

<b>Institution:</b> Plymouth University
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> D29
<b>Title of case study:</b> The Poetry of Tony Lopez: Contributing to the Creative and Cultural Sectors
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study describes the work of Professor Tony Lopez and its impact on the contemporary world of poetry and the creative and cultural economy. The impact has been on the general reading public, (who have recognised the importance of Lopez's works, on the writing community itself through Lopez's influence of creative practice, and on the publishers, editors, curators, arts festival programmers, and translators who work within the creative and cultural sectors of the economy. Publication, awards won, critical reception, and consultancy positions support the claim to impact.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Tony Lopez (employed by Plymouth University from 1989-2009, 2012-present) is a poet who is well known for his publication of experimental work since the late 1980s. Supporting his impact on the lay world of poetry readers and writers is his research into modern and contemporary USA and UK poetries and his own creative work, emblematic of research as practice. Since 1993, Lopez has published 18 critical essays, many of them collected into his book <i>Meaning Performance: Essays on Poetry</i> (Salt, 2009). These explore the work of the US and British poets from which his own creative work has evolved: Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, Basil Bunting, W.S. Graham, John Ashbery, Lee Harwood, David Antin, Ted Berrigan, Susan Howe, Andrew Crozier, Lyn Hejinian, and Bob Perelman. Lopez's research targets these authors as at the cutting edge of modernist poetic practice and so especially concerned with the limits of meaning and the production of new poetic forms. His interest in what are conceived of as 'difficult' poetries is further supported by his serving on the editorial board of <i>The Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry</i> and the <i>Studies in Liminality and Literature</i> book series for The Gateway Press (Madrid, Spain).</p> <p>In his own work, Lopez is similarly concerned with the expansion of form, specifically seen in his signature mode of 'collage' poetics. His process of 'seaming' together the many separate specialist sub-languages that define our fragmented contemporary experience, sampling and recombining rapidly shifting registers and vocabularies into a synthetic continuity that retains a sense of slippage, is the quality that marks out the originality and research insights embodied in his poetry. Since 1993, Lopez has published five books of poetry and also five pamphlets with eight different UK and US publishing houses, including Salt, Shearsman, University of New Orleans Press, The Figures, and Reality Street. The works of greatest reach and significance appear in Lopez's collections: <i>False Memory</i> (editions: 1996, 2003, 2012), <i>Covers</i> (2007), and <i>Only More So</i> (2011, 2012). The writing of <i>Covers</i> was supported by an AHRC research-leave grant (2005) for Lopez's proposal to 'use the composition process to explore a number of different modernist works from across the twentieth century: <i>Tender Buttons</i> and <i>How to Write</i> by Gertrude Stein, <i>The Cantos</i> of Ezra Pound, <i>The Sonnets</i> of Ted Berrigan and <i>My Life</i> by Lyn Hejinian'. In 2010, Lopez received an Arts Council England 'Grants for the Arts' award in order to complete, <i>Only More So</i>, a much larger compositional project in 'found text'. Pushing at the borders of the poetic 'form' with its non-continuous prose formatting and its scale (260 pages, 81,650 words), the book stems from Lopez's research into non-literary sources (specifically contemporary and popular science).</p> <p>His creative practice has been supported by the many performances/readings he's given of and about his work, both within and outside of Higher Education Institutions in Britain, the USA, Canada, Italy, France, Germany, and Spain, including Cambridge Conference of Contemporary Poetry (Kings College, Cambridge), Geoffrey Young Gallery (Great</p>

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Barrington, MA, USA), Teachers and Writers Collaborative (Poetry & Writers Series, Philadelphia, PA, USA), University of California, Berkeley; University of Kent, The Voice Box, Royal Festival Hall (London), and Whitechapel Art Gallery (London). He was a plenary reader at the 'Basil Bunting and Friends' Conference, Durham University, July 2012, and at the 'Long Poems: Major Forms' Conference, Sussex University, May 2008. He has also co-organized two international academic conferences on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Anglo-American poetry: 'Postmodern Poetry' (co-organized by Lopez and Philip Terry in 1998) and 'Poetry and Public Language' (co-organized by Lopez and Anthony Caeshu, 2008).

Since 2008, Lopez's development as a literary artist has seen him extend his range to produce explicitly public-facing 'material poetries' (such as 'More and More'), discussed in Section 4, using different modes of text display.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

Major works are reviewed in leading critical journals as indicated below and in Section 5.

1. Tony Lopez, *False Memory* (The Figures, 1996; Salt, 2003; Shearsman, 2012). 'Book of the Year' chosen by Robert Potts for *New Statesmen* (2003). Reviewed in *Guardian*, *TLS*, *Poetry Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Gig*, *Tears in the Fence*, *Terrible Work*.
2. Tony Lopez, *Only More So* (University of New Orleans Press, 2011; Shearsman, 2012). Reviewed in *PN Review*, *Free Verse*, *Stride*, *Silliman's Blog*.
3. Tony Lopez, *Meaning Performance: Essays on Poetry*, (Salt, 2006). Reviewed in *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, *Stride*.
4. Tony Lopez, *Covers* (Salt, 2007). Reviewed in *Scotland on Sunday*, *Tears in the Fence*.
5. Tony Lopez, *Poetry & Public Language*, co-edited with Anthony Caeshu (Exeter, UK: Shearsman, 2007). Publication by leading poetry publisher.
6. Tony Lopez, Material Poetry Exhibitions: 'More and More' (*Sentences*, Bury Art Museum, 2011); *Text Art: Poetry for the Eye* (TR1 Gallery, Tampere, Finland, 2012); *Visual Poetics* (South Bank Centre, London, 2013).

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

Lopez has created new forms of literary expression, influenced creative practice, contributed to the creative sector's economy, had his work anthologised, and has expanded cultural life through his readings and publications. His influence led to his appointment as a member of the SW Regional Council of Arts Council England (2009-2013). As a member of the governing body, Lopez helps oversee the development of arts and funding policy and decides which arts organisations will be funded in the future.

**Creating new forms of literary expression.** As one of the senior members of the contemporary British avant-garde, Lopez's 'collage' poetry (which appropriates specialised language from different fields), as well as his development of a 'material poetry' for public display are substantial new forms. For his use of 'public' language-registers, Lopez's poetry has been cited for challenging social assumptions: 'Lopez's *False Memory*... samples and blends the white noise of 1990s Britain... – economics, politics, genetics, fashion, real estate, entertainment, literature – in a surreal and satirical collage, sinister, elegantly amusing, and ultimately asking demanding political questions' (Robert Potts, review of *False Memory*, *New Statesman*). Or As David Herd writes, 'In part, the achievement of *False Memory* lies precisely in its handling of... diction.... In its progressive syntax Lopez's writing registers poetry's human responsibilities.' Kerridge, in his essay on Ecocriticism for *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory 2013*, writes of the 'ecocritical' value of Lopez's most recent book *Only More So* and refers to its 'innovation in literary form': 'the poem provides glimpses of the flow of large-scale cultural and material processes that no personal viewpoint can contain'. Lopez's 'material poetry' is aimed directly at the general public. The Arts Council funded B-SIDE Multimedia Festival (part of the larger Cultural Olympics Programme 'London 2012'), commissioned his site-specific text *Weymouth Sands* that was displayed on a large-scale LCD traffic management sign on Weymouth Esplanade during the Olympic sailing

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events in front of tens of thousands, 2012. His stone inscription work 'The Scattered Poem' is permanently sited on the towpath of the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal in Radcliffe, Greater Manchester (it was commissioned by the publicly funded Irwell Sculpture Trail). The significance for poetry of Lopez's innovative work can be seen by its wider circulation in anthologies (demonstrating 'canon-making') as follows: *The Dark Would: Anthology of Language Art* (Apple Pie, 2013), *The Art of the Sonnet* (The Belknap press of Harvard UP, 2010), *The Reality Street Book of Sonnets* (Reality Street, 2008), *Vanishing Points: New Modernist Poems* (Salt, 2004), *Anthology of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford UP, 2001), *Other: British and Irish Poetry since 1970* (Wesleyan UP, 1999) and *Conductors of Chaos* (Picador, 1996).

**Influence on creative practice.** Perhaps the most widely-read worldwide source of specialist poetry information and comment outside the Academy of Higher Education is *Silliman's Blog*. Ron Silliman describes *Only More So* as 'a forensic masterpiece' and writes that *Darwin* (published as a pamphlet, it constitutes one section of *Only More So*) 'just might be the most beautiful book of poems ever written... this is the most exquisitely constructed prose I've ever read – more lush than Proust'. Lopez's use of public language has also been cited for influencing contemporary poets such as Steve Spence's debut book of poetry which was shortlisted for the Forward First Book award.

**Contribution to the creative sector's economy.** Since 2008, Lopez has published two books of poetry with Shearsman, *False Memory* (a new edition with introduction by Robert Hampson) and *Only More So* (first published in the US by University of New Orleans press, subsequently published by Shearsman). He edited *High on the Downs: a Festschrift for Harry Guest* (Shearsman, 2012) and *The Text Festivals: Language Art and Material Poetry* (University of Plymouth Press, 2013). These book projects helped to employ publishers and designers, editors, distributors etc. His material poetry projects provide employment for collaborators including computer programmers, designers, stone carvers, neon sign manufacturers, printers, and electronic signage contractors.

**Anthologisation, translation, and book publication.** Maximizing impact, work that has appeared in book form has often been published in the first instance in journals and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic: *Practice: New Writing + Art*, *Argotist Online*, *Dispatx*, *Ekleksographia*, *Salt Magazine*, *Wobbling Roof*, *Action Poetique*, *Angel Exhaust*, *Capilano Review*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Fragmente*, *The Germ: A Journal of Poetic Research*, *The Gig*, *Jacket*, *Object Permanence*, *Talisman*, *The Alterran*, *Free Verse*, *Pilot*, *Pog*, *Shearsman*, *Shiny*, *West Coast Line*, *Poetry*. Seven poems have been recently published in Italian, Polish, and French translations by Raffaelli Editore, Italy, by Rita Baum (Poland), and by *Siecle 21*, (France). Two other poems appeared in their original English in European publications as well: in Helene Aji (ed) *Ezra Pound and Referentiality*, (Sorbonne University Press, France 2003), and in Kornelia Freitag and Katharina Vester (eds), *Another Language: Poetic Experiments in Britain and North America*, LIT Verlag (Berlin, Germany 2009).

**Expansion of Cultural Life.** Cultural life has been expanded through Lopez's public readings and performances of his work since 2008. Audiences are regularly over 100, and feedback includes: 'Quite simply, it was one of a handful of standouts in the many years of poetry readings I've attended... I believe that he is one of the truly great readers of the poem, as it finds its voice in this new century' (Philip Davenport, Whitechapel organizer); 'I loved your reading, as did so many other people I have spoken to. Your performance brought the festival to life' (David Herd, Sounds New Festival, Canterbury). Venues Lopez has performed his work at include: Whitechapel Gallery, London (Apr 2013), The Poetry Project, New York (Nov 2012), Milano's Poetry, Philadelphia (Nov 2012), Ada Books, Providence (Nov 2012), University of California, Berkeley (Nov 2012), Edinburgh International Book Festival (Aug 2012), Hay Poetry Jamboree (June 2012), Sounds New Festival, Canterbury (Mar 2012), Runnymede Festival, London (Apr 2012).

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Critical reviews and commentaries of the works discussed:

1. Review of *False Memory*, 'Newly Dug Plots', *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 January 2004.
2. Review of *False Memory*, 'Linguistic Gold', *Poetry Review* 94.1 (2004): 73-75.
3. Review of Darwin, *Silliman's Blog*, 15 July 2009 (accessed 28 June 2013),  
<http://ronsilliman.blogspot.co.uk/2009/07/last-week-when-i-was-having-my-way-with.html>
4. Andrew Duncan, 'Tony Lopez: Worrying in Public' (critical essay on TL) in Duncan, *The Council of Heresy: A Primer of Poetry in a Balkanised Terrain*. Exeter, UK: Shearsman, 2009, 142-145.
5. Stephen Burt, 'Radial Symmetry 3' (critical essay on TL) in Stephen Burt and David Mikics, *The Art of the Sonnet*, Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010, 389-392.
6. David Herd, 'Dislocating Country: Post-War English Poetry and the Politics of Movement', *Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, Ed Peter Robinson (Oxford University Press: 2013)
7. H  l  ne Aji, 'Tony Lopez: Le Retour du Reel', *Lisa e-journal*, 7, 1 (2009) <http://lisa.revues.org/816> (accessed 28 June 2013).
8. Review of *Only More So and 'Life Sentences'*, by, *PN Review* 206, Vol 38 (2012).
9. J. Peter Moore, 'Durable Excess', (review of *Only More So*), *Free Verse*, 22, Spring 2012 (accessed 28 July 2013):  
[http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/freeverse/Archives/Spring\\_2012/reviews/T\\_Lopez.html](http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/freeverse/Archives/Spring_2012/reviews/T_Lopez.html)
10. Richard Kerridge, 'Ecocriticism' in *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*, vol 21, 1 (November 2013).