

<b>Institution: University of South Wales</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: D29</b>
<b>Title of case study:</b> Re-creating Creativity: Promoting the study and articulation of creative process
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>  As a prize-winning poet, novelist and teacher of Creative Writing, Professor Philip Gross's work is concerned with the development of individuals' creative practice (both adults' and children's), outside the academy as well as inside it. His work has led to a wider awareness of the ways in which creative process, particularly through cross-arts collaboration, can enhance our understanding of some of the most urgent challenges of contemporary society. Offering models of peace-building and communication in an age of cultural diversity and migration, it encompasses creative ways of envisioning the environment as well as human issues of dispossession, health and ageing.
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>  The underpinning research includes both the body of Professor Gross's creative work and his complementary research publications on the subject of the creative process. His own highly-regarded creative practice closely informs his research into the creative process, and his concern to make this process visible outside as well as inside the academy. His grounding in the historic insights of the Quaker community as regards mediation, dialogue and the disciplines of open, clear, enabling communication inform his pedagogic practice and theory, as well as pointing to the ethical dimensions of his work. Equally, his family background as the son of a wartime refugee informs his understanding of inclusion, language and identity both on the social and the individual scale.  Professor Gross's work is embedded in the vibrant Creative Writing subject area at USW, which he joined in 2005 and where he leads the highly successful MPhil in Writing, now extending into Creative Writing PhDs (see REF 5). He was a founding member and an instigating force in the <i>BorderLines</i> research group at USW which investigates the interplay between creative and critical languages. He has played a widely-recognised and prize-winning leading role in the development of the discipline of Creative Writing both nationally and beyond. Alongside this academic trajectory, has been his continued commitment to engagement with the wider public on an international scale through readings, workshops (for schools, art centres, literary societies, the Society of Friends), videos/films, and collaboration with artists, dancers, actors and musicians. In the period under review alone he has given over 120 readings, talks and workshops.  Since 1993, Professor Gross has published ten collections of poetry for adults, including the T.S. Eliot Prize-winning <i>The Water Table</i> (2009), which has enhanced consciousness of environmental issues, and <i>Deep Field</i> (2011), which has impacted on thinking about the disintegration of language and its implications for the personality. He has also published three collections of poetry for young people, including the prize-winning <i>Off Road to Everywhere</i> (2010), and nine novels for young people.  Alongside these, he has published articles and book chapters on creative writing pedagogy and the creative process. These pieces demonstrate and articulate his concern with mapping the creative process and making this process available for reflection. Particular concerns include the creative writing workshop experience and methods, facilitating creative work with children, and the strengths and limitations of reflective analysis. In tandem with his own creative work, especially the cross-arts collaboration with the photographer Simon Denison, in <i>I Spy Pinhole Eye</i> (2009), these pieces illustrate and explore the ways in which collaborative work can free up creativity and release us from the narrowness of simple self-expression.  This research feeds back into Professor Gross's concern with the potential for the creative process to enhance and influence understanding of issues around the environment, health, migration and peace. His emergence as a poet speaking on these issues has initiated creative discussion of the role of the arts within the Religious Society of Friends itself.

### 3. References to the research

**Key outputs** from the research described in the previous section:

- *I Spy Pinhole Eye*, with photographs by Simon Denison (Blaenau Ffestiniog: Cinnamon Press, 2009), 80pp. ISBN 978-1-905614-99-8
- *The Water Table* (Tarsset: Bloodaxe, 2009), 64pp. ISBN 978-1-85224-852-9
- *Off Road To Everywhere* (London: Salt, 2010), 84pp. ISBN 978-844717224
- *Deep Field* (Tarsset: Bloodaxe, 2011), 64pp. ISBN 978-1-85224-919-9
- 'Then Again What Do I Know: reflections on reflection in Creative Writing' in R. Marggraf Turley, ed., *The Writer in the Academy: Creative Interfrictions* (Cambridge: English Association / Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp. 49-70.
- 'Giving Houseroom to our Waifs and Strays: Questions for the Writing Workshop and the Writing Self', in *Creative Writing: Teaching Theory and Practice 2:1* (2010), pp.33-40. ISSN 2040-3356

Evidence for the **quality and range of the research** is provided by the prizes awarded to Professor Gross's publications across several genres:

- 'No Artform Is An Island', *Writing in Education*, 40 (2006), pp18-26: Winner of the Liz Cashdan Prize for the outstanding contribution to Writing in Education 2006
- *The Water Table*, Winner of T.S. Eliot Prize in 2009
- *I Spy Pinhole Eye*, Winner of Wales Book of the Year Award in 2010
- *Off Road to Everywhere*, Campaign for Literacy in Primary Education prize for outstanding children's poetry collection of the year, 2011
- *Deep Field*, Winner of People's Prize, Wales Book of the Year Award, 2011

### 4. Details of the impact

Professor's Gross's writing, both in poetry and prose, has had a broad and deep impact on a diverse number of individuals and groups outside the academy, including school children, artists, peace workers, religious groups, environmentalists and health care professionals. His publications and cross-arts collaborations - including work with Wattle and Daub Figure Theatre (2009), Medea Mahdavi Dance Company, (2011), sculptor Alec Peever (2006), and the Resonabilis music ensemble, Gareth Peredur Churchill and Siân Cameron (2010) – have led to enhanced awareness of the role of creative process in thinking about key contemporary questions including peace building, transculturalism, environmental concerns and health.

The multi-level, national and international **reach** of this impact is indicated by the sheer number and variety of Gross's invited engagements and collaborations inside and outside the academy. During the review period, he has been invited to give over 96 public readings/talks with an estimated total non-academic audience of over 6,594. For the climactic shortlist reading for the T.S. Eliot Prize (2009) in the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the South Bank there was a capacity audience of 914. He has been an invited speaker at over twenty literary and arts festivals (including Poetry Now 2010, Dun Laoghaire; Hay Festival; Ledbury Festival; Poetry International, South Bank Centre; StAnza Festival, St Andrews; Transeuropa Festival, Amsterdam; Lancaster Literature Festival; Cheltenham Poetry Festival, Manchester Children's Book Festival). These appearances regularly produced audiences of 200 to 500. His broadcast work includes a major contribution to 'Listen to Them Breathing' (Radio 4 documentary on Quakers and Poetry, 17 July 2011), the title of which was taken from his poem 'The Quakers of Pompeii'. An interview with him featured on arts programme OP on Estonian National TV (10 Jan 2011). He has tutored at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, and at international Creative Writing courses at Tallinn University, Estonia (2011, 2013), as well as giving a reading/talk at the Writers' House in Tallinn (2011).

Gross's longstanding commitment to children's engagement with poetry and the study of the creative process has also led to numerous commissions from national educational organisations and frequent invitations to give workshops, readings and talks in schools. Highlights include visits to Springwood Primary School, Cardiff, as part of writing week with Michael Rosen (2008), to Ysgol Gymraeg Plasmawr, Cardiff as part of Foyles Young Poets scheme (2010), and to Ysgol Tre-Gib, Llandeilo in association with REEP (Religious Education and Environment Programme) (2011).

## Impact case study (REF3b)

International reach is evidenced by a residency at Stellenbosch University, South Africa (August 2012) which included work with high school pupils, and a Skype interview with staff and pupils of Beaconhouse School, Karachi, Pakistan (Jan 2013). He has worked on several projects with The Poetry Society. His poem 'Room Inside', from *Off-Road to Everywhere*, for instance, was performed by a community poetry group in Nottingham in a highly popular video commissioned by The Poetry Society for National Poetry Day 2010. An accompanying education pack was circulated to approximately half a million schoolchildren. Since 2011 Gross has been a member of the steering committee of the National Literacy Trust action research project into formative assessment and writing. The influence of his insights and techniques in the work of writers in schools enabling children's creativity is evidenced by the Liz Cashdan Prize for the outstanding contribution to Writing in Education in 2006 awarded to his essay 'No Artform Is An Island' in the journal of the National Association of Writers in Education (*Writing in Education*, 40 (2006), 18-26). Moreover, the Poetry Archive has issued a recording of Gross reading his children's poems (2012) and will shortly issue a parallel recording of adult poetry, making him one of only a handful of poets included in both categories.

The **significance** of Professor Gross's work is indicated by widespread public recognition of his status as a major poet whose writing addresses the 'big' questions which face our society and whose reputation is likely to endure. In the review period, four of his books won major prizes, including the T.S Eliot Prize (2009) for *The Water Table*, and the Wales Book of the Year Award (2010) for *I Spy Pinhole Eye*. T.S. Eliot Prize judge Simon Armitage said of *The Water Table*, 'this is a mature and determined book, dream-like in places but ultimately dealing with real questions of human existence.' The prize generated substantial coverage of Gross's work in national newspapers, such as *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Scotsman*, as well as journals such as *Poetry London* (see Sources below). The awarding of the People's Prize, given on the basis of a popular vote, to *Deep Field* in the Wales Book of the Year Award (2011) indicates recognition of his significance by the general public. He is frequently invited to judge poetry competitions (e.g Poetry Society's Stanza competition (2009), *New Welsh Review* poetry prize (2009), Cardiff International Poetry Competition (2011) Yorkshire Open Poetry Competition (2011)).

The significance of Gross's status as an advocate for the role of creative process in understanding our society's most urgent challenges is further evidenced by the following selection:

- **Peace-building and transculturalism:** a translation by Gross of a peace poem by Nordahl Grieg, commissioned by the Poetry Society along with the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the Mayor of Oslo's office, was exhibited on a hoarding in Trafalgar Square round the Norwegian Government's gift of a Christmas tree in 2010. It was seen by approximately 300,000 people, and an accompanying Schools Resource Pack, *Look North More Often*, commissioned by the Poetry Society Education Department in association with the Norwegian Embassy, was circulated to all primary schools in the UK, an approximate potential audience of five million children. 1,170 school students have been directly in contact with the Poetry Society with evidence of their active participation in the project. Gross's work on peace connects to his activities around transculturalism, developed through his connections with Estonia. He was also a speaker and subject at a translation workshop (12 languages), for Transeuropa Festival, Cardiff University Centre for European Studies which included a commissioned poem (Amsterdam / Cardiff, 2011).
- **Environmental concerns:** the publication of *The Water Table* led to an invitation to contribute to a (filmed) public consultation on the National Environment Framework in Bangor in September 2010. Gross was a speaker at the AHRC Researching Environmental Change Network, *Flood Stories: Exploring Informal Narratives of Resilience Past and Present* (March 2011). A poetry reading at the opening of the Valerie Coffin Price exhibition at Oriel Canfas, Cardiff (September 2010) has led to continued collaboration with this artist and a team of natural resource economics, cultural ecologist and anthropologist as part of the AHRC-funded Living Flood Histories project, demonstrating how creative input can set the agenda for cross-disciplinary work.
- **Health and ageing:** Gross's work on his father's aphasia, first in *Deep Field* and most recently in *Later* (Bloodaxe, 2013), has led to invitations to speak on 'Creative Writing and

Healing', with Dannie Abse and Sacha Abercorn, at the Hay Festival (June 2010), and at the 'Writing in Health and Social Care' course at Ty Newydd (November 2012). He was an invited speaker at the 4th International Hippocrates Symposium on Poetry and Medicine, Hippocrates Initiate for Poetry and Medicine and Wellcome Trust, London (May 2013), and he will judge the Hippocrates Prize for Poetry and Medicine (2014).

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. The Director of The Poetry Book Society can corroborate the audience figures for the shortlist readings for the T.S. Eliot Prize (2009) [1].
2. 'Great poetry is like walking on water. In this paradoxical, humane collection, Philip Gross achieves that miracle.' Polly Clark on *The Water Table*, *The Guardian*: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/jan/23/philip-gross-poetry-eliot-prize>
3. 'It is so concentrated and keen-eyed and patient. The poems have a beauty and a craft to the writing and it's hard to imagine how he kept it up over 64 pages. [...] There are big concerns throughout the book and he writes with real lyrical confidence,' Simon Armitage, Chair of T.S. Eliot Prize judges, on *The Water Table*, *The Guardian*: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/jan/18/philip-gross-ts-eliot-winner>
4. 'This is a beautifully executed collection – a meditation on what it means to be human in a fluid, often seemingly meaningless, world.' Sue Hubbard on *The Water Table*, *Poetry London*: <http://www.poetrylondon.co.uk/magazines/66/article/a-guidebook-of-darkness>
5. '[The T.S. Eliot prize] puts the little-known Gross [...] into the league of poetic giants such as Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney and Carol Ann Duffy.' Stephen Adams in *The Telegraph*: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/7029350/Philip-Gross-speaks-about-The-Water-Table.html>
6. 'Gross has a gift of writing poetry which touches both on big themes and on the ordinariness of life.' Interview in *The Scotsman*, during the StAnza festival, 2011: [http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/books/reviews/interview\\_philip\\_gross\\_author\\_1\\_1533379](http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/books/reviews/interview_philip_gross_author_1_1533379)
7. 'Gross has emerged as one of the greatest poetic voices of displacement, conveying what Terry Eagleton views as "lost bearings and blurred frontiers" (*Independent on Sunday*).' Poetry International Web: article and evaluative entry (by A. Dahouk, 2011): <http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poet/item/18803/29/Philip-Gross>
8. Gross made a major contribution to 'Listen to Them Breathing' (Radio 4 documentary on Quakers and Poetry, 14 August 2011). See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b013528r> An online review on *Nayler- The Living Spirit* called this 'A rich and insightful radio programme' which 'elegantly draws out intersecting lines between Quaker worship and poetry' (Jay Clark, <http://www.nayler.org/?p=365>).
9. Gross's translation of Nordahl Grieg's poem 'Gerd', commissioned by the Poetry Society along with the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the Mayor of Oslo's office, was displayed around the Christmas Tree in Trafalgar Square in 2010. See <http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/commissions/xmastree/2010> The accompanying Schools Resource Pack, *Look North More Often*, circulated to all UK primary schools is available from The Poetry Society on request from: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/commissions/xmastree/> To corroborate the participation figures for this project, contact the Education Manager of The Poetry Society [2].
10. Gross's poem 'Room Inside', from *Off-Road to Everywhere*, featured in a video commissioned by The Poetry Society for National Poetry Day 2010. See <http://vimeo.com/15460792> The video has logged over 6,460 plays. An accompanying education pack, circulated to approximately half a million schoolchildren, is available on request from The Poetry Society. See <http://www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk/>