

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Swansea University
Unit of Assessment: 29 - English Language and Literature
Title of case study: <i>The Library of Wales</i> : influencing Government Policy to benefit the Creative Industries, Cultural Tourism, Education and General Readers
1. Summary of the impact

The publication of *The Library of Wales* series, of Welsh literary works in English, was funded by the Welsh Government as a direct result of evidence given to the National Assembly of Wales by Thomas. The evidence was based on research carried out at Swansea University, and made the case for bringing a neglected but artistically and culturally important body of literature back into print. Since 2008 the series, edited by Smith, has delivered economic benefit to its publisher; provided new content for cultural tourism events; raised awareness of Welsh writing in English amongst new audiences; and made new material available for educational and creative purposes.

2. Underpinning research

[References to publications in Section 3 are given in square brackets below.]

Context: Welsh literature in English was ignored by most schools and universities until Welsh Devolution in 1997. M. W. Thomas and D. Smith mapped a culturally distinct body of Anglophone Welsh literature and argued that acceptance and understanding of the distinctive bilingual literary heritage of Wales was the precondition of imagining contemporary Wales, from the post-industrial South and the cosmopolitan cities of Cardiff and Swansea, to the rural Welsh-speaking West and North. The Welsh Government addressed the nation's neglect of its Anglophone literature in 2003-4 and Thomas was invited to give evidence to the National Assembly on the significant cultural deficit identified by his research. He emphasized the need to make key texts of this important heritage available for all. Subsequently, the research of Thomas, Smith and Bohata informed the selection of titles published in the resulting *Library of Wales* series, including titles such as Brenda Chamberlain's *A Rope of Vines*, Ron Berry's *Flame and Slag*, and Geraint Goodwin's *The Heyday in the Blood*.

Details of research: Thomas's work [R4, R5] interrogated the cultural implications of the bilingualism of Wales, while Smith [R2, R3] specialized in the particular historical context of avant-garde fiction produced in the industrial South. In *Corresponding Cultures: The Two Literatures of Wales*, Thomas juxtaposed rare and out of print English-language texts with literature in Welsh to illustrate Wales's conflicted literary history [R4]. In 2003 he published *Welsh Writing in English* – the only authoritative study to map and analyze a broad spectrum of C20th Anglophone writing [R5]. This literature, he argued, is essential to a stateless nation whose separate identity, like Scotland's, has been for centuries substantially maintained by its writers, in the absence of institutions.

Smith's research rediscovered the urgent leftist writing of Welsh coalfield writers, founders of an internationally significant tradition from Lewis Jones, Gwyn Thomas and Ron Berry to Raymond Williams [R2, R3]. He revealed that the literary experimentalism and political ideology of the industrial areas of Wales created a cultural entity, a 'South Wales' that, according to Smith is comparable to Faulkner's 'South' in being 'an emotional idea' rather than just a geographical expression [R2]. Smith's canon of South Wales writers has heavily informed the selection of texts for the *Library of Wales*. Other Swansea research which contributed to establishing the new field of study and expanding the canon included K. Bohata's *Postcolonialism Revisited: Writing Wales in English* [R1]. Developed from a PhD thesis supervised by Thomas (1999-2001), Bohata's research, informed by postcolonial critical theory, provided new readings of Arthur Machen, Rhys Davies, Margiad Evans and Alun Lewis, raising the profile of Welsh women writers and prompting the inclusion in the series of *In The Green Tree* by Alun Lewis (letters and stories from India) and two books by Machen.

Researchers:

– Thomas: Professor of English at Swansea (since 1995) and Emyr Humphreys Chair of Welsh

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Writing in English (since 2008): Thomas founded CREW, the Centre for Research into the English Literature and Language of Wales, and was awarded an OBE for his services to the literature of Wales in 2007.

- Smith: Raymond Williams Chair of Welsh Culture, CREW, Swansea (2005 – present).
- Bohata: Associate Professor at Swansea (2007 – present).

3. References to the research

Swansea University researchers are in **bold**. All University of Wales Press publications are peer-reviewed.

- [R1] **Bohata, K.** *Postcolonialism Revisited: Writing Wales in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004) pp. 212, ISBN 9780708318928
- [R2] **Smith, D.**, *Aneurin Bevan and the World of South Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), pp. 359, ISBN 0708312160
- [R3] **Smith, D.**, *Wales: A Question for History* (Bridgend: Seren, 1999), pp. 216, ISBN 1854111256 specifically the introduction and two new essays in this revised edition of Smith's *Wales! Wales?*
- [R4] **Thomas, M. W.** *Corresponding Cultures: the two literatures of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999) pp. 295, ISBN 0708315313.
- [R5] **Thomas, M. W.** (ed) *A Guide to Welsh Literature, Volume VII: Welsh Writing in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) pp. 348, ISBN 0708316794, including the following contributions by **Thomas**: 'Introduction' 1-6; Brown and **Thomas** 'The Problems of Belonging' 165-202; Aaron and **Thomas**, "'Pulling you through Changes": Welsh writing in English before, between and after two Referenda' 278-309.

4. Details of the impact

Numbers in square brackets refer to sources in section five.

Background:

Thomas's evidence to the National Assembly for Wales's Culture Committee [C1] led directly to the establishment of the *Library of Wales*. Using the research outlined above, Thomas argued that a great body of literature was unavailable to general readers and students and that where such books were reprinted 'no provision [was] made for delivery or for creating a market' [C2]. Taking as his model the *Library of America*, that 'great, popular monument to the literary achievements of the USA' [C1], Thomas suggested the creation of a 'Library of Wales', which would require generous funding from the Government. The Culture Committee duly made this recommendation which the Government accepted with cross-party support. Smith was appointed to create a blueprint for the project, Thomas was appointed to oversee the development of the publishing franchise and funding arrangements at the Welsh Books Council, and the first titles in the series appeared in 2006. They were eagerly received on both sides of the Atlantic, including being adopted for BBC R4 Book at Bedtime, Andrew Marr's Start the Week, and promotions in American Barnes & Noble stores.

CREW Development of the *Library of Wales* since 2008

The *Library of Wales* is currently edited by **Smith** and is overseen by **Thomas** in his position of Chair of the Welsh Books Council. The publisher, Parthian Books, has an office at Swansea University. New titles are selected by Smith in consultation with CREW colleagues (CREW drafted a list of 100 titles for the Welsh Books Council in 2004 during the planning/lobbying phase). Additional advice from academics and teachers is sought, and now the series is well-established proposals are received from the public, leading to the rediscovery, for example, of Stead Jones's novel *Make Room for the Jester*, which now has an introduction by Philip Pullman.

Impact and beneficiaries of the *Library of Wales* 2008-13

Since 2008, new funding worth £280,000 has been awarded to the Welsh Books Council to develop the *Library of Wales*. To date 38 titles have appeared, 25 of those published since 2008, accruing total sales of 56,000. Principal **beneficiaries** are: a) the publisher, Parthian Books (major boost to turnover and profile); b) the Welsh Books Council (the grant for the series represented a

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20% increase in the annual budget for English-language books); c) schoolchildren and university students (all schools and public libraries in Wales have a complete set of the series and titles are now studied in schools and universities), and d) the public, in Wales and beyond, who have been made newly aware of the strength and diversity of the Welsh literary heritage.

Economic Benefit for Publisher

Sales for 2008-13 total 38,700 books. Income from the Welsh Government grant in 2008-2013 totals £250,000, with turnover for the series at c. £75,000 per year [C3; C4]. The economies of scale generated by the series in the period since 2008 have led to substantial strengthening of the company's infrastructure and the series created new jobs (Manager, Editor, Marketing = 1 FTE post) and work experience via 20 internships and 4 paid graduate placements (Go Wales). [C3]

e-book development

Welsh government funding made it possible for Parthian to experiment with electronic publishing. In 2010, Parthian made all *Library of Wales* titles available as e-books (via Faber Fiction Factory and Amazon Kindle); e-books increased sales by as much as 25% on promotional titles. This test case was the foundation of a very lucrative e-book strategy for the whole Parthian list, and led to the creation of new digital initiatives by the Welsh Books Council to support other publishers in Wales (e.g. new grants for publishers to develop e-books and new e-pub platforms supported via its online bookshop gwales.com) [C4].

Raising the profile of writing from Wales: developing readerships in Wales and beyond

New audiences have been developed for Welsh writing in English by the much higher marketing budget (£20k per year) promoting brand awareness of the *Library of Wales*. All titles are available as e-books, extending reach; point of sale stands are prominent in bookshops, cultural centres and tourist venues [C4]. Sales for the *Library of Wales* are double and in some cases quadruple the average sales for a new literary novel in Wales: average sale for a new *Library of Wales* title is 1,600, with some totalling 4,000-6,500 [C3, C4]. Public consciousness of Anglophone Welsh literary heritage has been raised. Reader Development Officers have used the *Library of Wales* titles for Reading Groups across Wales and readers have pursued new titles in the series as they appear. The *Library of Wales* as a series was chosen as the centrepiece of a televised debate (*The Sunday Politics Show*, 4.11.12) on arts funding, in which CREW postgraduate students appeared alongside Assembly Members to discuss the value and impact of the series.

Sample testimonies convey the way the series has changed people's view of Welsh literary heritage. One reader encapsulates the value of the series as follows: *"it has been refreshing to see Welsh writing that would otherwise have slipped me by. They have widened my appreciation and knowledge of Welsh writing, leading me to want to read more"* [C5]. A student of literature at Durham University said *"I chose to write my dissertation on Welsh Writing in English specifically because I discovered the Library of Wales series. Prior to that I would have had no idea where to start with Welsh Writing in English as a literary tradition."* [C6] The writer, Rachel Trezise (who won the inaugural £60,000 Dylan Thomas Prize for her book about Valleys life) has spoken in public about the impact of the series on her: *"I dedicated my novel Sixteen Shades of Crazy to Gwyn Thomas. When I embarked on my writing career I'd never heard of him, or any other writers from the Rhondda, but because of the Library of Wales I have gradually come to realise that the south Wales valley novel is an established tradition; a path I'm following, not forging."* [C7]

The importance of the series as a 'brand' is recognized by politicians, ordinary readers and the creative industries. Since 2008, successive ministers have endorsed the impact of the *Library of Wales* by extending the funding for the series. In 2008, the First Minister Rhodri Morgan said of the *Library of Wales* that it is *"One of the best things we've supported as a government"*, and in 2012 the Minister for Culture described it an *'excellent way of selling our nation to the world'* [C8]. Outside Wales, readership has been expanded by translations of some titles (into Spanish and Arabic) and the sale of foreign rights. The series is distributed across the UK and USA, and sales beyond Wales account for 42% of the total.

Impact case study (REF3b)**Impact on tourism and creative industries**

The *Library of Wales* has generated spin-off events and creative opportunities, evidenced by:

- National Theatre of Wales's successful adaptation of a *Library of Wales* title, Gwyn Thomas's *The Dark Philosophers*, staged nationally (2010) and beyond (Edinburgh 2011).
- Literary tours organized by national promotional agency, *Literature Wales*, based on *Library of Wales* titles, taking place from Soho to Rhondda. Nine different tours have run since 2008, each averaging 40 people, plus on-line 'tourists' who download maps and reading lists. Tours generate economic benefits for the host venues, including hire costs, catering and transport [C9].
- An established partnership (2006 – ongoing) with the Hay Festival. This year Prince Charles was presented with a full set of the *Library of Wales* during his visit to Hay.

Impact on education and ongoing Welsh Government policy

Sustaining the wider literary heritage of Wales is now seen by the Welsh government to be a key component in creating and sustaining an ongoing sense of modern Welsh culture and history. The Government's education policy, the Curriculum Cymreig (Welsh Curriculum), requires that schools educate children about the history, culture and politics of Wales. The Welsh Government provides a full set of the *Library of Wales* to all secondary schools and colleges in Wales, giving teachers new material to help pupils understand their local and national cultural heritage. A teaching pack was published to help teachers introduce a range of *Library of Wales* titles in the classroom at Key Stage 4 and 5 [C10].

To extend the impact of literature and arts in education, the Minister for Education commissioned CREW's Smith to undertake wide consultation and produce a report on "Arts in Education in the Schools of Wales: An Independent Report for the Welsh Government" (2013). The report recommends that the Welsh Government makes 'creativity', including critical appreciation and creative practice of literature, a 'core theme' alongside Literacy and Numeracy in the Welsh curriculum, since literature is crucial to developing an informed citizenry and an understanding of cultural identity. This is the same premise that underpins the sustained initiative of Welsh Government funding for the *Library of Wales* [C11]. The minister will respond in the autumn of 2013, and CREW has been invited to give a policy briefing session for National Assembly members and civil servants on the *Library of Wales*, education and the future of Welsh writing in English in November 2013.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [C1] National Assembly of Wales, 'Policy Review: English Medium Writing in Wales, 15/10/2003. Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee CWLS(2)-04-03(p.3)' at <http://www.assemblywales.org/N000000000000000000000000000000013106.pdf>
- [C2] Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee, *Welsh Writing in English: A Review* (National Assembly for Wales, March 2004), see 2.3 Classic Works, pp 19-20.
- [C3] Quantative data supplied by Parthian Books, The Old Surgery, Napier Street, Cardigan, SA43 1ED
- [C4] Director, Welsh Books Council (see contacts)
- [C5] Reader Development Officer, Neath Port Talbot (see contacts)
- [C6] Former Durham University student (see contacts)
- [C7] Author, Rachel Trezise (see contacts)
- [C8] Ministerial Quotes: Morgan, 2008 in *Library of Wales Franchise Document*, Parthian Books, 2011; Culture Minister Huw Lewis, 2012: Press Release, '50,000 sales for out of print books' (Oct 2012) <http://thelibraryofwales.com/node/112>
- [C9] Project Officer, Literature Wales (see contacts)
- [C10] *Library of Wales Educational Resource Pack*, ISBN 9781905762231
- [C11] *Arts in Education in the Schools of Wales-An Independent Report for the Welsh Government* by Professor Dai Smith (published by the Welsh Government in September 2013).