

Institution: University of Surrey
Unit of Assessment: UOA 29 English Language and Literature
Title of case study: New Modernisms, New Audiences
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Building on the University of Surrey's long history of involvement in the post-war British poetry scene, Surrey's School of English and Languages conducts research into some of the key questions surrounding contemporary poetic practice. This research underpins the School's commitment to championing and investigating the most recent and innovative wave of contemporary British poetry: the renewed focus on a Modernist aesthetic that characterizes much of twenty-first-century verse. The School has established a series of public events to bring this challenging and rewarding body of work to a wider audience. These events have made a significant economic contribution through their promotion of the British poetry industry, and have had a marked cultural impact on public access to and understanding of avant-garde poetry in the county of Surrey and across southeast England.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>In the 1960s the University of Surrey's Poetry Tutor Morag Morris established a groundbreaking teaching syllabus and a public lecture series championing contemporary British poetry. Morris's practice-based research and activities were driven by a belief that poetry has an integral part to play in higher education and in the life of the wider community, and that poems are most effectively communicated and appreciated when they are performed publicly as well as read privately. Since her retirement David Ashford (Lecturer in English Literature 2008-present) has continued her work by re-launching the annual Morag Morris poetry lecture series and by developing new events and publishing projects to introduce public audiences to contemporary poetry.</p> <p>These projects build on research conducted in the School of English and Languages, which examines the key concerns of the late Modernist movement within contemporary poetry: the poetic representation of subjectivity; experimentation with poetic form; and the role of performance in poetry. The research of David Ashford and Gregory Tate (Lecturer in English Literature 2010-present) traces the history of these concerns in nineteenth and early twentieth-century poetry, situating the new wave of contemporary Modernist verse within a broader historical perspective. Tate's work focuses on the ways in which scientific ideas about the mind contributed to poetry in the nineteenth century, influencing poets to experiment with the form and content of their writing in response to new psychological theories that presented the mind as mutable and fragmented. Ashford's research examines the philosophical concerns of twentieth-century Modernist verse, arguing that Modernist poets drew on philosophical traditions which questioned Enlightenment notions of the rational subject to write poetry that interrogated the coherence of personal identity. The manner in which this research informs the School's public events was demonstrated by a public lecture given by Ashford and Tate at the 2013 Surrey Poetry Festival, examining the links between Victorian and twentieth-century poetry and the contemporary verse written by poets reading at the Festival.</p> <p>Ashford also writes and performs his own poetry, which focuses on the creative translation of texts from across the world. Recent appointments in the School have strengthened its existing research focus on creative experiment and poetry-as-performance. Stephen Mooney (Poet in Residence 2012-13, Lecturer in Creative Writing 2013-present) produces and performs poetry which interrogates contemporary political structures in the United Kingdom, and their effect on the</p>

individual [see also source 1 in section 5]. Mooney is also a founding editor of Veer Books, a poetry press which supports experimental writing and which has published 82 books since its establishment in 2003. Holly Luhning (Lecturer in Creative Writing 2012-present) is a novelist, poet, and scholar whose poetry investigates concepts of beauty, femininity, and illness through an examination of the intersections between identity and the gendered body.

These critical and creative research interests have established the University of Surrey as a nationally significant centre for the study of poetry and of contemporary Modernist poetry in particular. The cultural relevance of contemporary Modernism (with its focus on questions of identity, politics, nationality, and gender) is vast, and the organisation of events that give public audiences access to this difficult but important form of writing is a key element of the School of English and Languages' poetry research. The impact-related activities described in section 4 draw on the School's research, in the form of critical insight and creative practice, to enrich and expand public engagement with contemporary Modernist poetry.

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

1. Ashford, David (2013) 'The Siberia of the Mind: Egoism in the Writing of Wyndham Lewis', *Intercapillary Space* <<http://intercapillaryspace.blogspot.co.uk/>>.
2. Ashford, David (2013) *Xaragmata*. London: Veer Books. [poetry collection]
3. Luhning, Holly (2013) *Cinch: New and Selected Poems*. Guildford: Contraband.
4. Mooney, Stephen (2013) *The Cursory Epic*. Performance presented at *Reinventing the Post Colonial (in the) Metropolis* conference & *Veering to Berlin* reading. Chemnitz and Berlin <<http://vimeo.com/66266670>> and *The Cursory Epic/Duree*. Performance presented at *Surrey Poetry Festival 2013*. Guildford <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDbETIJRDMw>>.
5. Tate, Gregory (2012) *The Poet's Mind*. Oxford: OUP. [peer-reviewed monograph]
6. Tate, Gregory (2009) 'Tennyson and the Embodied Mind', *Victorian Poetry* 47, 61-80.

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

Reaching out to the local community and enriching the cultural life of Surrey through the public performance and discussion of contemporary poetry is a central part of the School of English and Languages. The scholarly and creative research underpins a range of public events which are designed to challenge and deepen the public's understanding of and response to contemporary Modernist poetry. The University of Surrey supports these events through organisational assistance and through the funding of a Poet in Residence position, which each year gives a contemporary poet the opportunity to spearhead the School's strategy for integrating experimental poetry into the cultural life of the community.

Cultural Impact: Morag Morris Poetry Lecture

The mainstay of the University's poetry calendar is the annual Morag Morris poetry lecture, a public event at which an established poet speaks on experimental poetry. Since the lecture series was re-launched in October 2008, the renowned poets Iain Sinclair, J. H. Prynne, Michael Horovitz, Rod Mengham, and Bernard O'Donoghue have delivered lectures to audiences in Guildford. The cultural significance of these events for the local community is demonstrated by the size of the audiences: over 200 tickets were sold, for example, for the 2009 lecture by Prynne [see source 2 in section 5]. The lectures give the public new perspectives on Modernist and contemporary poetry. They also sustain current debate about experimental verse by giving influential poets a public forum in which to present their critical ideas to a wide audience, both in the lecture itself and beyond: Mengham's 2011 lecture, for instance, was subsequently published in the summer 2013 issue of the prominent poetry magazine *PN Review* [see source 3].

Cultural Impact: Spring Poetry Reading and Open Lecture

The spring poetry reading and open lecture, established in 2012, is an annual event which brings the School of English and Languages' research interest in literary translation to a public audience. Each year an established poet is invited to Guildford to read from their own translations and to discuss the challenges involved in translating poetry. The 2012 lecture by David Constantine and the 2013 lecture by Harry Gilonis were each attended by 16 people from the local area. Feedback collected at the 2013 lecture testifies to the impact of this event on the audience's perception of contemporary poetry in translation. One attendee wrote that 'the topic was very thought-provoking and [I] enjoyed that it was open to anyone', while another confirmed that the event 'raised awareness of translated poems and provoked interest in the effects of translation and [the] process involved' [see source 4]. The impact of this long-standing lecture is also evidenced by the fact that Professor Edward Larrissy of the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen's University Belfast agreed to deliver the 2013 lecture at short notice to honour the late poet and playwright, and to speak about Heaney's work in relation to modernism.

Cultural and Economic Impact: Contraband Poetry Press

The School's commitment to giving contemporary Modernist poets a platform for their work, and to promoting the British contemporary poetry industry, is reflected in the activities of its poetry press, Contraband, managed by David Ashford. Focusing on work which intersects with the School's research interests (in subjectivity, gender, and translation), Contraband publishes formally innovative poetry by the new wave of Modernist writers that have emerged in recent years, as well as out-of-print material from earlier phases of Modernist poetic experiment. In the short time that Contraband has been running (since 2012), it has made a significant contribution to the cultural economy of southeast England [see source 5]. It has published 11 volumes of verse by local poets Cooke, Raha, Spragg, Evans, Gilonis, Martin, Guthrie, Freeman, Luning and Spicer. Sales to date have ranged from 15 copies of the newest publications to 140 copies of the first titles to see publication in 2012. In an experimental poetry market in which the sale of 200 copies makes a book a best-seller, these are significant sales figures for volumes of new verse.

Cultural, Economic, and Educational Impact: Surrey New Writers Festival

The Surrey New Writers Festival is an annual public event founded in 2013 and run by the School. The festival's programme consists of a series of sessions which introduce the public to various aspects of contemporary creative writing and the publishing industry. Experimental poetry constitutes a major focus of the festival: the 2013 event featured poetry readings, a panel discussion about publishing contemporary poetry, and the launch of Veer Books' spring poetry titles. These events were attended by a wide range of people from the local community: 51 tickets were sold for the festival, and 25 local schoolchildren attended free of charge. Evaluation questionnaires collected at the festival demonstrate that the poetry sessions expanded and enriched the audience's understanding of contemporary verse. This impact was particularly evident in feedback from the younger members of the audience: one A level student wrote that he or she 'was very inspired by the poetry' performed at the festival, and another recorded that the festival as a whole 'has informed and interested me in different aspects of creative writing, such as poetry' [see source 5]. The festival's impact on the cultural life of Surrey is affirmed by letters of appreciation from local community figures. Nicolas Spicer, a local poet who attended the event, commented that 'the sense of community that the enterprise must foster, both among writers and reaching out to the wider public, can only have a positive impact on the perception of literary endeavour.' The organisers of the monthly 'Pop Up Poetry' events in Guildford emphasised the significance of the festival's commitment to experimental poetry, writing that the poetry sessions facilitated 'a deeper understanding of the role of performance in avant-garde poetry'. They also

praised the 'opportunities for professionals, academics and members of the wider public to cross-fertilise ideas and inform each other. The venue in the High Street was ideal and attracted a cross-section of Guildford's community' [see source 6].

Cultural and Economic Impact: Surrey Poetry Festival

The annual Surrey Poetry Festival, established in 2011, is perhaps the most high-profile forum for registering the cultural impact of the School's research into Modernist poetics. In order to increase the public reach of the festival, it is held on a Saturday and is based in the Guildhall on Guildford High Street, ensuring that a large public audience sees the poetry readings, lectures, films and installations which make up the programme. The School works closely with local government to promote and organise the festival: in 2013, for instance, Experience Guildford, a Business Improvement District funded by Guildford Borough Council, arranged for the distribution of promotional flyers and secured licences for outdoor poetry readings across Guildford on the day of the festival. The festival consistently attracts audiences of more than 40 people, and audience feedback from the 2013 festival indicates that the event made a significant impact by giving local people their first experience of contemporary poetry. One audience member wrote that 'it was my first time [attending] such an event and I did enjoy it very much'; as a result of attending the festival, 'I became curious to know more about contemporary poetry'. Another attendee praised the 'great line up' of poets, and the 'lovely atmosphere, welcoming but thought-provoking'. The view that the festival was both inclusive and culturally stimulating was also reflected in the feedback from another audience member, who commented that 'the festival hit exactly the right note and really helped make contemporary poetry relevant to modern life' [see source 7]. The wider cultural impact of the festival is demonstrated by the substantial local media coverage surrounding the 2013 event. On 20 May 2013, the School's poet in residence Stephen Mooney discussed the festival (and the work of the Contraband poetry press) in a 20-minute segment on the BBC Radio Surrey/Sussex Afternoon programme [see source 8]. In addition to this radio coverage, the festival was the focus of features in the 31 May and 14 June 2013 editions of the *Surrey Advertiser*, a local newspaper with a circulation of 22,000 [see source 9]. The festival also has a positive economic impact on the contemporary poetry industry, as it gives innovative small presses a 'shop window' in which to sell their books to the general public [see source 10]. Veer Books, for example, sold a combined total of 46 volumes at the 2012 and 2013 festivals.

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

- [1] Letter about the Veering to Berlin readings. (Provided statement)
- [2] University of Surrey Arts Box Office: <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/arts/contact/>.
- [3] *PN Review* poetry magazine: <http://www.pnreview.co.uk/index.shtml>.
- [4] Feedback questionnaires from Harry Gilonis's 2013 poetry reading and open lecture.
- [5] Contraband Poetry Press: http://www.contrabandbooks.co.uk/#!_new-modernist.
- [6] 2013 Surrey New Writers Festival (Provided statement)
- [7] Feedback questionnaires from the 2013 Surrey Poetry Festival. (available upon request)
- [8] Interview with Stephen Mooney on the BBC Radio Surrey/Sussex Afternoon programme (CD recording). (available upon request)
- [9] Articles on 2013 Surrey Poetry Festival, *Surrey Advertiser*, 31 May and 14 June 2013; Newspaper Society Database website: <http://www.nsdatabase.co.uk/>.
- [10] Gliterature website: <http://gliterature.com/2013/06/10/surrey-poetry-festival-2013/>