

Institution: 10007857 Bangor University
Unit of Assessment: 29
Title of case study: Poetry and audiences: Wales, UK and Worldwide
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>An internationally-profiled practising poet from Bangor University, Dr Zoë Skoulding, has since 2008 impacted significantly on cultural life of audiences worldwide, by creating, presenting and interpreting poetry in ways that have reframed its local, national and international reception. Examples include worldwide readings as well as a project on women's poetry, urban space and innovative translation practice that has been presented to non-academic audiences throughout Europe and led to a local poetry festival focused on translation and locale. Editorship of <i>Poetry Wales</i> has developed new understandings of Welsh poetry in English.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>A part-time AHRC Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts 2007-2012 (value: £161, 633.75 FEC of which £129, 307.00 from AHRC) provided the frame for Dr Skoulding's practice-based research in poetry and urban space at Bangor University, including <i>Remains of a Future City</i> (Seren, 2008, long-listed for Wales Book of the Year 2009) (3.1). Since her full-time appointment as senior lecturer in 2012, the relationships between poetry and the public space of cities that emerge in this collection have been further amplified in her monograph <i>Women's Poetry and Urban Space: Experimental Cities</i> (Palgrave MacMillan, 2013) (3.2). The practice-based nature of her research means that outreach is often an intrinsic part of it. For example, the connection between poetry and local urban contexts formed the basis of <i>Metropoetica</i>, a collaborative practice-based research project Dr Skoulding directed 2009-2011 in association with Literature Across Frontiers (an internationally active EU-funded organization based at the Mercator Institute at Aberystwyth University). This involved a group of leading women poets and translators from smaller European countries meeting for a series of workshop discussions to investigate relationships between language and space through translation, collaborative writing and public performance in city space. <i>Metropoetica: Women Writing Cities</i> (Seren, 2013) (3.3) documents not only artistic practice and theory, but also the responses of local audiences involved in the process. The innovative nature of this research is its focus on women, who have often, historically, been excluded from poetic discourses of the city, and its use of artistic traditions in metropolitan centres like Paris or New York to explore culturally marginalized aspects of European identity.</p> <p>As co-convenor of the ContemPo series, a video-linked poetry seminar run jointly between Bangor and Aberystwyth Universities since 2006, Dr Skoulding, in collaboration with Professor Peter Barry at Aberystwyth, has established a shared interest in experimental poetry in a Welsh context. Public events such as the North Wales International Poetry Festival, directed by Dr Skoulding, build further on this research.</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>3.1. Zoë Skoulding, <i>Remains of a Future City</i> (Seren, 2008). <u>Submitted to REF 2014 (REF Identifier 2924).</u></p> <p>3.2. Zoë Skoulding, <i>Contemporary Women's Poetry and Urban Space: Experimental Cities</i> (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) <u>Submitted to REF 2014 (REF Identifier 2926).</u></p> <p>3.3. Zoë Skoulding, Ingmara Balode, Julia Fiedorczuk, Sanna Karlström, Ana Pepelnik, Elzbieta Wojcik-Leese and Sigurbjörg Thrastardottir, <i>Metropoetica: Women Writing Cities</i> (Seren, 2013). This output can be made available upon request.</p>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Creative and critical research in poetry has developed new audiences and enriched existing ones through local, national and global engagement with different communities.

Innovations in international contexts

Dr Zoë Skoulding's poetry from *Remains of a Future City* and *The Museum of Disappearing Sounds* has been **translated into eighteen languages, contributing to the cultural life across the world via her participation in numerous international literary festivals**. Such readings in other countries often have far greater cultural impact than they do in the UK because they happen on a larger scale. In Nicaragua (2010) and Venezuela (2011), for example, Dr Skoulding read at events with **audiences of thousands [5.8]** as well as **extensive coverage in the national press [5.9]**. Because of her wide international experience she was a **leading contributor to a programme for Radio 4, Guns, Roses and Poetry Readings, aired in 2011, explaining to UK listeners why poetry is seen as so important in other cultures. [5.7]**

While the first workshops of **Metropoetica** in Krakow and Ljubljana were planned with Literature Across Frontiers as part of Dr Skoulding's AHRC project, **subsequent events were commissioned by literary festivals in Riga, Wroclaw and Athens**, where the group (see website [5.1]) was invited to create performances to reflect an understanding of a particular city through poetry, film and photography and present it to a local non-specialist audience. [5.1] These invitations show that the project's **impact in generating a new approach to artistic practice and literary interaction between minority languages**. LAF's director writes that *Metropoetica* 'had a profound impact on our practice with respect to the translation of poetry in the context of gender-related inquiries on the one hand and community cultural development on the other. The project engaged both the participants and local communities in the cities where the project took place in thinking about their environment and about life in urban environments in general. She adds that **Dr Skoulding's approach to connecting writing and translating poetry about cities from a gendered perspective has provided useful insights for other projects.**' [5.3] The Wroclaw event received extensive coverage in the Polish media [5.2]. Work from the project is publicized via a website at [5.1] and an international co-publication in book form (3.3).

Dr Skoulding worked with UK, Indian, Swiss and French poets in December 2010 on a co-translation and performance project in Chennai, Pune and Trivandrum, India, organized jointly by Literature Across Frontiers and the British Council. Follow-up multilingual performances took place in Bangor and at the high-profile Ledbury Poetry Festival in June 2011, showing how **the combination of translation and multimedia performance in Dr Skoulding's previous work has informed further cross-cultural engagements [5.4].**

Enriching cultural life in Wales

The projects outlined above have **generated ways of understanding the role of English as a 'bridge' language in poetry translation and performance**; English is decentralized and placed in relation to other languages, while the process in itself is made a creative focus rather than a neutral transaction. This approach addresses the literary cultural heritage of Wales, which is split between two languages, and **has provided new models for cultural interaction**. The first North Wales International Poetry Festival, directed by Dr Skoulding, took place in October 2012. Nine visiting international poets gave readings alongside Welsh writers in both languages with a focus on the role of translation and performance in the local bilingual context. Performances took place in empty shops and small businesses in Bangor High Street, including a recital in Welsh by local schoolchildren, **contributing to current initiatives to regenerate the town through artistic and community engagement**. Encompassing experimental work by highly regarded international practitioners in several languages as well as Wales's historic strict-metre traditions, the festival

transcended the binary linguistic oppositions that often limit cultural exchange. The curation of the festival as a multilingual event with site-specific and cross-media elements was drawn from Dr Skoulding's research in *Metropoetica*. The event was **the first of its kind in Wales and over 300 people attended**, mainly in Bangor but also in Aberystwyth and Mold. Dr Skoulding's application for Arts Council of Wales funding for a second festival in 2013 was successful, indicating **support for the project at a national level.** [5.6]

As Editor of the quarterly *Poetry Wales* since 2008, a position she was offered on the basis of her work as a poet and critic, Dr Skoulding has **commissioned poems and essays** from leading poets and critics both within Wales and internationally **as a means of encouraging diversity within Welsh culture and opening it to international readerships.** Her editorials link creative and critical elements in the magazine, **providing an exchange between public literary engagement and practice-based research** by poet-academics throughout Wales [5.5]. Public presentations of *Poetry Wales* have enabled her to speak about writing from Wales at literary events across the world. At the same time, she maintains contact with thousands of contributors and would-be contributors through replying personally to unsolicited submissions. In **providing a channel for cultural engagement across the country**, with attentiveness to its disadvantaged regions as well as more obvious centres, **the magazine contributes actively to the development of Welsh culture outside academic structures.** This ongoing work links an awareness of poetry's international significance with its local and regional potential, thereby **increasing cultural confidence.**

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Website for *Metropoetica*, showing examples from activities in cities across Europe:
<http://www.metropoetica.org>
2. Press coverage of *Metropoetica* in Poland:
<http://kulturaonline.pl/metropoetica,spacer,po,wroclawiu,tytul,artykul,10956.html>
3. Letter from the Director of Literature Across Frontiers (held on file in Bangor University), demonstrating the impact of Dr Zoë Skoulding's work on *Metropoetica*.
4. Review of *Poetry Connections* in Pune, India, referring to use of Dr Skoulding's use of sound art in performance.
<http://openspaceindia.org/engage/recent-events/literature/poetry/art/poetry-connections.html>
5. Website for *Poetry Wales*, demonstrating variety of engagement through publication:
www.poetrywales.co.uk
6. North Wales International Poetry Festival website, where video of the poetry walk shows enthusiastic engagement of international poets and local audience:
<http://www.northwalesinternationalpoetryfestival.org>
7. BBC Radio 4 programme about poetry festivals with contributions from Zoë Skoulding
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/proginfo/2011/50/guns-roses-and-poetry-readings.html>
8. Zoë Skoulding reading at Granada Poetry Festival in Nicaragua can be heard at <http://www.festivalpoesianicaragua.com/2009/12/zoe-skoulding>. Other photos on the same site indicate the scale of the audience, e.g. <http://www.festivalpoesianicaragua.com/wp-content/uploads/poesiagranada-319.jpg>
9. Press coverage of Zoë Skoulding at Venezuela World Poetry Festival
<http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/regiones/festival-mundial-poesia-llega-a-nueva-esparta/>