

From the Editor: *TSWL* and the REF

I first became aware of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the British system for assessing research in higher education, in 2015 when *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* began receiving inquiries about our open access policy. Authors based in the United Kingdom needed to know whether essays published in our journal would comply with the REF's new requirement that articles be made freely available in open access repositories. As an American academic at an American journal, I was not familiar with British assessment policies, but I quickly realized that we were going to have to make a choice: change our journal's policies so that articles published with us satisfy REF requirements or lose the opportunity to publish excellent work from authors in the United Kingdom. As of this writing, approximately 15 percent of our published articles are by authors based in the United Kingdom, so it would be a major loss to the journal to forfeit our relationship with British scholars. Thus began a period of research and consultation, led ably by our Managing Editor, Karen Dutoi, in which we attempted both to understand the requirements of the REF and to assess the impact of those requirements on our journal.

For readers unfamiliar with British assessment metrics, the REF is a system developed in the late 2000s by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the governing body that distributes public funds to higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. Since 2008, British academics have been required to submit their research to the REF, which rates their work and that of their academic departments for quality and impact. According to HEFCE Chief Executive David Eastwood, two "key aims for the new framework" are "to produce robust UK-wide indicators of research excellence for all disciplines which can be used to benchmark quality against international standards and to drive the Council's funding for research" and "to provide a basis for distributing funding primarily by reference to research excellence, and to fund excellent research in all its forms wherever it is found."¹ Individual departments are awarded up to four stars for the quality and impact of their research, and these results are used to determine both the rankings of academic institutions within the country and the distribution of governmental funding—up to £1.6 billion annually—to support research. A poor performance on the REF can result in the closure of a department, meaning that participation in the REF is a high stakes affair, indeed.

This system has attracted a substantial amount of criticism within the United Kingdom. Chris Husbands, Vice Chancellor at Sheffield-Hallam University, points out, “Every institution wants to be able to describe itself as a ‘top ranked research university’ and, if it cannot do that, to have at least some departments which are ‘research leaders.’”² As a result, some institutions have tried to game the system: “there are research centres of genuine excellence and then there are places which present themselves as research centres of excellence, by being very selective about the research and information they enter.”³ Meanwhile, academics in the humanities have felt particularly threatened by the emphasis placed on impact. According to Matthias Uecker, a professor of German at the University of Nottingham, the focus on impact “may have the effect of disincentivising research that does not translate into immediate measurable impact for public policy or industry in the UK.”⁴ Research produced by humanists does not routinely lead to changes in public policy, and therefore, its impact is difficult to measure in tangible terms. As Roger Brown, codirector of Liverpool Hope University’s center for research and development in higher education, wonders, “These are some of the best brains in the country, but how do you measure the impact of a study on the life of Henry VIII?”⁵ Humanists have also questioned the extent to which long-term research will be affected by the demands of the REF, which seemingly privileges immediacy over deliberation. Writing for the *Times Higher Education*, Felipe Fernández-Armesto, William P. Reynolds Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame, was even harsher in his assessment:

So why does Britain have to endure barbarities such as the proposed research excellence framework? . . . Perhaps the most valuable lesson the Government needs to learn is that the purpose of research is not to accumulate ‘impact indicators’ or ‘improve national security’ or promote ‘growth in business revenue’ but to multiply ideas, enrich minds, approach truth, stimulate debate, excite academic exchange and enhance lives in ways too wonderful to measure.⁶

Frameworks like the REF, critics insist, misunderstand the aims and goals of humanities research, devaluing the concept of knowledge for its own sake, applying a scientific model to work that does not fit that mold, and discouraging long-term research whose impact may not be immediately apparent.

While metrics to assess the quality and impact of research are not new with the REF—they were also employed by the Research Assessment Exercise that preceded it—the open access requirement as a condition for consideration is new to the post-2014 REF. According to the HEFCE, “to be eligible for submission to the next REF, authors’ final peer-reviewed manuscripts must have been deposited in an institutional or subject repository. Deposited materials should be discoverable, and free to read

and download, for anyone with an internet connection.”⁷⁷ To be eligible for evaluation in the REF, articles accepted for publication after 1 April 2016 must be made available after a maximum embargo of two years following publication; these databases are fully searchable and available to the public, not just in the United Kingdom, but around the world. This policy is ostensibly designed to “enable the prompt and widespread dissemination of research findings, benefit both the efficiency of the research process and economic growth driven by publicly funded research, and increase public understanding of research.”⁷⁸ In practice, however, the HEFCE has made open access a precondition for measuring impact, a policy that has a direct effect not only on researchers but on the journals that publish their work. As an American academic, my scholarship and university are not, of course, subject to the REF, but as a journal editor, I had to decide whether to alter *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature’s* policies to accommodate it. In essence, the HEFCE was requiring authors either to avoid our journal or to circumvent *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature’s* open access policy, which previously allowed authors to make their research available open access only five years after the date of publication.

At this point, I want to emphasize that I am in theory supportive of open access publication. The world of academia is an unequal one, and lack of access to online archives and databases is a real problem for independent scholars and students and faculty at less wealthy institutions. However, the move to open access publication creates a number of problems on the production side. *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* is fortunate to enjoy the backing of a supportive university and provost, Roger Blais (to whom we are continuously grateful), and thus we are in good financial health. Still, we are aware that our continued existence is at least partially predicated on the royalties we accrue from the subscription databases Project Muse (which archives our content as it is published) and JSTOR (which archives content older than five years); some journals without supporting institutions are completely dependent on these royalties. Every time a scholar downloads an article through these databases, the journal receives royalties that offset the day to day cost of operations, and if authors routinely make their content available for free on other platforms, the bottom line of journals will be affected. In other words, if open access becomes the norm, our publishing model as it currently stands may one day prove unviable. As my colleague and predecessor, Laura Stevens, wrote in a preface to a previous issue of the journal,

an open access system, in which readers do not pay anything, is likely to lead in the long run to a system in which the author pays for the labor involved in publishing polished, edited work. . . . Essentially this approach would extend the device of the university press subvention—now a widely accepted

practice—from monographs to articles. It is already a practice commonly in use in science journals, to the extent that such fees are now routinely included in applications for the grants that fund much scientific research. Whether it is a viable model for the humanities is in question.⁹

While publication fees are built into scientific grants, scholars in the humanities do not usually have access to such funds, and most of the time, our work is not subsidized by grants at all. To move from a subscriptions-based, institutionally funded model of publication to one in which authors must pay large sums of money to make their research available to the world will broaden structural inequalities in academia, excluding adjuncts, independent scholars, and faculty who do not enjoy institutional support for their research. Some of the larger publishing companies, I know from experience, already charge several thousand dollars for open access rights, an amount that is prohibitively expensive to most humanists and that, in the current financial and cultural climate, is unlikely to be underwritten by any but the wealthiest universities. As Karen Dutoi succinctly noted during one of our many conversations about this issue, in making research more available for everyone to *read*, open access advocates risk making it harder for researchers to *publish*. As a feminist scholar, I do not wish to reify economic disparities in the academy, at least as long as we can survive financially otherwise.

At the same time, however, I do not wish to lose our British authors, who contribute so much to the intellectual life of the journal. We have therefore instituted a policy that will allow articles published with us to be eligible for the REF. Academics subject to the REF may post the version of their article that has undergone peer review and editing but has not yet been typeset (what the HEFCE calls the “post-print” version) to an institutional or subject repository following the maximum allowable two-year embargo. The copy uploaded to the repository must be accompanied by the following statement: “This is a pre-copyedited version of an article accepted for publication in *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*. For citation purposes, please consult the definitive publisher-authenticated version, which can be accessed through Project MUSE, through JSTOR (five years after publication), or through the paper journal.” For scholars in other countries, we will continue to enforce our five-year embargo policy, though we are willing to hear cases for exceptions.¹⁰ Although I believe this policy change is necessary, I worry about the scholarly consequences of having multiple versions of an article in circulation. The version that a scholar posts to her institutional repository will not be the final typeset and copy-edited article and thus will not be identical to the published essay. We hope our required statement alerting readers to the fact that the repository version is not the final one will lead scholars to seek out the published ver-

sion from Project MUSE or JSTOR, thereby preserving the royalties that are linked to article downloads. However, I wonder if academics (not to mention students) will take the time to track down the published version or if they will just cite from the post-print version at hand. An unscientific survey of my academic Facebook friends concluded that all academics will, of course, seek out the final version, but I am not sure I believe them. I am not sure if I myself would have taken the time to track down the final version before becoming educated about these issues. Moving forward, then, it behooves us as academics to be aware of the differences between post-print and published articles and not to be lazy (as I probably would have been) in seeking out final copies. It also behooves those of us who are journal editors not to permit authors to cite from repository copies of articles when final published versions are available elsewhere. As such repositories become the norm worldwide, editors must educate the scholarly community about best citation practices.

It is an interesting fact of globalization that decisions made in Britain have a real effect on this American journal, and it is not without some trepidation that we make this change. The REF is, in essence, demanding that we waive our copyright privileges and that we make our work and that of our authors available for free, despite our own financial needs. Journalist Richard Poynder has opined that “the UK government is bent on capturing open access for its own ends. Today the goal is not just to commodify higher education but to commodify the research produced in HEIs [Higher Education Institutions] too.”¹¹ This model may serve governmental needs, but it does not differentiate between journals owned by large corporations, who may be better positioned institutionally and financially to make the shift to open access, and our own small independent operation that relies heavily on royalties and does not have the staff, expertise, or resources to monetize an open access model.¹² We are also concerned that by not taking a stand now, it will be easier for other countries to follow suit until all our content must be available open access. With another 26 percent of our authors coming from other countries not including the United Kingdom, almost half of the articles we publish originate outside the United States. We have heard rumblings that Canada and Australia may institute similar policies to the REF, perhaps only allowing for an eighteen-month embargo, further eating into our bottom line, should we choose to comply.

As with any policy change, we cannot necessarily foresee all the long-term effects of our choices. As Laura wrote in her preface on open access, we must be cognizant of what is lost “when we take for granted the labor that goes into producing and publishing a text” (p. 10). There is real work that goes into publishing an article, work that deserves recognition and compensation. We will therefore be watching our royalty statements

carefully to see what impact this policy change has on our financial status. At the same time, we remain firmly committed both to our international authors and to the belief that academics should not have to pay to publish their work.

Speaking of invisible labor, I want to thank Karen Dutoi, our Managing Editor, for all of her hard work. Over the past two years, Karen has painstakingly researched the REF, becoming an expert in its requirements and vagaries. I could not ask for a better partner in policy making, a more talented and meticulous editor to work with our authors, and a better colleague and friend for managing the day to day operations of the journal. Neither this preface nor our policy would exist without her advice.

Since the time of my last preface, our office staff has undergone some changes. It is with regret that we say goodbye to Annie Paige, who in December concluded with aplomb her tenure as Publicity Manager. We welcome in her place Dayne Riley, a doctoral student specializing in long eighteenth-century British literature, who will be with us for the next three semesters. I am grateful to Annie and Dayne for their service to the journal, and I hope you will be on the lookout for Dayne's presence managing our social media accounts. I want to thank also Amy Pezzelle, our Subscriptions Manager, and Megan Gibson, our Book Review Editor, who perform their duties with professionalism, precision, and good humor. We could not do this job without them.

This month, we say goodbye to three valued editorial board members, whose terms are now concluding: Sandy Alexandre, Isobel Hurst, and Brigid Rooney. I am so grateful for their service to *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*. In their place, I am delighted to introduce the three newest members of our editorial board, listed here in alphabetical order.

Diana Maltz is Professor of English at Southern Oregon University, where she specializes in Victorian literature, gender, and sexuality. She is the author of *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes, 1870-1900: Beauty for the People* (2006) and editor of the Broadview Press edition of Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* (2013). She has published many articles in venues such as the *Journal of Victorian Culture* and *Victorian Literature and Culture* and is the recipient of numerous research awards, including a prestigious United States-United Kingdom Fulbright Scholar Award to the University of Liverpool. She is currently at work on two projects: "Fictions of the New Life," a book-length critical study of political and creative writings by socialist-feminist activists in late Victorian and Edwardian reform communities, particularly the Fellowship of the New Life and the Fabian Society; and "The Child in the House: Lifestyle

Aestheticism, Visual Culture, and Family Identity in Britain, 1880-1910," a study of aestheticism as a lived family experience, tapping into sources from late Victorian fiction, visual arts, memoir, and biography.

Fiona Morrison is an executive committee member of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature and Senior Lecturer at the University of New South Wales Sydney, where she specializes in postcolonial literature and theory, Australian literature, expatriate modernism, modern Irish writing, and literature of the American 1930s. Along with Michael Parker, she is the author of *Masters in Pieces: The English Canon for the Twenty-First Century* (2006), and she has edited both *Selected Prose of Dorothy Hewett* (2011) and an edition of Christina Stead's *The Little Hotel* (2003). She has also published widely in the *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, *Australian Literary Studies*, and *Southerly: A Review of Australian Literature*. She is currently at work on a new research project, "Christina Stead in America," which reads Stead's American novels with a particular focus on her Australian and transnational background, her commitment to the mobile subject position of "fellow traveler," and her allied critique of World War II America.

Iyunolu Osagie is Associate Professor of English and African Studies at Pennsylvania State University, where she specializes in twentieth-century American literature, African American literatures and theories, performance studies, Black playwrights, third world feminisms, and race and ethnicity studies. She is the author of *The Amistad Revolt: Memory, Slavery, and the Politics of Identity in the United States and Sierra Leone* (2000, 2003), editor of *Theater in Sierra Leone: Five Popular Plays* (2009), and author of *The Shield*, a play about the Sierra Leone civil war that has been performed at universities in Nigeria and the United States. Her work has been printed in journals such as *African American Review*, *Cultural Studies*, *Callaloo: A Journal of African Diaspora Arts and Letters*, *Historical Geography*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, and *Massachusetts Review*. Her new book, *African Modernity and the Philosophy of Culture in the Works of Femi Euba*, is forthcoming from Lexington Books in 2017.

It is with great sadness that I must conclude this preface by saying farewell to *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* advisory board member Nina Auerbach, who passed away on 3 February 2017. Over the course of her career, Professor Auerbach published broadly on Victorian literature, horror fiction, and cultural history, and was deeply influential on a generation of feminist scholars, myself included. While I never had the privilege of meeting Professor Auerbach in person, I have long been an admirer of her work, which I first encountered as an undergraduate hungry for feminist

literary criticism. She also left her mark on our journal; an early member of the *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* editorial board, she stepped in as a guest editor at a time of transition for the journal, overseeing the publication of Vol. 6, no. 2, a special issue on "Women and Nations." She will be deeply missed by all of us at *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*.

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NOTES

¹ David Eastwood to heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions and heads of universities in Northern Ireland, "Future Framework for Research Assessment and Funding," 6 March 2007, HEFCE circular letter number 06/2007, UK Government Web Archive, The National Archives, http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/circlets/2007/cl06_07/.

² Chris Husbands, "Higher Education's X-Factor: Everything You Always Wanted to Know about the REF," *IOE London Blog*, 16 December 2014, <https://ioelondonblog.wordpress.com/2014/12/16/higher-educations-x-factor-everything-you-always-wanted-to-know-about-the-ref/>.

³ Husbands, "Higher Education's X-Factor."

⁴ Quoted in Jessica Shepherd, "Humanities Research Threatened by Demands for 'Economic Impact,'" *The Guardian*, 12 October 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2009/oct/13/research-funding-economic-impact-humanities>.

⁵ Quoted in Shepherd, "Humanities Research Threatened by Demands for 'Economic Impact.'"

⁶ Felipe Fernández-Armesto, "Poisonous Impact," *Times Higher Education*, 3 December 2009, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/comment/columnists/poisonous-impact/409403.article>.

⁷ "Open Access Research," Higher Education and Funding Council for England, accessed 7 March 2017, <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/rsrch/oa/Policy/>.

⁸ "Open Access Research."

⁹ Laura Stevens, "From the Editor: Getting What You Pay For? Open Access and the Future of Humanities Publishing," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 32, No.1 (2013), 13. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹⁰ For further information on *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature's* open access policy, see <https://tswl.utulsa.edu/about-journal/open-access-policy/>.

¹¹ Richard Poyner, "Open Access and the Research Excellence Framework: Strange Bedfellows Yoked Together by HEFCE," *The Winnower*, 11 March 2015, https://thewinnower.com/papers/open-access-and-the-research-excellence-framework-strange-bedfellows-yoked-together-by-hefce#_ftn26.

¹² In exempting scholarly monographs from the open access requirement, the HEFCE has acknowledged, at least for the moment, the difficulty that such requirements pose to traditional publishing models. According to the HEFCE website,

In planning an approach for open access and the next REF, the UK HE funding bodies received very clear advice, during consultation, that the monograph publishing world was not yet at a stage where it could support an open access requirement. We have listened to this advice; monographs and other longer publications will not need to be made available in an open access form to be eligible for submission to the next REF. (“Open Access Research”)

It is unfortunate, therefore, that the HEFCE does not recognize similar difficulties for smaller, independent journal publishers.