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Institution: Bath Spa University**Unit of assessment: UoA29 English Language and Literature****a) Context**

Bath Spa University has an illustrious history in the formation of Creative Writing as a serious academic discipline in the United Kingdom alongside the existing research culture of English Literature. From the outset, it has demonstrated that this is a subject with strong appeal in the wider public sphere. The strategy of the subject team has long been focused on disseminating its research to public audiences, from the late 1980s when Creative Writing at Bath Spa became an academic subject to the present when the literary festivals and book clubs fuelled by Creative Writing courses have become the backbone of much literary life outside academe. In tandem with its aim to enhance the quality of published literary writing in a variety of genres the team has succeeded in opening up literary debate in the publishing industry and the public sphere (as conducted in articles and reviews in newspapers and magazines, broadcast reviews and discussions, literary prizes and festivals, events in schools, public readings and lectures). From the start it was important to engage directly with the industry at the pre-publication stage of selecting and editing work, primarily by entering into collaboration with literary agents and publishers. In that way, our research-based critical criteria could interact with the commercial criteria used by agents and publishers, bringing about better understanding and mutual influence. Over the last 20 years, this strategy has proved highly successful, as shown by the eagerness of agents and publishers to visit, sponsor prizes and take part in events, including public seminars. That success has been paralleled by exciting new developments in English Literature, which over the same period had a strategy of taking research to public audiences and supporting fields. Eco-criticism, criticism of contemporary writing and book history are all areas of research at Bath Spa where the relationship with non-academic audiences and industries is integral to the aims and processes of the work itself, evidenced in a range of collaborative projects with public bodies such as museums, art galleries and theatres.

Creative Writing is naturally and inextricably preoccupied with public audiences and non-academic institutions that are employers, since all practitioners in the School are seeking to publish their work with trade publishers, have it broadcast on national radio or television, or have it performed at commercial venues. Longstanding relationships have therefore developed between researchers in the School and literary agencies, publishers and broadcasters, who visit regularly to talk to students and staff, and whose professional business is to find literary talent they can take to public audiences. Indeed, the MA programmes in Creative Writing, and increasingly the PGR programmes too, now function as a recognised part of the publishing industry. Most publishers of fiction have ceased to encourage the direct submission of unsolicited manuscripts, and now deal almost exclusively with work tendered by literary agents. Now the agents themselves are moving in the same direction, wanting to find a filtering process that brings high-quality work to the fore, reducing the need to examine large numbers of unsolicited manuscripts. The degree programmes have become that filter, and as such they are now an essential structural part of the industry. Bath Spa University, one of the institutions that pioneered the emergence of Creative Writing as a major academic discipline, was an early developer of this structural relationship, and has worked in this way with PFD Ltd, Janklow & Nesbit Ltd, United Agents Ltd and Greene & Heaton Ltd, among others. Creative writing of all kinds in the department requires an overlap between the academic world and the external world of audiences, broadcasters, literary journalism, publishing, performance, literary prizes

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and bookshops. Virtually all the Bath Spa researchers in this subject write for non-academic literary journals and the literary pages of national newspapers, perform their work at readings in bookshops and other venues, or have it performed at theatres or on radio and television, and make media appearances themselves. Many take part in the administration and judging of literary prizes. Some have also explored other social functions for creative writing, as Liardet's work with prisoners, victims of torture and recovering alcoholics illustrates. Others have played leading roles in the organisation and content of literary festivals. The Impact Case Study featuring the work of Tessa Hadley exemplifies this strategic approach to impact. Hadley is an excellent example, but several others might have been chosen (e.g. Liardet, Woodward and Voake).

Other outward-facing strengths include the field of Writing and Environment (or 'Environmental Humanities'). The *raison d'être* of this research is the idea of making a contribution to debate about one of the defining fields of concern of contemporary times – a debate that cannot be confined to the academic world. The Writing and Environment Research Centre, since its creation in 2008, has co-ordinated efforts to realise this strategic aim, holding symposia in which academic researchers, people from industry and NGOs, and members of the general public meet to discuss the implications of the primary research. Initially, the ecocritical efforts of Kerridge and Garrard to establish the field were primarily academic in their impact, but it was these efforts that led to the expansion of the research field at Bath Spa through the appointments of Neale and Evans and the children's environmental writer Nicola Davies.

For the *Book, Text and Place Research Centre*, outward-facing work involves engagement with such bodies as OUP (Gadd), the City of London Corporation in connection with the Lord Mayor's Show (Hill) and Hartlebury Castle Trust, holders of the Richard Hurd Library (Gregg). Concerned as it is with the relationship between literary ideas and material forms of textual production, this centre has also set out from the beginning to coordinate collaborative work between academic researchers and the relevant industries, especially the heritage industries.

Another area of outward-facing research is Early Twentieth-Century Modernism, where Edwards's work on Wyndham Lewis's writing and painting involved curating exhibitions for two major art galleries, and Wright's dramatisation of Virginia Woolf's relationship with Vanessa Bell was performed to public audiences at commercial theatres. Both projects received funding from the AHRC Knowledge Transfer programme; Edwards held a KT Fellowship in 2007-8, while Wright was awarded in 2010 an AHRC funding grant for KT that included the employment of a recent graduate.

b. Approach to impact

Encouraging and funding outward-facing work is central to the research strategy for English and Creative Writing. Academics routinely take their research to public audiences through readings, lectures and performances. Since the 1990s, English and Creative writing staff have worked with the annual Bath Literature Festival and Bath Festival of Children's Literature, sponsoring readings and exhibitions of work by staff and students, public workshops led by staff, and guest readings by writers whose work connects with Bath Spa research strengths. For eight years the University has funded and organised 'Stand Up Poetry', a series of monthly public readings in Bath by eminent and emerging poets: readers have included Les Murray, Kathleen Jamie, Peter Porter, John Burnside, Pascale Petit, Hugo Williams, Harriet Tarlo, Tony Lopez, Alan Brownjohn, Jill Bialosky, Ahren Warner and John Kinsella. Events have also been organised in collaboration with two independent Bath bookshops, Topping's and Mr B's

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Emporium, where members of the department, PGR students and former Masters students frequently hold public book-launch events. These serve not only to showcase research, grow the public audience for literature, and introduce new writing, but also to establish and maintain a dialogue between writers and audiences that shapes the writing itself. 'Stand Up Poetry' events include question and answer sessions in which readers talk about creative processes and publishing, and audiences are encouraged to express their reactions to work.

Conferences and symposia are often open to the public, and include non-academic speakers. The AHRC Network seminars on 'Cultural Framing of Environmental Discourse', for example, included Liz Warren, founder and director of SE2 Ltd, an independent environmental consultancy. Bath Royal Literary & Scientific Institution (BRLSI), where the seminars were held, was a project partner (BRLSI is also the venue for 'Stand Up Poetry'). The Writing and Environment Research Centre's 2012 symposium on 'The New Nature Writing' was open to the public and had the specific mission of engaging the public about this emerging literary genre. This was also true of the MIX conferences on writing and the digital media held in July 2012 and 2013.

c. Strategy and plans

Our research centres will continue to organise and fund activities, and to use mentoring and training events to help staff enhance public understanding of the creative processes that are the primary research methods for creative writers, and the critical processes that are the research methods of literary critics and literary historians.

Sponsored events and contributions to festivals, organised and sponsored by the centres, are central to this strategy. Green, Voake and Almond, for example, annually play leading roles in Bath Festival of Children's Literature, the leading national festival in this field, partly sponsored by the centre. All centres and departments will search for new ways of engaging our research with non-academic bodies and public audiences: new uses for literary research and creative writing. One example is the involvement of staff and students in 2012-13 in the redesign and marketing of some of the National Trust's properties in the South West that have literary associations, especially the two Thomas Hardy houses near Dorchester and S.T. Coleridge's house at Nether Stowey.

d. Relationship to case studies

All three case studies reflect our focus on critical interaction with public audiences. The Case Study based on the novels and short stories of Tessa Hadley gives an example of the work with public audiences and the literary industry that is typical of Creative Writing practitioners in the School. 'Writing and the Environment' shows how a new field of teaching in the UK and overseas has been led by critics in this School, and how a variety of forms of environmental writing by practitioners in the School have achieved public influence. 'Wyndham Lewis' exemplifies how collaboration with external bodies such as museums and heritage institutions can transcend disciplines to generate enormous impact on public understanding of established cultural figures.