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| Institution: University of Exeter |
| Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature |
| Title of case study: Exeter Programme for Creative Writing and Arts: Creating, Inspiring and Supporting New Forms of Literary Expression |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Members of the University of Exeter's Programme for Creative Writing and Arts have translated their research-as-practice into regional, national, and international impact by introducing innovative forms of contemporary writing to a range of audiences through publications, several of which have had notable public acclaim; an events programme; and training workshops. Funded projects to develop new writing have strengthened relationships between academic and creative sectors and inspired new and successful writing careers. The main impacts of this research-as-practice have been to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create new forms of literary expression and enrich public appreciation of contemporary writing • engage different publics in creative practice through participation and events • inspire and support new forms of literary expression |
| <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research-as-practise of Exeter's Creative Writing staff is characterised by their critical engagement with the forms and genres of modern fiction and poetry, and the creative translation of this research into original works that advance contemporary writing and generate new ways of thinking about literary expression.</p> <p>Andy Brown is a poet and critic (appointed in 2001 and now Senior Lecturer) who explores and interrogates contemporary poetic forms and values. <i>Binary Myths</i>, published in 2004, is a collection of Brown's conversations with 24 poets and poet-editors in which he asks them to consider binaries prevalent in contemporary poetry (e.g. mainstream vs. avant-garde, populism vs. modernism) that he believes stifle poetic practice and comment (3.1). This research found expression in his own collections of lyrical poetry, including <i>Goose Music</i>, a volume of 'eco-poetry' that questions how we live in a world undergoing significant environmental change (3.2). It also found practical expression in his Directorship of the Creative Writing programme since its inception in 2002. Exeter Creative Writing has developed into a centre of excellence in the South West of England for creative writing events and pedagogic workshops, funded by repeated Arts Council England grants. From 2001-9, Brown achieved grants with a total of £267k, including a grant in 2009 to establish writers-in-residence at the University of Exeter (3.7).</p> <p>Philip Hensher (Lecturer and then Associate Professor at Exeter from 2005-12) is a novelist and critic of international standing. His fiction draws measurably upon his research into the history of the English and European novel, evident in his introductions to editions of works such as Dickens's <i>Mrs Lirriper</i> (Hesperus, 2006), reworking its forms to advance the artistic claims of the contemporary novel and press for its continued public significance. Several high-profile reviewers recognised the influence of 19th-century literary heritage on Hensher's 2008 novel <i>The Northern Clemency</i> (3.3). Princeton academic Sophie Gee wrote in <i>The New York Times</i>: 'It resembles a Victorian drama, <i>Middlemarch</i> or <i>Barchester Towers</i> . . . Hensher's edifice is built solidly from the bricks and mortar of English social realism'. According to the <i>Wall Street Journal</i>, 'there is an aspect of social history to the novel that reminds one of Mrs Gaskell or even Dickens'. Hensher's 2011 novel <i>King of the Badgers</i> was an attempt to unify the literary structures of the social commentary novels of the 19th century with contemporary concerns about surveillance, control and institutional oppression of the individual. In <i>The Sunday Times</i> (10 April 2011) the novel was memorably described as 'the sort of thing George Eliot would have written if she was interested in gay orgies and abducted chavs' (3.4).</p> |

Sarah Moss (Associate Professor at Exeter from 2010-12) was appointed to help found and teach the MA programme in Writing, Nature and Place at Exeter's Penryn campus in Cornwall. Her scholarly research of into travel writing, the cultural history of food, and nineteenth-century literature is translated into creative practice in fiction and autobiographical memoir which explore cognate themes. Her scholarly books on the literature of polar exploration and on the cultural relations between food and gender in Romantic-era women's fiction (3.5) have shaped the thematic and formal concerns of her creative practice: *Cold Earth* (2009) is set in the arctic environment of Greenland; *Night Waking* (2010) is set on a fictional Scottish island and interleaves the life of contemporary women upon the island with those of the nineteenth century (3.6), and *Names for the Sea: Strangers in Iceland* (2012) is a memoir of a year spent in Iceland.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Evidence of the quality of the research: peer-reviewed grant awards from external funding bodies, peer-reviewed scholarly work with established academic publishers, and research-as-practice published with major UK and international publishing houses.

1. **Brown**, *Binary Myths I & II: Conversation with Contemporary Poets and Poet-Editors* (Exeter: Stride, 2004).
2. **Brown**, with John Burnside, *Goose Music* (Cambridge: Salt International Editions, 2008).
3. **Hensher**, *The Northern Clemency* (London: 4th Estate, 2008).
4. **Hensher**, *The King of the Badgers* (London: 4th Estate, 2011).
5. **Moss**, *Spilling the Beans: reading, writing, eating and cooking in British women's fiction 1770–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).
6. **Moss**, *Night Waking* (London: Granta Books, 2011).

Grants:

7. **Brown**, Arts Council England: 'Awards for All' grant, 2009 (£30.7k).

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

The collective research-as-practice the University of Exeter's Creative Writing team (ECW) has enriched public appreciation of contemporary literature in the UK and globally. Their publication of a number of critically acclaimed and popular works has given ECW the standing to hold a series of events and workshops as part of a strategic outreach programme that has increased public participation in creative writing and inspired and supported new literary publications and careers.

Creating new forms of literary expression and enriching public appreciation of contemporary writing

Hensher's fiction has received international critical acclaim for its originality; he has had a correspondingly important role as a critic and reviewer in fostering public engagement with contemporary literature. His novel *The Northern Clemency* (2008) was reviewed on publication in every major newspaper in Britain and America, and many others in the English-speaking world. It was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize (2008), Commonwealth Writers prize (2008), and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award (2010). Amazon.com chose *The Northern Clemency* as the Best Book of 2008; it was also among *Time Out's* Best Books of the Year (5.1). The *Washington Post* commented: 'Amazon may disappoint some customers with a novel as demanding as *The Northern Clemency*, but it's encouraging to see that the ascendancy of online booksellers needn't mean the end of high culture' (5.2). *King of the Badgers* (2011) was similarly

widely reviewed and was long-listed for the Man Booker Prize. **Moss's** *Night Waking* (2011) was reviewed to great acclaim by UK broadsheet newspapers—the *Financial Times* described it as ‘a brilliantly observed comedy of 21st century manners’—and was one of the winners in the 2011 *Fiction Uncovered* promotion, sponsored by Arts Council England (5.3). It was *Mumsnet's* Book of The Month in May 2012 and Moss was interviewed on the site about her writing process (5.4).

Engaging different publics in creative practice through participation and events; inspiring and supporting new forms of literary expression

The ECW team gave 47 invited readings and talks in the REF period (**Hensher** 24, **Brown** 18, **Moss** 5), including in Hensher's case at major international events: India International Literature and Media Festival, Hay Festival Dhaka, and Melbourne Festival. Some of their talks are freely available on-line and relate their creative practice to their research into the history of literary forms, such as **Hensher's** ‘What Would Dickens Write Today?’ for the British Council in Berlin (5.5). The publishing success and reputation of ECW created a research environment at the University and in the South West of England which helped to bring literary figures of international standing to Exeter to give public lectures, including Philip Pullman, Hilary Mantel, and Paul Muldoon, and to increase public participation in creative writing events. Mantel has subsequently become Honorary Visiting Professor in Exeter's College of Humanities. Twenty public events were held between 2008 and 2013, attracting audiences of over 3,000 people (5.6).

Public writing workshops held in partnership with regional and national cultural agencies have been central to the ECW's strategy to engage different publics in creative practice. Arts Council England (ACE) describes ECW as ‘a key strategic client’ and has repeatedly funded the team's outreach activity (5.7). **Brown** came to Exeter with experience in this area having directed an annual programme of creative writing residential courses in his role as Centre Director for The Arvon Foundation in Devon from 1996-2002. Brown's ACE award in 2009, for example, funded the appointment of two writers-in-residence at the University of Exeter, Paul Dodgson and Claire George, who acted as ambassadors and mentors for Exeter's regional activities, collaborating with staff to offer workshops for audiences who might not ordinarily have access to the arts. The research interests of **Brown** in ‘eco-poetics’ and **Moss** in writing and the environment led to their collaboration in 2010-11 with Claire George in a series of public workshops in Devon and Cornwall around the theme of ‘Imagine There's A Future’, in which participants were invited ‘to create fictions set in a sustainable future’ and were brought together in creative encounters with experts in climate change and environmental campaigners. The workshops and a competition resulted in over 80 stories, the best of which were included in a published anthology which was freely given away (500 copies) (5.8). One participant praised a workshop for offering ‘encouragement that environment issues are permitted in fiction’; another noted that ‘the workshop has given me a more confident approach to quickly writing whatever comes into my head’ (5.9). As part of this scheme, twelve selected writers from the South West were mentored by ECW. Two of these writers (Beatrice Hitchman and Rupert Wallis) subsequently contracted their novels to major publishers (Serpent's Tail and Simon & Schuster).

One of the most notable achievements of the research environment developed by ECW has been to inspire and support new and commercially successful writing. In 2007 **Brown** and **Hensher** launched *Riptide*, a bi-annual short story journal. *Riptide* is now a commercial venture: its editors are two former ECW PhD students and among the writers first published by the magazine was Jane Feather, who has since published novels with leading publishers including Harvill Secker (*Love Me Tender*, 2009), and who from 2013 replaced Hensher as permanent lecturer in fiction writing at Exeter (5.10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. <http://www.amazon.com/b?node=1239030011>
 Amazon.com: ‘Best of 2008’ (accessed 12/11/2013).

2. *The Washington Post*, 30 Nov. 2008
http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2008-11-30/news/36928813_1_amazon-novel-zadie-smith
(accessed 12/11/2013)
3. *Financial Times*, 28 Feb. 2011
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/de0640da-4065-11e0-9140-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2kSy7n4Hc>
(accessed 12/11/2013)
4. <http://www.mumsnet.com/books/webchats/night-waking-sarah-moss> (accessed 12/11/2013)
5. 'What Would Dickens Write Today?'
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9btgA69hNGo> (accessed 12/11/2013)
6. The Creative Writing visitor speaker events were held in partnership with Phoenix Arts Centre, Exeter, which managed venues, ticketing and publicity. Corroboration about audience numbers can be obtained from the Box Office Manager, Phoenix Arts Centre, Exeter.
7. Corroboration of the relationship between ECW and Arts Council England can be obtained from the Relationship Manager, Literature, Arts Council England.
8. 'Imagine There's a Future' (2010-11) - testimony from a participant:
<http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/environmentalfutures/about/>
9. Project Summary, Grants for the Arts Writer-in-Residence Programme, University of Exeter, Interim Report, Nov. 2010, Appendix2: 'Free text answers to the feedback questionnaire'.
10. *Riptide*: <http://www.riptidejournal.co.uk/about/> (accessed 12/11/2013)