

<p>Institution: University of Bolton</p> <p>Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature</p> <p>a. Context</p> <p>The University has always worked closely with the local community in promoting its sense of identity, drawing many of its students from the region. The name 'Worktown', which the town bore in the 1930s Mass Observation (MO) Studies, has thus become significant for us in two main ways. First, in that a substantial strand of research is connected with MO. This goes beyond UoA 29, involving colleagues (especially from UoA 36) in establishing the Centre for Worktown Studies, which, since 2008, has held annual conferences. From UoA 29's perspective, it is the work of Bill Naughton, who began his writing career with MO, that has provided the focus (http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Worktown/About/Home.aspx). Secondly, the Worktown ethos of attending to particular communities has informed much of our research, in that it is seen as vital that those involved in the research should themselves be beneficiaries in terms of its impact.</p> <p>Creative Writing has always been strong at Bolton, especially in the area of poetry, with Glover's work at its centre. His editorship of <i>Stand</i> and coordination of the 'Northern House' imprint with Michael Schmidt and Carcanet have resulted in books from Bolton graduates and others. Thus Northern House had, in its Forward Prize shortlist, John Whale (2012) and Rebecca Goss (2013).</p> <p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>In terms of Worktown Studies, English has long drawn on the local community in researching and promoting the work of Naughton. It hosted two conferences (1995, 1999), then liaised with Bolton Libraries/Museums in acquiring Naughton's extensive archive – secured, thanks to a Heritage Lottery Fund, in 1999. English also works closely with other local constituencies, such as The Octagon Theatre, which has championed Naughton's plays since its inception (with Rudd, who wrote Naughton's <i>DNB</i> entry, contributing a number of programme notes for productions). Following extensive collaboration between Bolton Library/Museums, the Octagon and Bolton Council, Rudd organised a one-day conference to celebrate Naughton's centenary (2010), which was launched by the Mayor of Bolton, with family and Erna Naughton in attendance (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3p3QU16eUB0).</p> <p>Research into critical and creative practice at Bolton is frequently linked to the study of particular communities. Thus the study of Naughton makes use of local archives and, working closely with the Octagon Theatre and its own programme of study days, has helped inform financially successful revivals of Naughton's plays. Aside from work on Naughton, Rudd began his study of Enid Blyton with her readership, subsequently discussing his views with librarians, teachers and others, resulting in shifts to more positive perspectives (in terms of purchasing her books, using her work in the classroom, etc). Glover's study looks at the communities of poets in Leeds, making use of archives held in the Brotherton Library (University of Leeds). He has also examined the ways that the public has responded to different approaches to writers in residence, and to students undertaking creative work-placements. Jones, a Canadian poet, has looked at the impact that his nationality has had on his writing, and how this, in turn, is picked up and responded to by his readers. Others are pursuing similar projects, with the impact still in process. Thus MacGregor has, over several plays, explored the relationship between his ancestors and larger, historical events, and is currently theorising this in what has become known as 'documentary theatre', whose impact can be gauged by the response that his works evoke. Caldwell has probed the links between family history and historical events, and is presenting a paper on using a photographic archive in poetry (National Association of Writers in Education Conference, November 2013), which it is hoped, should generate similar poetry writing activities. Most fully realized is Cooper's impact as a result of her commissions to write about issues involving particular constituencies in her plays (e.g. around health issues, prisoners' families) which have then been performed precisely to support those involved (as detailed in REF3b).</p> <p>More generally, English's commitment to impact is a consequence of UoA 29's creative writers, whose <i>raison d'être</i> is for their work to have an impact on the public, rather than just to be disseminated. However, many responses to this are of a more personal nature, in the form of immediate feedback at readings and subsequently in emails or via social media. For the critical</p>

researchers, impact is usually felt more indirectly, following its initial, academic reception. Rudd's work is probably the exception here, in that children's literature, because of its 'popular' appeal, often has more immediate impact, though again, it is usually of a small-scale nature (responses from individual librarians, teachers, parents) rather than entire services making quantifiable shifts in their policies.

c. Strategy and plans

English's strategy of working with specific constituencies will continue, though it is now seeking to realize its impact by engaging more proactively with social media and new technology. In terms of the region, interest in Worktown and Naughton grows, sometimes in unexpected ways; e.g., Ayub Khan Din's *Rafta Rafta* reworked Naughton's *All in Good Time* [*The Family Way*] in a modern, Muslim context. Rudd was asked to discuss the play on BBC Regional TV when the Octagon produced it (May 2010). When the Naughton archive of several million words is made fully available in 2015, interest will increase, and the University hopes to sponsor some postgraduate research, drawing on our wider links with MO (the University already has one AHRC funded student working on Humphrey Spender's photographic archive). In fact, as part of the Centre for Worktown Studies' collaboration with the MO Archive at the University of Sussex, a 'Recording Leisure Lives' conference is planned for 2014. Our Centre is also planning to implement an updated version of the original Worktown ethnography, profiling Bolton today, including its literary and cultural landscape, involving both critical and creative components. Impact will be central to this project. The Octagon, with its revitalised productions of Naughton's plays under the artistic direction of our Visiting Professor David Thacker, has already explored this juxtaposition (as shown in *Rafta Rafta*). Thacker also recently drew on the Naughton archive to introduce the world to an early, unperformed work, *Lighthearted Intercourse*. Ventures such as this have been fully collaborative, with English and Creative Writing students witnessing rehearsals, and Rudd providing programme notes.

The Naughton/Worktown connections comprise only some of our links with the local community (i.e. the general public, Bolton Council, Libraries and Museums and The Octagon). Our ties with The Octagon, mentioned above, are long-established and part of an ongoing strategy. For years the theatre has hosted our public 'Poetry and Prose Readings', which have included many famous writers (e.g. Simon Armitage, Heather Beck, Stephen Blythe, Lucy Burnett, Vahni Capildeo, Linda Chase, Will Eaves, Paul Farley, Rebecca Goss, Zoe Lambert, Grevel Lindop, Carola Luther, Ian McMillan, Ian Pindar, Antony Rowland, Anthony Rudolf, Michael Schmidt, Emma Jane Unsworth, Sarah Wardle, Matthew Welton, John Whale, Pat Winslow, Chris Wood, Alan Young) alongside indigenous talent (Caldwell, Glover, Jones). Newer staff continue these connections, which have resulted not only in the dissemination of *staff* outputs, but those of *research students* too (e.g. Lowery's *Otherwise Unchanged*, Carcanet, 2012). The work is supported by the artist herself and by Arts Council England.

In developing our creative writing research, especially with a view to its publication and dissemination, Professor Michael Schmidt, a poet, academic, critic and broadcaster, besides being editor-in-chief of Carcanet Press, has been made a Visiting Professor. Schmidt is collaborating with Glover, Caldwell, Jones and Rudd to enhance research into creativity with the disabled and those facing life-threatening problems. With Glover, Schmidt has helped to publish poems by Bolton tetraplegic research student Lowery, and is advising another (Isherwood) on creative writing in Bolton Hospice; the latter has affected local and regional 'end of life' care policy. Through Schmidt, students have been made aware of publishing practices, and especially the impact of new electronic processes, which should help creative writers (students and staff) engage with public response more directly. Glover, too, as long-time editor of *Stand*, continues to champion students' engagement with contemporary writing, while exemplifying this himself as a poet of international stature; e.g. his collection *Magnetic Resonance Imaging* was not only selected to feature on *The Verb* – which in itself shows the impact it had (presenter, Ian McMillan, termed it his 'book of the year' <http://www.jonglover.co.uk/>) – but it also featured in a debate at the University of Sheffield between Glover and the late Prof. Sean Spence on how MRI scanning could increase understanding of creativity. Many of Glover's poems also speak more directly to a particular constituency: those with MS, providing some moving insights into the condition.

In terms of drama, a popular play at The Octagon, *And Did Those Feet* (about Bolton's 1923 FA

Impact template (REF3a)

Cup win) by two English staff (Les Smith and Martin Thomasson, both now retired) was revived in 2010 by popular demand (<http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/didthosefeet-rev>). Its subject matter established a trend in social drama (again, addressing particular constituencies) that others are pursuing: MacGregor's series of 'documentary' plays, premiered at Salford's The Lowry, Cooper's dramas addressing particular social issues, and Zaluczkowska's transmedia work (not submitted for this REF), imaginatively exploring the tensions of different communities in Northern Ireland. Though Caldwell's medium is poetry, she too explores the relation of family history to historical events, particularly focussed on Aberdeen and Berlin (in her forthcoming publication, *After Images*). As noted earlier, our plans are to ensure that audience response and subsequent actions are followed up more systematically, drawing on social media and new technology in order to do so. Currently, whatever impact we are having is more amorphous. Cooper's work has provided a model of good practice that we are seeking to learn from, besides itself being a rich vein of research that Cooper herself is taking further (REF3b). Jones's success in establishing a blog for a recent publication has also demonstrated the impact-potential of such new technology (REF5), which we will pursue.

d. Relationship to case studies

The strategic directions outlined above look towards the future, especially in developing the University's Worktown Studies Centre, and go beyond the English UoA per se. Thus it was decided that, from the Critical side, Rudd's more established research on the work and reception of the controversial children's writer, Enid Blyton (on which he is an acknowledged world expert) would provide a more robust case study than Worktown: it covers an extensive period of research and encompasses a more wide-ranging body of outputs and impact factors. Moreover, given that this work has sparked interest worldwide, it can legitimately claim to have had long-term international influence.

For the second case study, Cooper's work has been selected as representing the more Creative side of our research. Cooper has long been involved in writing dramas about social issues. The one chosen grows out of her work on prisoners' families, following Home Office research stressing the importance of prisoners maintaining family ties. Her previous research in this area (*Homeward Bound*) was part of RAE 2008 and its success led to the recognition that female prisoners were not being treated equitably; hence her award-winning *Missing Out*, which led directly to the 4 leaflets being prepared by Rights for Women, and the planned work mentioned above.