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| Institution: 10007857 – Bangor University |
| Unit of Assessment: UoA 28 Modern Languages and Linguistics |
| Title of case study: Extending the Reach of Welsh-language Creative Writing |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Inspired by the pioneering work of Gwyn Thomas since the mid-1960s, writers based in Bangor University's School of Welsh are actively engaged in practice-led research. Acutely aware of the social context within which they write and utilising various platforms such as local and national media, festivals and public readings, they have connected their work with a wide and varied audience. That audience includes native Welsh speakers and learners, visitors and non-Welsh speakers. Collectively they have made a practical contribution to Welsh language resurgence and rejuvenation, and their translation work has further extended the reach of their writing into new domains beyond regional and national boundaries.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Practice-led research by members of Bangor University's School of Welsh since 1 January 1993 has tackled new and often contentious material to align Welsh literature to contemporary debate and refresh current perspectives.</p> <p>Prof. Gwyn Thomas (joined in 1961, retired in September 2000) emerged as a poet during a period of heightened public concern for the Welsh language. This context has permeated his verse and led to a research focus on how a minority language, steeped in tradition, can take up its place within modern society and face up to current global affairs. Since 1993 specifically, the motivation driving this creative challenge has been to ensure relevance for his writing, and poetry in particular, within the present world. His work has been extremely influential in challenging fellow writers to connect linguistically, intellectually and emotionally and impacts upon current debate and modern sensibility. Published in 1998, <i>Darllen y Meini</i> (3i) reaffirmed that a quest for accountability has been a constant feature of Thomas's poetics. In July 2000, Thomas published <i>Gweddnewidid</i> (3ii), a retrospective selection of his earlier poems. This selection confirms his essential contribution to contemporary Welsh poetry and his pre-eminent status. His importance in extending the thematic reach of Welsh poetry is suggested by leading poet and critic Alan Llwyd: in his extended review of <i>Gweddnewidid</i>, he states that 'everything [as exemplified by the poems of Thomas] is subject-matter for poetry in our modern world, from the songs of Elvis and Roy Orbison to television adverts' (3ii).</p> <p>The same commitment, to tackle new and often contentious material and thereby forcing the Welsh language to face up to modern complexities, characterizes the sustained body of work by other members of this group.</p> <p>In various poems contained within <i>Cydio'n Dynn</i> (1997) and <i>Tafarn Tawelwch</i> (2003: 3iii), Prof. Gerwyn Williams (joined in 1989) has investigated through his verse various instances of conflict as well as the impact of media coverage on modern perceptions within the global village. 'Efrog Newydd Eto', included within <i>Rhwng Gwibdaith a Coldplay</i> (2011: 3iv), was described by Gareth King (author of a popular guide for learners of Welsh) as 'a telling demonstration of the capacity of this ancient linguistic tradition to find its voice in the wider modern world' (5i). Avoiding the pitfalls of sentiment and cliché, Dr Jason Walford Davies (joined in 1993) readdressed the 1984 miner's strike and encompassed post-industrial Wales within Welsh poetry in his highly-praised National Eisteddfod Crown-winning poem, 'Egni' (2004: 3v).</p> <p>Since her appointment at Bangor, Dr Angharad Price (joined in 2006) has extended her research into the exploration of place in <i>Caersaint</i> (2010: 3vi), a novel praised for providing a unique response to post-devolution Wales and for its exploration of political and cultural tensions. While</p> |

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widely referred to as the most Welsh-speaking town in Wales, this is the first novel to present a fictional version of Caernarfon. The interface between private and public spheres is a particular preoccupation for Professor Jerry **Hunter** (joined in 2003) in his Prose Medal-winning novel, *Gwenddydd* (2010: 3vii). Alluding to the medieval prose tale of Myrddin, this tale of post-traumatic stress disorder set during the Second World War has been described by critics as ‘an important contribution to war literature in Wales’. **Hunter**’s most recent novel, *Gwreiddyn Chwerw* (2012), is a ground-breaking novel which addresses the taboo subject of neonaticide, rising to the challenge by adopting the persona of a female first-person narrator.

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

- (i) Gwyn **Thomas**, *Darllen y Meini* (Dinbych: Gwasg Gee, 1998), tt. 72. Submitted to RAE 2001.
- (ii) Gwyn **Thomas**, *Gweddnewidio: Detholiad o Gerddi 1962-1986* (Dinbych: Gwasg Gee, July 2000), tt. 272; see Alan Llwyd’s extended review in “Y Ddôr yn y Mur”: Barddoniaeth Gwyn **Thomas** ar Achlysur Cyhoeddi *Gweddnewidio*, 2000’, *Rhyfel a Gwrthryfel: Brwydr Moderniaeth a Beirdd Modern* (2003).
- (iii) Gerwyn **Williams**, *Tafarn Tawelwch* (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2003), tt. 64. Submitted to RAE 2008.
- (iv) Gerwyn **Williams**, *Rhwng Gwibdaith a Coldplay* (Caernarfon: Gwasg y Bwthyn, 2011), tt. 72. Shortlisted for Welsh Book of the Year 2012; submitted to REF 2014. (REF Identifier 2864).
- (v) Jason Walford **Davies**, ‘Egni’, *Cyfansoddiadau a Beirniadaethau Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru Casnewydd a’r Cylch 2004* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer ar ran Llys yr Eisteddfod, 2004), tt. 22-7. National Eisteddfod Crown-winning poem 2004, submitted to RAE 2008.
- (vi) Angharad **Price**, *Caersaint* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2010), tt. 384. Welsh Books Council Novel of the Month March 2010; shortlisted for Welsh Book of the Year 2011; submitted to REF 2014. (REF Identifier 2838).
- (vii) Jerry **Hunter**, *Gwenddydd* (Pwllheli: Gwasg Gwynedd, 2010), tt. 168. National Eisteddfod Prose Medal winner 2010; longlisted for Welsh Book of the Year 2011; submitted to REF 2014. (REF Identifier 2820).

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

The work described in Section 2 has had a significant impact on the resurgence and rejuvenation of the Welsh language since 2008, with specific benefits to poetry, education, community projects and publishing businesses, and has contributed extensively to contemporary debate and current perspectives on the Welsh language. The significance of the impact is in disproportion to the size of this group of researchers and ranges from involvement with national organisations to regional events, from community-based projects to curriculum design, utilising and promoting the Welsh language as a vibrant, living medium throughout.

Impact on national and regional poetry celebration and presentation of cultural heritage

Between July 2006 and April 2008 **Thomas** was appointed by The Welsh Academy of Writers (later Literature Wales) as second National Poet of Wales, in recognition of the contribution to Welsh language rejuvenation of his celebrated selected volume of poems, *Gweddnewidio*. In this capacity, **Thomas** took a proactive approach to extending the reach of contemporary Welsh poetry and in doing so, interpreting the still-novel role of National Poet. He adopted from the outset a variety of strategies ranging from responding in verse to ‘news stories’ (e.g. the passing of Welsh rugby giant Ray Gravell and the achievements of the often controversial and unconventional North Wales police chief, Richard Brunstrom) to placing unfamiliar poems on beer mats (5.1). Another strategy was the regular translation of his poems into English. Through his poems and wide outreach he raised the profile of Welsh poetry and extended its reach to new audiences throughout Wales and beyond, an impact which extended well beyond the period of his official appointment (5.1).

In recognition of his importance for Welsh national identity and his expertise in propagation of the

language, **Thomas** was commissioned in 2009 to write a verse that was inscribed within the structure of the new Snowdon visitor centre, Hafod Eryri. Visited annually by around 500,000 visitors from around the world, permanent, worldwide reach of his work and the Welsh language has thereby been secured on this world-renowned summit (5.2). In addition, and in recognition of their significance as writers steeped in the history and heritage of their community, **Thomas, Hunter, Price** and **Williams** were all commissioned in 2011 to write pieces celebrating the high-profile 60th anniversary of the Snowdonia National Park which annually attracts over 4 million visitors (5.3). Their participation in this web-based project demonstrates how these writers utilise a variety of social platforms to ensure extended impact of their work, and in the same year, **Hunter** and **Price** were among a select group of 26 authors invited to take part in the National Library of Wales's 26 Treasures celebratory project, part of a wider collaboration with the National Museum of Scotland and the Ulster Museum. The book accompanying the exhibition, including the work by **Hunter** and **Price**, has sold between 1000 and 1500 copies to date.

Two national bodies that these writers have regularly impacted upon are the National Eisteddfod of Wales, which attracts around 150,000 visitors a year, and the Urdd National Eisteddfod, which draws in the region of 100,000 visitors annually (5.4). **Hunter** won the prestigious Prose Medal in the 2010 National Eisteddfod with his *Gwenddydd* and the ensuing publicity has ensured a still wider reach. For the 2012 Urdd National Eisteddfod, 'Dan Ein Trwynau' from *Tafarn Tawelwch* by **Williams** was selected for a 19-25 age-group recitation competition, which in practical terms meant that the poem was learnt by hundreds of youngsters and publically performed in tens of local and area eisteddfodau before reaching the national stage and enjoying simultaneous multiplatform media coverage, including a 47,000 television audience (5.7).

These writers have also been involved in a variety of bespoke projects which have extended the reach of contemporary Welsh writing by exposing it to bold new contexts. For example, **Davies** was commissioned in May 2012 to write a poem responding to the coal-inspired exhibition of artist Jonathan Anderson at Oriol Myrddin, Carmarthen. This invitation was a direct result of **Davies's** depiction of industrial south Wales in 'Egni' in 2004. Another impact directly-associated with research, this time on a regional level, occurred during the 2010 Caernarfon-based literary festival, Gŵyl Arall. **Price's** *Caersaint* was central to the author-led walking tour of Caernarfon; a multi-platform game based on the novel, along with a blog, was commissioned and formed a prominent part of the festival's activities, as reported in the regional and national press (5.5, 5.6).

Impacts on Welsh language education and literature engagement

The impact of these writers ranges from the educational to the recreational. **Williams's** 'Efrog Newydd Eto' from *Rhwng Gwibdaith a Coldplay* was included as a learning aid in Gareth King's popular *The Routledge Intermediate Welsh Reader (2013)*; the text was included as an example of contemporary poetry and used to extend Welsh-learners' linguistic skills. It was described by King as 'a telling demonstration of the capacity of this ancient linguistic tradition to find its voice in the wider modern world' (5.8). **Price's** *Caersaint* and **Hunter's** *Gwenddydd* have been used as set texts, the first for a course in the School of Welsh at Cardiff University and the latter as a set text in Aberystwyth University's Department of Welsh, while **Davies's** 'Egni' has been a set text at both Cardiff and Aberystwyth (5.9). **Hunter's** *Gwenddydd*, **Price's** *Caersaint* and **Williams's** *Rhwng Gwibdaith a Coldplay* have been the chosen subject for reading clubs throughout Wales; *Caersaint* was also chosen by the Welsh Books Council as its Novel of the Month in March 2010 and **Hunter's** *Gwreiddyn Chwerw* in July 2011, providing evidence for the significant impact of these works on literature engagement in communities throughout Wales (5.4).

Impact on media and Small and Medium Enterprises

This practice-led research has regularly steered contemporary debate and influenced current perspectives on the Welsh language. The research cited in Section 2 has provided ample subject-matter for numerous television and radio programmes such as S4C's flagship art platform *Pethe* which regularly draws audiences of between 20,000-50,000 viewers (e.g. March 2010, September 2011, June 2012) (5.10) and BBC Radio Cymru's *Stiwedio* (e.g. July 2012) as well as extensive web presence. **Hunter's** success with *Gwenddydd* was the deciding element in having the author selected as the guest for an episode of *Dweud Pethe* on S4C, an in-depth interview with host Guto

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Harri. In addition to providing material and setting the agenda for media programmes, works created by this group of writers have provided publishing opportunities leading to economic benefits to various SMEs (5.4), namely Gwasg y Bwthyn, Gwasg Gwynedd and Y Lolfa, which are all located in rural Wales within the Convergence Area designated for Structural Funds from the European Union between 2007–2013. For instance, **Hunter's** *Gwenddydd* has sold over 2400 copies and **Price's** *Caersaint* over 2000. The fact that these sales continue to grow indicates the lasting public interest in these important works.

Extending the reach of Welsh literature through translation

An additional important feature of this group's impact is translation (see also REF5, section b), which extends the bounds of contemporary Welsh literature and creates cultural capital far beyond Wales. For example, **Price's** *The Life of Rebecca Jones* (Gwasg Gomer, 2010, and The MacLehose Press, 2012), a translation of her 2001 *O! Tyn y Gorchudd* (submitted to RAE 2008), is also available on Kindle. It was praised in *The Independent* – 'Widely hailed as the first Welsh classic of the 21st century, it now stands tall ... as a peak of modern British writing too' (5.11) – and was chosen as one of the novels of the year by *The Irish Times* and *The Independent*. **Price** has also been invited to discuss the work in venues such as the 2012 Hay Literary Festival and Nottingham Welsh Society.

Lloyd Jones's translation of the novel derives from an extended process of creative interaction with the author. In order to translate the novel into six further languages, including German, Romanian and Bengali, similar creative interactions between author and translator have been facilitated by the Wales Literature Exchange, an organization which aims to connect writers, translators and publishers in Wales and abroad (5.12).

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

- 1) Supporting letter from CEO Literature Wales.
- 2) <<http://www.eryri-npa.gov.uk/visiting/hafod-eryri>>
- 3) <<http://www.eryri-npa.gov.uk/a-sense-of-place/60Wonders>>
- 4) Supporting letter from ex-CEO of The Welsh Books Council and Chair of National Eisteddfod Literature Panel.
- 5) Supporting letter from the organiser of Caernarfon's Gŵyl Arall and owner of Palas Print independent bookshop
- 6) <<http://prosiectcaersaint.wordpress.com/>>
- 7) Eisteddfod yr Urdd 2012, Saturday 10/06/12, 19.05 transmission:
<http://www.s4c.co.uk/top20/rm/view_top20_welsh_progs/uploadid/762/language/wel/>
- 8) Chapter 34 on 'Efrog Newydd Eto' by **Williams**, as included in the *Welsh Routledge* (2013) <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415694544/> can be found on Google Books. Sales figures on this reader have been provided by Routledge and are available on request. These should be treated as **CONFIDENTIAL DATA**.
- 9) Course details evidencing the use of **Price**, **Hunter** and **Davies'** work as reading material at Cardiff and Aberystwyth Universities is available on request.
- 10) The following archived television programmes broadcast on S4C relate to the work of **Davies**, **Hunter**, **Price** and **Williams**: *Pethe Hwyrach* (August 2010); *Dweud Pethe* (November 2010), *Pethe* (March 2010; September 2011; May 2012; July 2012). DVD copies are available on request.
- 11) A review of the translation of the Life of Rebecca Jones in *The Independent* (20 April 2012) is available at: <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-life-of-rebecca-jones-a-novel-by-angharad-price-trans-lloyd-jones-7660996.html>>
- 12) <<http://waleslitexchange.org/en/books/view/o-tyn-y-gorchudd-the-life-of-rebecca-jones>>