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**Introduction. Part 1: Beyond accountability?**

*Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write.*

Michel Foucault

**Bifurcation**

One of the least things you can say about art is that people tend to like it. Practice-led (aka practice-based) research, whose products are typically bifurcated into an art object and an exegetical essay, has not fared so kindly. Even proponents refer to the need to ‘raise awareness of the value of practice-based research in the creative arts’ (Australia Council 2006), make reference, as Christine Owen does, to the fact that ‘[w]ords like agony and even schizophrenia have been used to convey the tension between the two apparently incompatible parts’ (2006: 5) and express fears – here Henk Borgdorff – that the consequence of requiring an art work to come with an essay describing the research gains made while producing that work might be that ‘works of art will totally disappear from sight, as if research in the arts has nothing to do with art itself’ (2006: 12). Those more outrightly critical of the form include Fiona Candlin (2000), who finds no coherent criteria for the relation between the two parts and insists that this is a problem: ‘How do you produce or examine a PhD when it is unclear what competence constitutes per se?’ She adds, incisively:

This is not to say we have a blank canvas and therefore the lack of parameters can be interpreted as an exciting opportunity for experiment and innovation. In fact the canvas is overloaded with precedents that candidates and staff have to negotiate.

The issue for Candlin is not a lack of criteria but a surfeit of them, and an incompatible one at that, where what receives approbation in scholarly terms is prejudicial artistically and vice versa. Yet both competing components have to be summed into a singular enterprise, a single mark. Michael Biggs and Daniela Büchler are blunt. In their opinion the ‘hasty academicization of the creative practice community’ over these last twenty-five years in countries like Australia, Finland, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK has resulted in activities that ‘conform to the conventions of academic research’ but ‘do not result in a significant research activity’

(Biggs & Büchler 2011: 89). Their overall summation of the experience is that it has been one of collective ‘dissatisfaction’ (87).

Biggs and Büchler’s recent assessment is brave in its call for a total rethink of research in the field, and prominent by dint of its appearance in *The Routledge companion to research in the arts*. It has helped clear the ground for this special issue which in many ways builds on its foundations and those of the authors’ earlier, widely-cited critique ‘Rigor and practice-based research’ (2007). To foreshadow what this special issue has to offer by way of such rethinking, let us start with the question my opening paragraph might well beg: given the manifest problems all these comments point to, why did writing a scholarly, textual accompaniment to one’s own art-work seem such a good idea in the first place?

Clearly it had something to do with getting art on the books. One of the explanations for the rise of practice-led research concerns the incorporation of former art schools into universities in many of the countries concerned, a process beginning in Sweden as early as the 1970s, in the late 1980s in Australia, and the early 1990s in the UK (Kälvermark 2011; Strand 1988; Biggs & Büchler 2007). Art had to become answerable to knowledge as a result, and it has to be added that some decades of post-structuralist and post-colonialist critique had left knowledge rather more answerable to art as well. But that picture needs to be complemented by awareness of other developments in many of those same national university systems. I am referring to neoliberalism’s influence upon the academy, and the way it has led to an epochal shift in our understanding of what constitutes a valid research practice, at either individual or departmental level. A fetishization of research products for the supposed sakes of efficiency and distributive justice has become the norm in many countries since the 1980s, including most of the countries in which the method has arisen (see Harvie 2001 on the change in the UK; Redden 2008 on Australia; Marginson 1997 and Davies, Gottsche & Bansel 2006 more generally). Considerable discretionary funding now depends on a department’s tally of peer-reviewed publications, government grants and higher degree completions, so much so that such funding is effectively a punitive mechanism for non-compliance as well. The novelty of this is to be remarked: as late as 1988 it was possible in Australia for a musician cum-scholar like Malcolm Gillies to produce no refereed scholarship at all, ever (on the grounds that academic contributions are many, various and in forms best determined by their authors, including e.g. musical performance). It is hard to imagine practice-led research arising in such circumstances. Whereas in 1997 Gillies would be giving the keynote address to the Research in Performing Arts Symposium, and surveying a whole new trend of methodological discussion on how art might constitute a form of research. Which led to his remark in that same keynote that ‘[i]f it were not for our ever-deepening funding crisis I doubt we would be concerned with these, often ridiculous, questions’ (Gillies, ctd in Strand 1998: 39).

The fact that practice-led research has in many respects resolved that Australian crisis to which Gillies referred (the way it legitimated creative arts departments’ access to

highly lucrative government funding for post-graduate research students would be a key issue here) raises a curious question, with resonances far beyond that specific national context: why the initial crisis? Should not the creative arts, with their long-historied dedication to the production of not just finished, but ideally flawless, objects and public events,<sup>1</sup> would have fared quite well under neo-liberal regimes committed to rewarding researchers for accountable product? Why would getting art *on the books* require an ‘exegesis’ as well?

Consider, on this same topic of accountability, the pre-existing traditions of rigorous, at times ferocious, critical judgement in art – including rigorous judgement as to work’s intellectual and innovative qualities, even both at once (Strand 1998: 32). Why ignore these traditions of collegial evaluation, to insist that an art work’s contribution to knowledge can only be judged if it comes with a load of that artist’s words as well?

There have of course been answers to these questions. The most cogent of the *realpolitik* ones concerns what sociologists have curtly called ‘opportunity hoarding’ (Tilly 1998). As Christopher Frayling put it, back in the early days of the method, in 1993, ‘we feel we don’t want to be in a position where the entire history of art is eligible for a postgraduate research degree’ (5). No rethink of the discipline can avoid this issue. Other answers concern the way art objects communicate. Now Biggs and Büchler in the quote below are explaining why practice-led research does not work, rather than why it was felt necessary, but their focus on the problems scholars have had with assimilating the creative side of the bifurcated product offers some insight into the forces making the ‘exegesis’, for all its manifest disadvantages, seem so necessary all the same:

the creative practice community values ‘the event’ which promotes the direct encounter with the artifact. The direct encounter in turn precipitates a plurality of experiences and, because these experiences are all different, a single unified answer does not emerge. (2011: 91)

Whereas ‘the academic research model attempts to hone in on a single answer to a question’ (91). Biggs and Büchler do not say this, but one might extend their analysis to suggest that the academic research report tends towards the production of a single unified reader: *anyone reading this can imagine that they are experiencing the same proof, hearing the same message as anyone else*. Art cannot provide that sense, and that fact is clearly an obstacle for any attempt to treat an artistic presentation as a research report in its own right.

A further suggestion as to why the exegetical essay should have seemed necessary for an art object to amount to a research product can be found in Geoff Parr’s suggestion that a scientific journal article is not really a final product but rather is an index to the investigations that preceded it. Art, on the other hand, comes to us in galleries, books and theatres as *all* product: ‘the end product ... has primacy and how it is achieved is left in mystery’ (Parr, ctd in Strand 1998: 49). In this light, there is something too hasty in the observation above that the accounting mechanisms weighing upon academics in the countries in which practice-led research has arisen have recently

converged upon a demand for peer-reviewed product. In fact, the demand has been for a peer-reviewed product of a very particular stamp: each academic book, article or report must, as well as being judged valid by peers, be able credibly to serve, now in Dennis Strand's words, as 'proxy for overall research activity' (56). In effect, Parr and Strand are both suggesting that what people really look for when assessing a knowledge report as to its research qualities is its crystallisation of the prior actions of a biographical subject. Add in the generic requirement that such a researcher present his or her history of investigation as one which any other person could have performed in their shoes so as to come to the same result, and you arrive at the same figure I've just inferred from Biggs and Büchler's comments: the single unified reader, whether of a scholarly report, or of reality itself.

We can push this analysis further, however. For what these arguments suggest is that creative arts academics adopted practice-led research as the way to go forward for the quite logical reason that all science and scholarship is validated in terms of practice. That is, the typical 'practice-led' bifurcation between a presentation of the world, and an I that validates that presentation as knowledge through an autobiographical account of the method that produced it, is innate to research in all disciplines and in fact constitutes that otherwise elusive factor uniting the humanities and the various sciences. For an immediate pointer in this direction, consider Büchler, Biggs, Sandin and Ståhl's wry observation on the separatist notion that artists think practically, while academics just theorise:

The converse concept, that academic research would not have a practice aspect, is [...] not persuasive.

Even academic research that is developed within the traditional scientific disciplines contains practical elements such as experimentation, data collection, observation and interviewing, for example. (2009: 28)

And of course scientists and scholars' questions and hypotheses emerge, 'practice-led', from such endeavours as well. But Art Theory is no different in these regards: the theorist's footnoted or in-text reference to another text makes no sense unless an act of reading that text, or somehow otherwise ascertaining its content (e.g. liaising with a research assistant, which involves a whole other set of practices), has occurred; in the absence of such a 'practical element', such a *doing*, the reference approaches the category of fraud. Footnotes, as Anthony Grafton writes in his study of the phenomenon, 'locate the production of the work', i.e. the academic knowledge report, 'in time and space', emphasizing the actual activities of reading and otherwise finding out that the author performed so as to generate said report (1997: 31).<sup>2</sup> For the fact of the matter, as Parr's comments help us to see (in art, 'the end product ... has primacy and how it is achieved is left in mystery'), is that science and scholarship are far more deeply concerned with the subjective truths of, and the rights derived from, practice than art is. Artists kick all that away prior to the moment of publication or exhibition – as so much scaffolding.

An exegesis could remedy that deficiency. But validation in terms of practice is not the only conventionally academic feature of this supposedly new paradigm. The first-person-singular essay form that practice-led exegeses often assume is itself an entirely logical outcome of an attempt to make the creative arts sound like academic research modalities. Far from simply being a regrettable, narcissistic indulgence (attributable perhaps to the artistic sensibility?), this apotheosis of the authorial I bloats out of all grace what is in fact, and has been since Descartes and the New Science he emblematises, the obligatory perspective for all scientific and scholarly endeavour:

The myth of the ideal I, of the I that masters, of the I whereby at least something is identical to itself, namely the speaker, is very precisely what the university discourse is unable to eliminate from the place in which its truth is found. From every academic statement by any philosophy whatsoever, even by a philosophy that strictly speaking could be pointed to as being the most opposed to philosophy, namely, if it were philosophy, Lacan's discourse – the *I-cracy* emerges, irreducibly. (Lacan 2007: 63)

Practice-led research, through the institution of the exegesis, gave us the opportunity to say 'I', as in *I have followed a valid method and so have the right to say x*, which autobiographical utterance (whether in those exact words, or as the effective claim of an in-text reference or footnote, or innate to the rhetoric of an econometrician's appeal to his study's statistical significance, or however) is inseparable from any scholarly claim to know anything.

This is not, of course, immediately obvious. We have long been accustomed to criticising (Adorno & Horkheimer 1972) and/or defending (Giddens 1993: 47) academic discourse on the grounds of its claim to impersonal objectivity. Lacan suggests that this is just a ruse: what is essential to the academic is to be able to say or imply 'I', responsibly. A painting does not say 'I' in any accountable sense, and nor does a poem. An exegesis offers that 'I', albeit intolerably contradictorily when judged in amalgam with an artwork. For an artwork is judged, as much as for any other reason, by dint of its capacity to void that very same imaginary totality 'I'.

Which is why it could not be counted as research in its own right. Or so people must have intuited.

But let's cut to the chase: *Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write.* Professor Michel Foucault of the Collège de France resolutely refused to write an exegesis for his artwork, tops the bibliometric charts for most-cited author in the humanities all the same (Times Higher Education: 2009), and surely offers a model for how to do things differently. Even at doctoral level: 'To speak of madness one must have the talent of a poet', Foucault stated during the oral defence of his PhD, to which Georges Canguilhem examining him felt compelled to reply: 'But you sir have it' (Foucault, ctd in Eribon 1991: 108). Now it would hardly be Foucauldian to imagine Foucault himself an anomaly. To the contrary: the university has its artistic moments, and Foucault's case is an epiphenomenon of them. They arise when academics refuse the self-justifying

manoeuvre at the core of the exegetical demand, to produce instead something much more like a compelling, mesmerising question.

The intention of this introduction is to offer a set of long-range lenses to take to the 12 interventions – *Beyond practice-led research* – collected in this special issue. More on our contributors below. For now, and in brief, my introductory argument is that we have failed to avail ourselves of the hegemonic model of scientific and scholarly endeavour that most approximates how artists in fact address others (the one that leaves ‘how it is achieved’, and even the representativeness of the ‘I’ of its author ‘in mystery’, the better to spike its readers with compelling questions). We’ve adhered instead to the model that attempts to ensure the provision of ‘justified, true belief’ (Scrivener 2002) by way of a justified, true, researching subject, and often results in such a waste product of dimly conformist gestures in so doing. This is how art has, on the one hand, *got on the books* as research these last twenty-five years, albeit by way of the artist-researcher’s exegetical accompaniment, with all sorts of pernicious effects on the artwork actually produced for the exercise and largely withdrawn from judgement in the process. It is also why there is so little love for the thing.

### **A little agribusiness**

*Anyone reading this journal article can imagine that they are experiencing the same proof, hearing the same message, as anyone else.* The way one creates such a reading experience, I suggested above, is to present one’s autobiographical, investigative self as similarly homogenous: *anyone with the requisite background observing this data would in my shoes arrive at the same result.* Another way of putting the matter would be to say that scientific and scholarly writing interpellates its reader to imagine that they partake of the same, justified I as its author. Michael Taussig has a name for this. I am referring to his recent, exasperated comments on the stylistic limitations of contemporary scholarship, and in particular the way those limitations are imposed on the next generation in PhD programmes: ‘You can write about James Joyce, but not like James Joyce’. Taussig calls it ‘agribusiness writing’ (2010: 26). I am suggesting that what this enterprise largely amounts to is the mass production of one and the same responsabilised subject position (*I have followed a valid method and so have the right to say x*), one with which any other I might imaginatively identify.

I write this introduction in praise of authors like Taussig, who has been prominent in opening ethnography up to precisely the sort of anti-exegetical writing (e.g. 1987) foreclosed by the practice-led phenomenon. Taussig too leaves the justifications to the police and the bureaucrats.

But we should not ignore in passing the verbal talent and sheer charisma at times involved in convincing your reader that you and they partake of the same I, with its autobiographically acquired power to know. I am referring to the little commented-upon fact that formal scholarly writing involves an immense amount of drafts. Nor should we ignore – as the ‘agribusiness’ in Taussig’s term perhaps implies – that such

an achieved, I-bound perspective leads to claims that at times, and certainly collectively, assume immense power in the world. Lacan himself sees this ‘I-cracy’, this drama of the scientific subject insisting on its own identity with itself and all others (but above all, with itself), as the very engine of modern science and technology, the engine that produced the engines all around us (2007). Turning to my own humanistic field, you just have to read some of the classics of leftist political science to appreciate the critical power, at times quite awesome, of discourses propounded I-cratically (i.e. through the implicit premise that *I have followed a valid method and so have the right to say this, however subversive*). Think too of the I-bound and ultra-responsibilised discourse of our modern political leaders: for Lacan, I-cracy is the very form of mastery itself.

### Academic art

At one point in *Finnegans wake* a professor argues:

If after years upon years of delving in ditches dark one tubthumper more than others, Kinihoun or Kahanan, giardarner or mear measenmanouger, has got up for the darnall same purpose of reassuring us with all the barbar of the Carrageehouse that our great ascendant was properly speaking three syllables less than his own surname (yes, yes, less!), that the ear of Dionn Earwicker aforetime was the trademark of a broadcaster with wicker local jargon for an ace's patent (Hear! Calls! Everywhair!), then as to this radiooscillating epiepistle to which, cotton, silk or samite, kohol, gall or brickdust, we must ceaselessly return, whereabouts exactly at present in Siam, Hell or Tophet under that glorisol which plays touraloup with us in this Aludin's Cove of our cagacity is that bright soandsuch to slip us the dinkum oil? (Joyce 2010: 86)

Can a novel sustain an argument? A poem? A painting? (This is, NB, very different to asking whether any of these forms can sustain a question.) I doubt it. There's more than one voice there and not one of them amounts to an answerable I. Though it seems somewhere to cohere. Each successful art work is akin to Joyce's professor in this multiple personality disorder regard.

Mikhail Bakhtin provides us with a theoretical template from which to comprehend the *Wake's* wild tumult of voices as an extreme form – a symptom, even – of modern art's innate polyvocality. For even though Philippe Sollers might comment that after James Joyce, ‘the English language no longer exists’ (ctd in Lacan n.d.: 1), that does not mean Joyce is alone in at least momentarily destroying that imaginary totality, and that of its speakers. We can approach this negatively, via Bakhtin's argument that a novelist who is ‘deaf to the organic, double-voicedness and to the internal dialogization of living and evolving discourse’ will never achieve ‘the actual possibilities and tasks of the genre’ (1981b: 327). It's worth keeping in mind that for Bakhtin ‘the inner language’ of thought, and so of authorial composition, is nothing but ‘the outer language’ of public affairs; further, that we think not in monologue but in dialogue, that is, in a medley of voices that variously propose, reply, interject and argue, all within the head we might refer to as ‘I’; *that* is what you do when you think,

according to Bakhtin: there's actually no 'you' there, unless in the plural (1986a: 38). The passage that follows is worth quoting at some length. The author that is 'deaf to the organic, double-voicedness' of the speech all around and inside us

may, of course, create an artistic work that compositionally and thematically will be similar to a novel, will be 'made' exactly as a novel is made, but he will not thereby have created a novel. The style will always give him away. We will recognise the naively self-confident or obtusely stubborn unity of a smooth, pure single-voiced language (perhaps accompanied by primitive, artificial, worked-up double-voicedness). We quickly sense that such an author finds it easy to purge his work of speech diversity: he simply does not listen to the fundamental heteroglossia inherent in actual language; he mistakes social overtones, which create the timbres of words, for irritating noises which it is his task to eliminate. The novel, when torn out of authentic linguistic speech diversity, emerges in most cases as a 'closet drama' with detailed, fully developed and 'artistically worked out' stage directions (it is, of course, bad drama). In such a novel, divested of its language diversity, authorial language ends up in the awkward and absurd position of the language of stage directions in plays. (1984: 327)

Bakhtin is close to Lacan's analysis of scholarship here. For the figure whose voice resounds through such 'stage directions' is – and it is a 'myth' for Bakhtin too – 'the I that masters'. And does not the novel thus described sound like the sort we would criticise and put down as 'academic'?

I return to Candlin's incisive comment that the novelty of bundling scholarly and aesthetic forms does not ensure 'an exciting opportunity for experiment and innovation'. Rather, the candidate finds him or herself 'overloaded' with inherited models for what constitutes success in each respective domain. It is certainly the case that one can judge art. I will make a few more Bakhtinian comments in that direction prior to honing in on what is so mutually repugnant about the two broad genres of scientific/scholarly work, and art, when forced into agreeing with each other enough for them purportedly to constitute a singular contribution to knowledge.

How do you judge a novel? I quoted Biggs and Büchler's suggestion above that what artists and lovers of art value is 'the event' of 'direct encounter with the artifact', something that 'precipitates a plurality of experiences' and splits a community into differing interpretations (2011: 91). And in the passage immediately above, we have seen Bakhtin suggest that a precondition of novelistic art is the annihilation of that 'smooth, pure single-voiced language' we aspire to when pretending to be the same as ourselves; the novelist, as he puts it, elsewhere, 'has no language of his own' (1981a: 47). Reading Biggs and Büchler through Bakhtin, you would have to say that the novel takes on the status of an event, and precipitates a plurality of experiences in its reader, because its multi-voiced texture is already a meeting of unlike minds: that crowd is precisely what it offers the reader to identify with. But is the insistence of a multiple authorial voice pertinent just to the novel? Bakhtin's long career sees an interesting shift from initially attributing such polyvocal characteristics to the novels of rare masters like Dostoyevsky alone (as opposed to the 'monolithically, monologic'



Tolstoy (1984: 56) – surely a misreading, and as opposed to all! lyric poets up to and including avant-garde figures like futurist Velimir Khlebnikov (1981b: 288; see further Scanlon)), but then coming out the other side of Stalin’s era to hold that actually, polyphony is innate to literature itself, however it occurs: ‘Is not any writer (even the pure lyricist) always a “dramaturge” in the sense that he directs all words to others’ voices, including to the image of the author (and other authorial masks)’ (Bakhtin 1986b: 110). I leave it to the reader to decide if such a voice-based approach to the literary object’s polysemic texture cannot also *mutatis mutandis* make sense of what one does with paint, limbs, glass, steel and other such means of (Derrida 1976: 9) writing. I think it can, and that is because ‘academic’ is a pejorative term in those art forms too (Borgdorff 1986: 2).

It certainly functions that way – turning back to Bakhtin’s ‘pure lyricist’ – in poetry. Indeed poetry might serve as paradigm case for these Bakhtinian claims, precisely because it is possible to say I in it and seem to refer to the same autobiographical figure so accountably present in science and scholarship. But is that actually what one is doing? ‘Arnold Stein is an innocent, academic, giftless poet’, poet-critic Randall Jarrell claims in a 1946 review. Stein ‘writes to a girl that he “is a part of you and of the beauty of the world and man”’ (1980a: 137). Jarrell is appalled: ‘one thinks helplessly, “There is nothing in the whole world this man wouldn’t call beautiful”’. But the ‘uneasy confusion of a few poems written in occupied Germany’ shows ‘that Mr Stein is not actually one of Leibniz’s monads after all, since he has at last seen something in the world besides the reflection of his own tender and warm insides’ (138). Why is Stein’s work ‘monadic’? For the same reason that it is ‘academic’: it has an unwavering thesis (‘everything = beautiful’), and an I who shows he believes it. Whereas the more Stein’s I splinters, the more his writing approximates art. On the other hand, Jarrell raves about the new Emily Dickinson *Collected* (1980b: 244), which is replete with ‘I’, ‘I’, ‘I’, as anyone who has read her verse will recall. The point is that Dickinson’s authorial I implodes in the very utterance, and with it the reader. *I felt a funeral, in my brain*. Implosion would not be the right metaphor, but something similar could be said of Wordsworth’s autobiographical verse, and many another poet’s. Whereas Stein’s ‘I’ stays all too intact. There are countless examples of the critical demand that a poet spare us the imaginary totality of his or her own ego, examples immediately contemporary (e.g. Weinberger 2008; Campbell 2009; Eagleton 2010 – Craig Raine’s writing, according to the last of these, ‘keeps a proud eye on its own verbal pirouetting ... in the margin the reader is silently invited to inscribe a large, approving tick’ (24)) but also historical, running back not just to Elliot, obviously, but also Coleridge and even Aristotle. And all of these critiques could be summed up as so many variants on the theme *get out of the damn way*.

The incoherence Candlin refers to is surely of this order: we are to judge an artist’s dramatic openness to the multiple currents coursing through any one compositional instant, an openness that necessarily dissolves the imaginary totality of their I in the process; and we are also to judge, as part of that very same communication, their concurrent attempt to cut all such outer and inner voices out, as they congeal their

authorial voice into the ‘myth of the ideal I, of the I that masters’, and table an autobiographical pedigree of accountable past action to boot. Yes, one can switch between such authorial subjectivities, daily when necessary. And of course many an artist (I cited Joyce above) is known to be as egomaniacal as any scientist or scholar: but if that bloated I gets in the artist’s work we, by generic convention, attack them for it; while we require it in the scientist’s and the scholar’s, albeit only in the right, surreptitious way. The issue with bundling that scholarly appeal to knowledge claimed by autobiographical right, and the artist’s dissolution of just such imaginary authorial coherence, and combining them into the same single would-be contribution to knowledge, is that it presents examiners, supervisors and the candidates themselves with competing criteria for judgement that confuse any attempt to take a stance either way. I am referring to that familiar examiner’s predicament of excusing poor art work because there is something good in the scholarly accompaniment, and excusing poor scholarship because there is something good in the artwork; and then excusing the fact that ‘there is something good in it’ is not good enough as far as either of these endeavours are concerned, on the grounds that it is actually unjust to fail a candidate set such an incoherent task in the first place. Each part of the practice-led research dissertation package has its alibi in the other and the whole offers an alibi for performance as well. You simply cannot judge the thing. This would surely be high among the reasons why, as Søren Kjørup remarks, ‘after 10, 20 and at certain places even nearly 30 years of institutional commitment artistic research has not developed any generally known classics and no stars’ (2011: 39). It is because it does not work.

An urgent and pressing demand: at the very least, any such bifurcated creative arts dissertation package should have two separate examining panels, neither of whom have any communication with the other. One examines the artwork, including for its intellectual qualities, by drawing on the long tradition of critical discussion on just that in each and every art form concerned. The other examines the papers, which would need thus to stand as independent scholarly contributions in their own right. It would, of course, be unlikely for a discussion of the knowledge engendered in the production of one’s own artwork – can you really pretend it was methodically produced? – to make that grade.<sup>3</sup>

But I’d banish the exegesis altogether, on the following grounds: the ‘I’ is addictive. Did not Walter Benjamin refer to ‘that most terrible drug – ourselves’ (1986: 190)? Anyone driven to contribute well-founded propositions to scholarly debate will know the rush of that ego-bounding pleasure, and perhaps also feel a glimmer of *delirium tremens* recognition on reading about how Descartes converted a bout of mental collapse (Gaukroger’s thesis as to what really happened on those delirious nights in November 1619 in which the famous I-cratic perspective of modern science was later said by its author to have been dreamed up (1995: 111)) into the consolidation of his I as a vehicle for truth. I am certainly not convinced that the I’s justified, confessional perspective (Valéry thinks Descartes got it from Montaigne, and cites Hamlet’s soliloquy as a contemporaneous version as well (1948: 9)) is necessary so as to get

artists to deepen the intellectual qualities of their work. It might just serve to infect their art with the desire to be whole.

Anyway, Benjamin dumped it.

(Some will counter that my refusal of the bifurcated form may be fine as far as certain *literary* genres such as poetry or avant-garde novel-writing go, maybe even as far as all literature, but the non-verbal artforms require something more than the art itself to demonstrate that research has taken place. Among the many responses I would make here are: distinguish between *demonstrate that research has taken place* and *make a contribution to knowledge*, and consider in the process that many traditional academic genres, not just ‘French theory’ but also pure mathematics, do not involve the former. Secondly, does the requirement of such a demonstration really amount to all that much more than Frayling’s candid rationale above (‘opportunity hoarding’)? Perhaps it does, if the art form concerned is mired in some art vs. theory antagonism making the abolition of exegetical comment appear a victory for the philistines. But if so, consider, thirdly, that the promotion of a compromised form is no great argument for the attractions of theory; in fact it makes thinking more like a licensing system with otiose hurdle requirements, which trivialises not just research but – another PhD rationale – teacher training as well. Fourthly: fine, but come up with something better than you have got. But all of these responses boil down to the following demand: rethink everything until you come up with a research platform where judgement can proceed without compromise. Trade that away and you are no longer engaged in public thinking at all.<sup>4</sup> But I digress.)

How do you contribute to knowledge without being personally accountable for how you came to what you say in relation to it? How does Foucault throw his/your face away?

### **The scholarly star system**

Foucault discusses ‘founders of discursivity’, those figures like Sigmund Freud or Karl Marx, to whom later generations incessantly return. For what these authors have produced are ‘the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts’ (1991: 114). They are thus akin to scientific founders like Galileo Galilei, who also produce the possibilities and rules for those to come. Yet such is science’s forward trajectory, a Galileo’s findings do eventually go out of date. Further, his other-than-historical relevance to present-day science is always judged from the perspective of present-day science. Whereas one can always return to Freud and Marx. Such figures are subject to a continual ‘return to the origin’ which would judge their words anew in the light of what we revisionistically decide they actually always meant, at that past point of origin (116). The works of ‘such founders of discursivity’ are not, in short, chained to a system of cumulative knowledge.

Why should contributions in the creative arts be chained to a system of cumulative knowledge? Here I would disagree with the necessity of the premise Rocco, Biggs

and Büchler have recently argued as indispensable to any activity if it is to be deemed research, viz. that research is necessarily engaged in the production of cumulative knowledge. The premise is foundational to the authors' proposal of four 'generic requirements' for research in any field ("question and answer"; "method", "knowledge" and "audience" (2009: 377)), and it needs to be added that debate over creative arts research has largely, if implicitly, revolved around this very premise to date. It is dispensable. Consider, as a way into this, the shifting patterns in the scholarly and even popular reception of works like Joyce's, Joseph Turner's or Virginia Woolf's, patterns which evidence that same 'return to origin' tendency Foucault identifies. Is it not the case that what Foucault has really alighted upon in Freud and Marx is a point of convergence between scholarly and artistic modes of address/reception? We are certainly subscribing to a very different model of time when citing them as authorities now, still, in 2012, a model that breaks with the cumulative race of science, to return incessantly to the things we have already read, to read them anew (and were we really reading that first time?). Does not art engage that same mesmerised excitement, desire to go back and know it again?

Which raises a further urgent and pressing demand: perform the stylistic (i.e. simultaneously aesthetic and epistemological, formal and institutional) analyses that will help us to see what make such protracted, non-progressive, and endlessly rich uptakes possible. The weird absence of studies of Foucault's own, massive style (excepting Butler 2001; de Certeau 1986; Rajchman 1985; 1991: but then again, none of these authors are prepared to grasp the real issue here, Foucault's repeated reliance upon not just the word, nor even just the concept, but the huge, actual power that *facts* have in all his writing) is a case in point. Surely we can derive lessons – 'I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face' (Foucault 1972: 17) – for other forms of creative research here, including the non-verbal. For whatever its semiotic means, a non-verbal work can still, like Foucault's 'novels' or Benjamin's essays or Caroline Walker-Bynum's consummate work on medieval sensuality (e.g. 1987), convey those things which we cannot deny, which 'we feel ... resist our will' (Peirce 1955: 77) and so raise a compelling emotional and intellectual question (Magee 2012). Why not whittle method in the creative arts down to that one requirement? That it brain us with a question?

One of the things that the reader will notice about the articles collected here is the tendency of a number of the authors to anchor their whole argument as to how we might move *beyond practice-led research* to the guiding voice of one single, scholarly star, 'a founder of discursivity' or even artist, as you will. That this should be such a prominent strategy for moving us beyond the impasse that is practice-led research strikes me as very interesting, given the relatively subsidiary role (compare the status of Foucault in History, Bourdieu in Sociology, Derrida in Literary Studies etc.) such figures have had in the debate so far, not to mention Kjørup's 'no stars' comment cited above. I will introduce the four articles which do this now. Scott Brook will introduce the remaining five articles in his own introduction, which follows immediately on this one. You will also find a concluding postface from Michael

Biggs and Daniela Büchler, in which Michael and Daniela respond to each of these articles in turn.

Shane Strange's article 'A radical subjectivity?' draws on Marx and the Marxian tradition to hone in on the way the new creative arts research paradigm restores the figure of the creative subject voided by post-structuralism. Creative arts research restores that subject, but in refusing to acknowledge its critical capacities, largely defuses what creativity it might have possessed. Key to Strange's argument is the idea that the form of subjectivity capitalism incessantly produces is '*human practice ... in the mode of being denied*'. I think of Davies, Gottsche and Bansel's stinging claim that academics' typical attitude of helpless resignation to their own colonisation by neoliberal governmentalities amounts to an act of faith: 'Claims ... [by proponents and sufferers alike] ... that there is no other way, locate neo-liberalism as a fundamentalist discourse' (2006: 307). But I also think of Strange's own diagnosis as to creative research's to-date myopic focus on the production of so many local knowledges, as if there were no larger, would-be totality (Capital, perhaps?) determining us. Doris Salcedo's installations, from *Unland: Audible in the mouth*, through *Atrabiliarios* and *Shibboleth* to *Mute prayer*, seem very much critical acts of identifying a subjectivity 'in the mode of being denied' as well, e.g. <http://www.modernamuseet.se/en/Malmo/Exhibitions/2011/Doris-Salcedo/>. The power of such interventions, as of Marx's, is to remind us of the obfuscation in the limits we see.

Dominique Hecq draws on Julia Kristeva in 'Beyond the mirror' to present a reading of poetic language and its revolution as that which brings us back into our bodies (i.e. the rhythmic pulsing of our drives toward the body of another) through performing 'an opening in the linguistic sign'. Writing poetically, in her account, emerges as an act of research into the gaps in and around that 'symbolic barrier' of metaphor we require for our sanity. We require it and cannot resist turning it into a fortress against those same drives. Hecq's labeling of writing as a practice 'involving an intertextuality which is first and foremost intra-textual, that is, played out from within', highlights that poetic composition is related to research by being at once impersonally personal and intimately public; and in neither case will the fortress fully hold. Hecq's refusal of a dialectical resolution here is refreshing and I note there's no mention of exegesis either.

'Art, the academy and fish out of water' sees Jen Webb focus Pierre Bourdieu's field theory upon the plight of researchers in the creative arts, who have at once attained the 'significant achievement' of 'an expansion in the definition of research' and yet only at the cost of being regarded as 'poor players' in the overall scholarly field. These quotes are all from Graeme Turner, who is at once a prestigious Cultural Studies scholar and a key player in Australian humanities research policy. Webb's Bourdieusian response to Turner involves pointing out that, actually, such researchers are trying to play two fields at once, both incompatible. Playing hockey during a football match; and vice versa. That is to say, a field for Bourdieu is not simply a

space for an individual to act in, but rather a whole ensemble of bodies, stakes and agonistic position-takings, among other attributes, and the very thickness of it makes such category errors far more drastically unworkable than one might at first glance think. Webb's path to a solution involves commitment to further reflection on the as-yet unthought 'logics of practice' speaking through these two separate fields to find some new way forward. As such, it is a call to intense investigation and carries with it the useful premise that we still do not know what either scholarship or art making, as practices, fully involve. At the same time, Webb holds up Blanchot, Elliot, Calvino, Steiner and particularly Bourdieu himself as exemplary figures who have in many ways already arrived at that new way we seek.

Lucille Holmes's 'Looking for the real in visual arts research' begins with an analysis of the epistemological problems that have dominated discussions of practice-led research. She suggests, in a section intriguingly titled 'Holes in the field', that an equally significant, if less focused, theme in these discussions has been an 'interconnected uncertainty around the subjectivity of the artist in the research process'. Should that artist's subjective relation to his or her materials be focal to the research, or kept at a remove from it? Holmes feels that if visual artists are to find a response to Graeme Sullivan's earlier, agenda-setting question as to 'how mental images are given creative form', they will have to take on these problematic questions. For her, the issue is really to do with the artist's unconscious desire. She accordingly sets out to offer, along Lacan's Freudian lines, 'a conception of subjectivity for art research that is both constructed by and yet also exceeds discourse and orders of representation'.

In terms of the above discussion of those Foucault calls 'founders of discursivity', it is interesting to note that this tactic sees Holmes stage a 'return to origin' of her own. Of course all four of the articles I am discussing here do this, but the move is more explicit in Holmes's work because she is directly taking issue with Joanne Morra's earlier adaptation of the Freudian corpus to the visual arts research paradigm. Morra theorised the sort of research which art objects elicit from us, in both their production and consumption, in terms of the clinical strategy of free association, and the repressed symbolic content such a willful unfocussing allows to emerge. Holmes wants to revise this, arguing that around the beginning of the First World War Freud supplemented that wholly symbolic notion of the analytic project with a consideration of something like what Lacan would eventually call the real: an unsymbolisable rent in the subject's experience of the symbolic order. On this basis, Holmes offers a definition of 'the cause of the subject as an "unrealized" real which leaves a scar' (i.e. the psyche itself). Covering that rent over is the aim of unconscious phantasy, the very thing which generates the 'mental images' the artist will later come to offer in creative form, and which contours our each and every conversation, and comes out in slips, and dreams, and does not recognise us.<sup>5</sup> Holmes proceeds to cite Lacan's comment – a salutary one for artists, given that their task is to represent the world in such a way as to evoke it – that the real at the navel of such a phantasy 'is always something anti-conceptual, something indefinite'. Considering that we not only think but also emote

and feel by way of symbols, i.e. definable signs (Peirce 1992; Damasio 1994), framing such a rent in art is no small task. Joyce came up with the word ‘drauma’ (2010: 90), one of his mental images ... Holmes concludes the piece with the intriguing suggestion that further research into ‘the collective and subjective functions of fantasy in the practices of visual art’ might take the form of a ‘transdisciplinary alliance’ between art researchers and psychoanalysts.

I agree. And I see no need for an exegesis there either.

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### **Endnotes**

1. The event of a performance lends itself well, if counter-intuitively to begin with, to treatment in such objectal terms (see further Pakes 2004).
2. Is it merely a faded rhetoric of generational revolt that has allowed scholars in the practice-led field so often to forget that reading scholarly or scientific texts, writing them, and even merely thinking in the propositional fashion they promote, are just as much practices as molding clay is, subject to socio-historically specific ways of doing, and just as much if not more productive of new discoveries as well, this last by dint of (1) the necessarily intuitive, habitual thought processes reading and writing engage and often disrupt into manifesting (Althusser 1970, who is here mouthpiece for Spinoza) and (2) the relative social power of university texts, particularly of course in the science, technology, engineering and medicine sector, to art objects? Well, there is a heavy burden of prior history to the delegitimation of reading and especially writing practices, as Derrida (1976) makes clear. My inclination would thus be to abandon the word ‘practice’ as fatally burdened, and to search anew. Whatever words come to the fore, the real distinction we require is the one Parr implies in the comments cited above: the distinction we by convention make when judging an art work between the hard days and months that nearly always go into it, but might not have, and are irrelevant (make it all up when someone asks you, why not?) and the object which we abstract, fetishistically if you like, from the life of its maker for the sake of judgement. Aesthetic judgements often take an artist’s life or identity into account, of course, but that is also constantly held against them as category error, indeed as grounds for political critique (e.g. Wu 2009); whereas scholarly judgements legitimately assess presented claims in terms of the work that went into them in the lives of their makers (excepting those instances I treat as so promising for us

below, such as Foucault's). In short, the cogent opposition, which 'practice' obscures, that is required to orient thought around any convergence between these two fields is the one we can make between a *biographical activity* (which might include getting paint on your shirt but also has to include experimenting, reading, writing and even coming up with art theory) and a conventionally abstracted (or, as far as scientific and scholarly work goes, indexically linked) *end-product*.

3. Actually I think Barbara Bolt (2007) is right to suggest it might be possible if, as in David Hockney's documentation of his work with the camera obscura, the aim of that document is less to validate one's right to speak than to mess with others' heads.

4. Kant (1997: 29-39) would call the thing we thus abjure 'public reason'. See Rajchman's interesting introductory essay (1997: 9-28), and also the volume as a whole, for documentation of Foucault's repeated reference to this short essay of Kant's in the final years before his death, and the way his uptake of Kant's ideas contrasts with that of his then rival Habermas.

5. Or rather *they* – for there is no unity there, no controlling puppet but rather a constellation of unconscious speaking positions around a void – *do not recognise us*. I will provide a hint of Joyce's in this direction below, where I cite his portmanteau word 'drama'. It is worth pre-empting that citation by pointing out that, in addition to this coinage's more or less clear reference to an art form that tends to involve multiple players, there is more than one voice in the very word itself, viz. its concurrent sayings of both 'drama' and 'trauma'. (It is a shame that Bakhtin did not theorise (he simply attacked it: Scanlon 2007) poetic metaphor: surely what renders a 400 year old phrase like 'darkness visible' less than dead, and to the contrary impels thought, is the way it crystallises a struggle of conflicting, would-be totalising, voices within it.)

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