

<b>Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: D29 English Language and Literature</b>
<b>Title of case study: The Poet Laureate: A case study in creative leadership</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Carol Ann Duffy has, for nearly two decades, rooted her impact and public engagement work as a poet in the Writing School at MMU. In 2009, she became the first woman ever to be appointed Poet Laureate. From the outset, she set a pattern for her laureateship as inclusive, public-facing, and clearly aimed at broadening public understanding, appreciation and access to poetry and poets. This impact is wide-ranging, providing creative and academic leadership benefiting emerging poets and new audiences for poetry, challenging and questioning political and cultural positions, and contributing to a revitalised approach to the teaching of poetry in schools.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Carol Ann Duffy was first appointed as a lecturer at MMU in 1996. Now she is Professor of Contemporary Poetry and Creative Director of the Manchester Writing School at MMU. In the last 18 years her work has been central to establishing an internationally renowned centre for critical and creative poetry research in the English Department at MMU, and this has given her a base to build her model of creative leadership within and beyond the university.</p> <p>Her own work as a poet ranges from the polemical wit of <i>The World's Wife</i> (1999) [1] to the intimate love lyrics of the TS Eliot Prize-winning <i>Rapture</i> (2005) [2] and the blend of personal and public (Laureate) poems in <i>The Bees</i> (2011) [3]. Writing in the <i>Guardian</i> when Duffy was appointed Laureate in 2009, Alison Flood said: 'As one of the bestselling poets in the UK, Duffy has managed to combine critical acclaim with popularity: a rare feat in the poetry world.' This rare balance is the result of formal skill with rhyme and metre (which makes her poems readily memorable), and the versatility to write poems of dry wit and satirical edge, but also poems of great intimacy and tenderness. As Charlotte Mendelson wrote in <i>The Observer</i> in 2002 'Part of Duffy's talent – besides her ear for ordinary eloquence, her gorgeous, powerful, throwaway lines, her subtlety – is her ventriloquism. Like the best of her novelist peers ... she slides in and out of her characters' lives on a stream of possessions, aspirations, idioms and turns of phrase.'</p> <p>She demonstrated from the outset a determination to speak freely and accessibly through her laureate poems, even if this meant challenging political and social conventions. Her first Christmas poem as laureate, <i>The Twelve Days of Christmas 2009</i> [<a href="http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/dec/06/poet-laureate-duffy-christmas-poem">http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/dec/06/poet-laureate-duffy-christmas-poem</a>], addressed such issues as species extinction, the Copenhagen conference on climate change, the banking crisis and the war in Afghanistan. In 2008 when she published a poem <i>Education for Leisure</i> [<a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/sep/04/gcses.english">http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/sep/04/gcses.english</a>] about violence and knife-crime in a schools anthology, it precipitated a national debate in press and on radio and television about the responsibility and impact of poetry, when it was alleged that exam board AQA had urged schools to destroy copies of the unedited anthology. Duffy said at the time: 'It's an anti-violence poem. It's a plea for education rather than violence.' In both these ground-breaking poems, Duffy demonstrated her ability and desire to use her work as a public poet to create impact and leadership in its contribution to political and cultural debate and forging a path for other poets to engage more directly with these issues through their work.</p> <p>In her reach into other art forms and new audiences, she is the most eclectic Poet Laureate for generations. Already, during her term of office, she has written a new stage musical for the Royal Exchange Theatre, produced a widely acclaimed new set of carols ('The Manchester Carols' with composer Sasha Johnson-Manning [4]), worked extensively with printmaker and artist Stephen Raw, written a short drama for the Bush Theatre's 2011 project 'Sixty Six' about the King James Bible [<a href="http://www.bushtheatre.co.uk/sixtysix/">http://www.bushtheatre.co.uk/sixtysix/</a>], and written and performed extensively for children,</p>

working with a range of illustrators and musicians. Duffy's conviction is that the laureateship, and poetry itself, should not be confined to its familiar cultural contexts (the page, the public reading), but can communicate widely without compromising quality or complexity by working in concert halls, theatres [5] and galleries.

She has sought to use the traditional laureate 'occasions' to bring in other poetic voices, and to make those occasions connect more broadly with the experiences of readers and listeners. For example, on the occasion of the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton, Duffy took over four pages of the Guardian newspaper, and commissioned a wide range of contemporary poets to write on the subject of 'new wedding vows', and for the Queen's Jubilee she commissioned a new anthology [6]. Under Duffy, the laureate role has become a conduit for a broad range of contemporary poetry (including 'performance poetry', which has often been regarded as a separate form) to connect with a wider public. This reflects her sense of British poetry as an eclectic, but crucially collective, project.

### 3. References to the research

[1] *The World's Wife* (1999) 96 pages, Picador, ISBN: 978-0330372220 [A themed collection that takes characters, stories, histories and myths which focus on men, and presents them anew to look at the women who were hidden behind the men. It is a set text on A2 and AS Syllabuses of English Literature in England and Wales. Still in print, the book was adapted into a stage play and performed at the Edinburgh Festival and Trafalgar Studios.]

[2] *Rapture* (2005) 80 pages, Picador, ISBN: 978-0330433914 [poetry collection] winner of the TS Eliot Prize 2005.

[3] *The Bees* (2011) 96 pages, Picador, ISBN: 978-0330442442 [poetry collection including first published Laureate poems] winner of the Costa Poetry Prize 2011.

[4] *The Manchester Carols Vocal Score* (2007), 127 pages, Faber Music Ltd, ISBN: 978-0571521210 [choral collaboration with composer Sasha Johnson-Manning, performed at Manchester's Royal Northern College of Music and broadcast on BBC Radio 4]

[5] *Rats Tales* (2012) 112 pages, Faber & Faber, ISBN: 978-0571299041 [stage play] a children's musical stage production commissioned by the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. Guardian 5\* review - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2012/dec/04/rats-tales-review>

[6] *Jubilee Lines* (2012), 160 pages, Faber & Faber, ISBN: 978-0571277056 [poetry anthology]

Carol Ann Duffy's awards and honours include the TS Eliot Prize (for 'Rapture', 2005) the Whitbread Poetry Award, the Forward Prize, a major NESTA Award (2001), the PEN / Pinter Prize (2012), Scottish Arts Council Book Awards and the Laureateship itself (2009). She was appointed OBE in 1995 and CBE in 2002, and made a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1999.

### 4. Details of the impact

Since she joined MMU, the culture of the MMU Writing School has helped Duffy to form her vision, that British poetry – in reinvigorating its traditional forms and modes, such as lyric, elegy, dramatic monologue – could reconnect with a broad popular audience. This conviction is confirmed by her book sales. In the past two years, according to Nielsen BookScan, the three bestselling poetry titles in the UK have all been by Duffy [*The Christmas Truce* (38,181), *The Bees* (29,716) and *The World's Wife* (19,933)], and this at a time of falling poetry sales.

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/may/24/salt-poetry-market-slump>. In conjunction with colleagues like the broadcaster, publisher and critic Michael Schmidt, the poet and critic Jeffrey Wainwright, and fellow poets with a popular following like Simon Armitage and Sophie Hannah, Duffy was able to develop a genuinely populist poetic following without compromising the quality of the work itself, giving her the ideal grounding for her work as Poet Laureate.

The Laureate is chosen according to three main criteria: poetic achievement and reputation, ability to connect and communicate with a broad range of people across the UK, ability to write accessible 'public' poetry. Duffy more than meets these criteria. Her poetic achievement over more than four decades has won her the TS Eliot, Forward, Whitbread and PEN/Pinter Prizes, plus an OBE and CBE. Her ability to connect with wide audiences is evinced by her high media profile, the presence of her work on the GCSE and A-Level syllabus **[A]**, and the continuing demand for her to read at schools, festivals and other public venues, a schedule averaging around three performances a week. Her skill at writing an accessible 'public' poetry is demonstrated by the lasting popular success of work such as 'The World's Wife'.

Within months of being appointed Poet Laureate in May 2009, Duffy set out to act as an ambassador for British poetry and poets, and immediately set up a number of new impact-generating initiatives to change the role, providing creative and academic leadership, reconnecting the British lyric poetic tradition with the largest possible number of people and finding a place for poetry as a public art in contemporary Britain. The chief beneficiaries of her impact-generation are young writers and readers, teachers and educators, emerging poets and new audiences beyond the core readership of poetry books. Her vision for the laureateship is to revive and reshape it as public-facing and inclusive.

From the announcement of her laureateship she has rooted her laureateship in the northwest of England, where she lives, and her regular commitment to working with northwest based artists and arts organisations (Sasha Johnson-Manning and Royal Northern College of Music for 'Manchester Carols', Opera North, the Royal Exchange Theatre) has had an impact on the range of opportunities for northwest poets, performers and audiences. Her flagship readings series 'Carol Ann Duffy and Friends' at Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre **[B]** has been a huge success, regularly selling out within days of the programme being announced, and has given a platform to new, emerging poets.

With her regular broadcasts and poetry pages in the Daily Mirror **[C]** and the Guardian **[D]**, she has extended the impact of her creative leadership, by commissioning new work from many fellow poets, established and developing, and enabling them to participate in the laureate's public role, and to reach new audiences. This inclusive approach to the laureateship has continued with commissioned anthologies, including the 2012 'Jubilee Lines', in which Duffy commissioned 60 fellow poets each to respond to a different year in the Queen's reign.

She gave up the annual stipend that goes with Laureateship, and put it in the hands of the UK Poetry Society, to establish an annual prize (of £5,000) for 'New Work in Poetry', under the title 'The Ted Hughes Award' **[E]**. This has quickly become a well-regarded and acclaimed prize honouring ground-breaking work by poets. Its remit to honour previously neglected areas of poetic work (performance based and collaborative) has had a significant impact on poets working in those fields, and on audiences discovering this new work.

Like many areas of the arts in the UK, recent cuts in Arts Council funding have threatened some major poetry organisations. As Laureate, CAD organised benefit readings in London and Manchester (2011) to raise money for, and awareness of, the work of the Poetry Book Society **[F]**, which was set up by TS Eliot in 1953 to support the propagation of poetry. She gave the PBS further support by agreeing to chair the judges for their TS Eliot Prize in 2012 **[G]**. Her work on behalf of PBS had a significant impact on their profile and fundraising, and has helped them to continue their work.

Her extensive work in schools as Poet Laureate has contributed to a resurgence of interest in reading and writing poetry at that level, and has 'opened the doors' to a literary form often regarded as too old-fashioned or too difficult **[H]**. As the most widely read and best-known poet in Britain today, Duffy has made the Laureate's role her own, generating not just cultural impacts, but contributing to social, economic and policy impacts too. Her growing overseas reputation and travel has given the Laureate's role a genuinely international dimension. **[I]**

## Impact case study (REF3b)

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

**[A]** AQA Examination Boards (re her impact on schoolchildren through her poetry on the curriculum) <http://anthology.aqa.org.uk/index.php?currmenu=duffy>

**[B]** Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester (re 'CAD & Friends' readings series and her drama for children 'Rat's Tales') <http://www.royalexchange.co.uk/event.aspx?id=761>

**[C]** Daily Mirror, books pages (commissioned poems by CAD herself, and sub-commissions from other poets) <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/carol-ann-duffy-new-poem-1249433>

**[D]** Claire Armitstead, Literary Editor, The Guardian. (commissioner of poems and 'pages' in which CAD sub-commissions other poets for occasions such as Royal Weddings and Olympic Games). Example: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/apr/23/wedding-carol-ann-duffy-poetry>

**[E]** Ted Hughes Award (established in 2010, administered by the Poetry Society, funded by the Laureate's traditional stipend of £5,000) <http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/competitions/tedhughes/>

**[F]** The Poetry Book Society (established by TS Eliot in 1953 to promote the art of poetry, CAD has been instrumental in supporting and raising awareness of the PBS in recent years) <http://www.poetrybooks.co.uk/>

**[G]** T S Eliot Prize website (run by the Poetry Book Society, judging panel chaired by CAD in 2012, herself a former winner) <http://www.poetrybooks.co.uk/projects/4/>

**[H]** Poetry Live (performing for 75,000 schoolchildren per year in 50 venues across the UK) <http://www.poetrylive.net/>

**[I]** The British Council Literature Department (evidencing CAD's international impact) <http://literature.britishcouncil.org/carol-ann-duffy>