue. But it must be acknowledged that by no means everybody is convinced about the value of the arts. The current UK government has appointed Lord Stern to conduct an independent review of REF with a view to the next audit, possibly in 2021, and possibly with an international dimension. However, Stern's chosen panel is drawn mainly from Russell Group universities and does not include any representation from the Arts &

Humanities. Moreover, his indication that, a simpler, lighter-touch, system for the REF might be developed raises once again the spectre of metrics.

Despite all that has been achieved in RAE/REF by the inclusion of the Arts & Humanities in an audit process with common core criteria for all disciplines, much remains to be done to redress imbalances between the valorisation of the arts and sciences in respect of both their epistemologies and funding. But REF marks a shift away from special pleading to an evidence base, and the Arts & Humanities should use its mechanisms to make their claim for recognition. To achieve full worth, however, the Arts & Humanities need to stand more confidently on distinctive epistemological ground. Where no discipline can lay claim to a privileged truth language, the equivalence, and value, of various modes of knowing must be affirmed wherever the opportunity arises.

References

Bay-Cheng, Sarah, Chiel Kattenbelt, Andy Lavender, Robin Nelson, eds. 2010. *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. 2004. *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press.

HEFCE *The Metric Tide: Report of the Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment and Management*. 2015. http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/Year/2015/metrictide/Title,104463,en.html.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. 1984 [1979]. *The Postmodern Condition. Manchester:* Manchester University Press.

May, Shaun. 2015. *Rethinking Practice as Research and the Cognitive Turn*. Basingstoke: Palgrave macmillan.

Melrose, Susan '… just intuitive…'. 2005. http://sfmelrose.org.uk/justintuitive.

Nelson, Robin. 2011. *Stephen Poliakoff on Stage and Screen*. London: Methuen Drama.

Nelson Robin. 2013. *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. Basingstoke: Palgrave macmillan.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. 2001. *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press.*

Scott, Joanne. 2016. *Intermedial Praxis and PaR.* Basingstoke: Palgrave macmillan.

Noë, Alva. 2004. *Action in Perception.* Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press.

Vygotsky, Lev. 1986 [1934]. *Thought and Language* trans. newly revised and edited by Alex Kozulin. Cambridge Mass: The MIT Press.

Websites

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research_Assessment_Exercise
https://www.ucu.org.uk
http://oxcheps.new.ox.ac.uk/casebook/Resources/RVHE-FU_1%20DOC.pdf
http://www.ucu.org.uk/refpolicy
http://www.ucu.org.uk/rae2008
http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/3648/UCU-policy-briefing-Research-Excellence-Framework-REF-Dec-09/pdf/ucupolicy-brief_ref_dec09.pdf
http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/expanel/member/Main%20Panel%20D%20overview%20report.pdf.
http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2009/ov/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0UY9Hsbkkc
http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/publications/leading-the-world/

Notes

1   For a history of UK research audit, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research_Assessment_Exercise, accessed 03/01/016, to which this account is indebted. For a range of objections to such audit, see https://www.ucu.org.uk, the website of the main union of UK university lecturers'.

2   See http://oxcheps.new.ox.ac.uk/casebook/Resources/RVHE-FU_1%20DOC.pdf, accessed 18/01/2016.

3   HE = Higher Education and HEI = Higher Education Institution (since, in the UK, they are not all universities). UoA = Unit of Assessment in REF since many subpanels cover a number of subject domain or disciplines

4   As follows (and retained for REF 2014):

Rating	Description
4*	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour
3*	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which nonetheless falls short of the highest standards of excellence
2*	Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour
1*	Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour
Unclassified	Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

5   See http://www.ucu.org.uk/refpolicy.

6   The evidence for this claim is anecdotal but undoubted by members of subpanel 35.

7   The evidence lies in the difference between the number of staff submitted and the number recorded as being part of a UoA. Though not all staff may have four eligible Outcomes, anecdotal evidence suggests that a significant number do.

8   See *Leading the World, The economic impact of UK arts and humanities research*. AHRC, 2009. http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/publications/leading-the-world/, accessed 07/12/2015

9   A recent review, *The Metric Tide: Report of the Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment and Management*, July 2015, confirms that no metric can currently provide a like-for-like replacement for REF peer review.

10   See Overview Report sub-panel 35, http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/expanel/member/Main%20Panel%20D%20overview%20report.pdf. particularly p.100, para 37, and, for RAE 2008, see UOA 65, Main Panel O http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2009/ov/, accessed 07/12/2014.

11   For a full discussion of Practice as Research in the Arts, see Nelson, 2013.

12   In the Impact category which carried a 20% weighting in the overall assessment, 83.9% was achieved across the piece, scored at 4*/3*grad-

ing, that is 'Outstanding' (44 %) and 'Very Considerable' (39.9 %). REF 01.2014, December 2014 03-04.

13 The professional focus here is on the arts and media but the principles of PaR might be applied across disciplines.

14 In this view, no statement is worthy of credit unless it is testable against the facts of experience as systematically and objectively observed.

15 Observation made by Frank Wilczek, theoretical physicist, mathematician and noble laureate, in discussion on 'Harmony and Balance', *Start the Week*, BBC Radio 4, 06 July 2015.

16 For an example of a worked and documented praxis, see Scott, Joanne (forthcoming 2016).

17 For an example, see Nelson, 2013, 76.

18 See May, 2015, 60-62 on the need to understand all forms of writing as practices and a discussion of the claim that all research is effectively practice as research

19 For an example, see Scott (forthcoming 2016).

20 At MIT for example.

21 See 1984.

22 See, for another example, Blast Theory, www.blasttheory.co.uk/our-work/.

23 For an account of post-narrative, see Ryan, Marie Laure, 2001.