

<b>Institution: University of Lincoln</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 35 Music, Drama, Dance &amp; Performing Arts</b>
<b>Title of case study: Contemporary playwriting: The Lincoln School of Performing Arts' role in guiding the UK theatre industry's international outreach through evaluation, analysis and praxis</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>This case study draws together a number of research projects led by members of the UoA whose work has had shared thematic goals. Collectively, this research has impacted upon the UK theatre industry's understanding of its international influence. This has served to promote and champion a vibrant culture of international new playwriting in the UK, and also to disperse positive practices internationally to encourage equally vibrant playwriting cultures in communities abroad. The research has had effects on the cultural capital of key institutions that support international playwriting and its growth; and formative impact on the praxis of translation and adaptation in the theatre industry.</p> <p>The principal beneficiaries of the impact are key industry institutions and organisations who have a stake in the development of new playwriting, its funding and its outreach (the Royal National Theatre, the Royal Court Theatre, the Young Vic, the Old Vic, ACE, the British Council, etc.).</p> <p>Direct impact is in the transfer of knowledge to industry and NGO stakeholders. Secondary impact is in the implementation of policy and procedure by those organisations (establishing initiatives; moving into new territories). Indirect and long-term impact will be felt by arts practitioners, audiences and theatres internationally. Additional spin-off and associated research enquiries are also likely to use this research as a springboard for further enquiry.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The principal focus of this case study is the work of <b>O'Thomas</b>, in collaboration with Elaine Aston of the University of Lancaster, in an AHRC-funded research project, 'Creating Cultural Exchange and Change: The Royal Court Theatre's International Department'. The research explores the impact of the Royal Court's international role and methodologies over fifteen years, while it has sought to develop playwriting in a range of countries and regions including the Middle East and Latin America. The research aims of this project are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend understanding of the Royal Court's method and process of translating cultures and languages in dramatic forms and contexts.</li> <li>• Explore how this can relate to and produce social and political change.</li> <li>• Provide an assessment of the Court's impact on international cultural development with specific reference to partnership projects in South America and Arab countries, in particular Brazil, Chile and Morocco.</li> </ul> <p>The research began in 2010 and was subsequently awarded an AHRC Translating Cultures grant which ran from January – August 2012.</p> <p>While the Royal Court project reflects the bulk of this case study, a number of associated projects feed into and consolidate shared themes in the UoA's research through their commitment to contemporary playwriting in the UK and abroad, and to translation studies. In particular, the parallel practical work of <b>O'Thomas</b> as a translator/adaptor of new Portuguese language playwriting offers a platform for the development of new international plays; and the work of <b>Jordan</b> as director of the new plays of Carl Djerassi offers an important body of work in professional, public production.</p> <p>Meanwhile, a number of scholars within our research area have focused their archival and critical research into specific playwrights, thus broadening the focus of the research. Amongst these, <b>Adiseshiah</b> (submitting as part of UoA29) has published widely on Caryl Churchill and has organised three symposia on Caryl Churchill (2011), Sarah Kane (2012) and Mark Ravenhill (2013). These symposia have taken place within the context of week-long festivals devoted to the work of each playwright, with performances for general public and school-student audiences and</p>

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post-show discussions involving the local community.

In order to complement and consolidate this thematic area of research, key researchers have been recruited to the school whose work elsewhere has contributed to the understanding of contemporary British playwriting. In particular, **Bull**'s work over several decades has tracked the developing dynamic of British playwriting, and his scholarship continues to document and archive new writing; thus it provides long-term historical context for our contemporary investigations. Meanwhile, **Bolton** is an Early Career Researcher whose previous appointment at the University of Reading was as post-doctoral researcher for the AHRC-funded project 'Giving Voice to the Nation: The Arts Council of Great Britain and the Development of Theatre and performance in Britain, 1945-1995'. Her PhD thesis, 'Demarcating Dramaturgy: Mapping Theory onto Practice' (University of Leeds, 2009), explored the differing contributions of the dramaturg in the UK and Germany to those nations' cultures of new writing. More recently, her focus on the work of Simon Stephens both in Britain and Germany, has contributed a significant body of knowledge to the academy. This includes a critical preface to his play, *Three Kingdoms* (Methuen, 2012), an extended critical guide to *Pornography* (Methuen 'Student Editions', 2014), an introduction to *Blindsided* (Methuen, 2014) and a public platform session interviewing the playwright in 2013.

#### Key findings that inform the stated impact:

- That the Royal Court's international strategies have influenced and enabled diverse theatrical cultures both in the UK and abroad;
- That an export economy of the arts influences writing for the stage in the UK as well as internationally;
- That workshop methodologies using translation for both delivery and dialogue can enable 'cultural' translation of texts;
- Discrete knowledge and dissemination of practical methodologies, especially in translation and adaptation;
- Discrete subject expertise into specific playwrights and their work.

### 3. References to the research

- Aston, Elaine and Mark O'Thomas (2013), 'Imagining with Others: the Transformative Process of the Royal Court Theatre's International Department', in *Performing transformations*, Collaborative Media International, pp. 38-45.
- Aston, Elaine and Mark O'Thomas (2012), 'Creating Cultural Exchange and Change: the Processes, Legacies and Impact of the Royal Court Theatre's International Department', (interim report), available at: <http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/lspa/research/translatingcultures/>
- Bolton, Jacqueline (2012), 'Capitalizing (on) new writing: new play development in the 1990s', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 32 (2). pp. 209-225.
- Jordan, Andy (2012), 'Carl Djerassi's Science-in-Theatre plays: the Theatrical Realization', in Walter Grunzweig (ed), *The Sci-Artist: Carl Djerassi's Science-in-Literature in Transatlantic and Interdisciplinary Contexts*, LIT Verlag.
- O'Thomas, Mark (2012), 'Rewriting "The book of disquiet"', in *Word and Text - A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics*, 2 (2), pp. 173-179.
- O'Thomas, Mark (2010), 'Turning Japanese: translation, adaptation, and the ethics of transnational exchange', in Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Ray Cutchins (eds), *Adaptation studies: New Approaches*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

### 4. Details of the impact

The impact from this research can be considered in three ways:

- 1). **Direct impact on the Royal Court Theatre in terms of its practices and approaches to international relations and the development of new playwriting; by extension this has led to wider knowledge within the British subsidised theatre sector; indirectly, this has impacted practitioners, theatres and audiences more widely, thereby diversifying the cultural landscape.**

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- Interim findings of this research were presented at a seminar hosted at the Royal Court, 'Developing Playwriting Abroad: Translating Cultures and the work of the International Department' (June 2012). This event was chaired by **O'Thomas** and featured Elyse Dodgson (Royal Court), Mike Bartlett (playwright) and April De Angelis (playwright) as key speakers. This event allowed for a knowledge exchange on translating cultures between international seminar participants from the theatre industry. Thus it demonstrated how HEIs can successfully bridge a gap between theatres and practitioners in the exchange of working methodologies and their efficacy. The Royal Court Theatre highlighted the benefit of this event for its own external engagement with translators and for developing a discourse into translation practice. The brokering of new relationships demonstrates the critical role universities can have in providing a forum for collaborations which may endure beyond the scope of the project itself. Since the publication of the Interim Report, the British Council in Chile and São Paulo has used its findings to reflect on the curation and development of arts activities outside the UK.
- Meetings with cultural agencies, practitioners and scholars in Morocco (Le Centre International des Etudes de Spectacle), Brazil (the British Council) and Chile (the British Council), led to further engagement with local playwrights and dramaturgs. The work here was particularly useful in delineating the role of theatre and new writing to capture political events (such as the Arab Spring) and how such work becomes mediated across cultures and languages.

### 2). The impact of new plays in production on theatres, audiences, and more generally on the buoyancy of new playwriting in the UK theatre landscape:

- **O'Thomas's** work with various schemes ('Connections' at the RNT; 'PIIGS' at the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs at the Royal Court and 'Feast' at the Young Vic) has contributed to a buoyant culture of international new playwriting, and particularly the work of young playwrights, being produced in the UK. This has helped to continue the work of these theatres and the UK subsidised theatre sector in leading and sustaining the promotion of diverse, multicultural theatre. At the same time, publication of **O'Thomas's** translated plays consolidates the archiving of this work for future audiences.
- **Jordan's** work with the staging of Carl Djerassi's plays has offered public presentation of an important playwright's body of work, exploring the links between science and theatre. The impact of this has not only been on exposing audiences to a significant (new) writer, but also on inviting dialogue between science and the arts. Further production projects with, for example, the Old Vic's 'Old Vic, New Voices' scheme has also introduced other new writing.
- The Lincoln School of Performing Arts also operates a new playwriting and development scheme of its own, 'Script This', which runs on a competitive basis and offers rehearsed readings of selected new plays submitted from across the country.

### 3). The impact of practical understanding gained from this work (as practice as research), disseminated through scholarly literature:

- **O'Thomas's** critical understanding of translation and adaptation has been widely disseminated at conferences and in publications (**O'Thomas** 2010, 2012), contributing to an understanding of emerging trends in new translation methodologies, which are feeding into pedagogic practices in the field.
- **Jordan's** dissemination of his working collaboration with Djerassi (**Jordan** 2012) has also outlined interesting working methodologies involved in the 'translation' from text to performance of complex scientific concepts and terminology. His voice in the emergent critical discussion about Science in Theatre is prominent, and reflected in a forthcoming publication and a conference organised for 2014 which will combine academic audiences with a wider public.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

AHRC Translating Cultures report (O'Thomas: 'Creating Cultural Exchange and Change')  
<http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/lspa/research/contemporaryplaywriting/translatingcultures>

AHRC funding bulletin (O'Thomas: 'Creating Cultural Exchange and Change')  
<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funded-Research/Pages/Creating-Cultural-Exchange-and-Change-The->

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[Royal-Court-Theatres-International-Department.aspx](#)

RCUK listing (O'Thomas: 'Creating Cultural Exchange and Change')

<http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/project/CFC5BE14-A927-4FD8-A05F-A1233DF69193>

Conference Listing: Performing Transformations, Morocco (O'Thomas: 'Creating Cultural Exchange and Change')

<http://icpsmorocco.org/index/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Performing-Transformations-Program-Mai-20-.pdf>

Profile on Carl Djerassi (Andy Jordan: Djerassi)

<http://www.lablit.com/article/21>

Metapedia site on Carl Djerassi (Andy Jordan: Djerassi)

[http://en.metapedia.org/wiki/Carl\\_Djerassi](http://en.metapedia.org/wiki/Carl_Djerassi)