

Institution: Leeds Metropolitan University
Unit of Assessment: Culture, Communication and Media: Library and Information Management
Title of case study: Contemporary Women's Writing
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research into contemporary women's writing that took place in the School of Cultural Studies and Humanities at Leeds Metropolitan University between 2000 and 2013 has contributed to the continuing personal and professional development of beneficiaries amongst the public, as well as postgraduate students significantly beyond the submitting HEI. The majority of these beneficiaries have engaged directly with this research in two ways: via the website (the Contemporary Women's Writing Association website, or its sister organisation the Postgraduate Contemporary Women's Writing Network website) or via a public lecture or event.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research on contemporary women's writing underpinning this case study examines the relationship between gender and the writing, publication, marketing and reception of contemporary literature. It also studies the relationships between gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and age in contemporary literature. This work was carried out between 2000 and 2012 by Mary Eagleton, Reader and then Professor from 1999-2010 in the School of Cultural Studies at Leeds Metropolitan University, Dr Susan Watkins, Reader in Twentieth-Century Women's Fiction, also at Leeds Metropolitan University (employed from 1998 onwards and as Reader from 2007) and by Dr Alice Ridout, Post-Doctoral Fellow in Contemporary Women's Writing from 2006-9.</p> <p>The research includes Professor Eagleton's project on gender, authorship and the literary field, which includes the publication of one monograph and a number of articles. Dr Watkins's research project in this period concerns the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Doris Lessing and the relationships between gender, race, nation and empire throughout her literary career. This project has resulted in one monograph, one co-edited essay collection (with Ridout), 3 articles and the co-editing of two special issues of journals. Dr Ridout's work has focused on contemporary women writers' use of re-writing as a strategy that reveals a shift from 1960s irony to twenty-first century nostalgia. She has published one monograph, one co-edited essay collection (with Watkins) and 1 article. Eagleton and Watkins co-edited a journal special issue on <i>'The Future of Fiction: The Future of Feminism'</i>. In 2006 Professor Eagleton founded a new international, peer reviewed journal in this field: <i>Contemporary Women's Writing</i>, published by Oxford University Press. The first issue appeared in 2007. Prof Eagleton was co-editor from 2007 until 2009 and Dr Watkins is an associate editor. Dr Ridout was book reviews editor from 2009-11.</p> <p>Until recently there was no organization devoted to research into contemporary women's writing. In 2005 Professor Eagleton established the Contemporary Women's Writing Network, a forum for promoting, supporting and disseminating research in this area, organised by a steering group with members representing 10 UK Universities. Professor Eagleton was Chair of the steering group, Dr Ridout was Secretary and Dr Watkins was a member. In March 2011 the network was formally constituted as the Contemporary Women's Writing Association (CWWA) and currently has 204 members from around the world. The Association is currently chaired by Dr Watkins. The Executive is made up of elected officers and co-opted members representing 12 UK universities. Members of the Executive are the leading figures in the field publishing the most important work in this area. In the past 8 years CWWA has established a website; helped establish what has become a thriving network (PGCWWN) and website for postgraduate students; been recognised by the English Association as a special interest group; organized 8 international conferences; supported a number of events, public lectures and seminars and established a virtual book club. CWWA is now the leading research organisation able to support the production and dissemination of research in this field.</p>
3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Mary Eagleton, *Figuring the Woman Author in Contemporary Fiction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005. RAE 2008

Mary Eagleton, 'When Old is New: Diana Athill and Literary Value', *Contemporary Women's Writing*. 5: 3 (2011), 172-187. DOI10.1093/cww/vpr001

Mary Eagleton and Susan Watkins, 'The Future of Fiction: The Future of Feminism' special issue of *The Journal of Gender Studies*, 15: 2, (July 2006).

Alice Ridout, *From Irony to Nostalgia: Parody in Contemporary Women's Fiction*. London: Continuum, 2011. ISBN 9781441147448

Alice Ridout and Susan Watkins, *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings*. London: Continuum, 2009. REF2

Susan Watkins, *Doris Lessing*. Contemporary World Writers. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. REF1

Journal of Gender Studies 2010 Impact Factor: 0.551 Ranking: 22/35 (Women's Studies), 22/35 (Social Issues), 50/84 (Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary)

2010 Journal Citation Reports® (Thomson Reuters, 2011) ESF / ERIH Ranked International 1

Contemporary Women's Writing ESF / ERIH Ranked International 1

Feminist Review ESF / ERIH Ranked International 1

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

Research in contemporary women's writing has had specific impact by contributing to the continuing personal and professional development of members of the public and postgraduate students significantly beyond Leeds Metropolitan University. They have engaged directly with this research in two ways: via the website (the Contemporary Women's Writing Association website, or its sister organisation the Postgraduate Contemporary Women's Writing Network website) or via public lecture or event.

The new CWWA **website** provides a resource for those interested in contemporary women's writing. It disseminates research through the promotion of conference events, the listing of members' research interests and publications, a resources section (which includes a bibliography of work in the field and provides links to other related organisations with whom we have established affiliations, such as libraries, arts organisations, creative writers' groups, feminist activist groups) and the CWWA book club. The mailing list can be used by all members. The reach of the website is extensive and international, with members from the following countries: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Finland, France, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Moravia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Tasmania, UK, USA. A significant number of CWWA members and users of the website are academics or postgraduate students, but given the nature of work on women's writing and feminism, many beneficiaries are also creative writers, librarians, feminist activists or work in/with theatres and other arts organisations. The number of visits to the site per month has remained steady since launch at an average of 1391 per month, with an average of 590 unique visitors per month, an average of 7482 pages visited and 17493 hits per month. In the reported period of May 2011, of the top 25 pages viewed, the members' profiles page-URL is amongst the most popular, with 504 views, closely followed by the conferences page-URL (176 views) and resources/ useful links page-URL (150). Of the top 25 search keywords the commonest are 'women', 'contemporary', and 'writing'. To give a specific example of how visitors to the website benefit from the research of Watkins and Eagleton, the CWWA book club has material on Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* and

A. S. Byatt's and Alice Walker's short stories that include discussion points deriving from their research on these texts published in outputs 6 and 1 above. There have been 72 individual visitors to the CWWA book club website and 123 visits (ie. times the site has been visited).

Research into contemporary women's writing has had impact on PGRs extending significantly beyond Leeds Metropolitan University. Watkins and Eagleton have provided informal mentoring for PGR students, opportunities for them to disseminate their own research (via publication and conference attendance) and have encouraged them to develop their ideas about organisation and leadership for women within academia. Dr Watkins is one of the organisers of an AHRC-funded Collaborative Skills Development programme in contemporary women's writing, along with Professor Lucie Armitt (PI, University of Lincoln), Professor Clare Hanson (University of Southampton), Dr Nadine Muller and Dr Fiona Tolan (both Liverpool John Moores University) and Professor Gina Wisker (University of Brighton) that is open to PGR students across the UK. In addition, CWWA was able to fund travel bursaries for both early career scholars and (jointly with PGCWWN) for postgraduate research students to attend the 2012 Taiwan conference and also offer a cash prize for the best conference papers delivered by scholars in both categories.

CWWA has organised and supported a number of **conferences and public lectures**. Dr Watkins's research on Doris Lessing has resulted in a number of public events. In 2007 Leeds Metropolitan University hosted the Second International Doris Lessing conference, which was supported by CWWA and the Doris Lessing Society. Professor Eagleton, Dr Watkins and Dr Ridout were on the organising committee for this event and all gave papers. The conference also included the European premiere of the one-woman play by US actress Hilary Kacser, 'In Pursuit of the English: Rose', based on Lessing's short novel of the same name, which was followed by a discussion between academics in the audience and the actress about interpreting the text in both performance and literary criticism. This event was open to the public.

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

1. Susan Watkins, 'Doris Lessing: Writing Against and For', Open Democracy, 12 October, 2007. Piece on Lessing winning the Nobel Prize for Literature.
http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/arts_cultures/literature/doris_lessing 12671 reads
2. Susan Watkins, 'Writing in a Minor Key: The Life and Work of Doris Lessing', part of a free public lecture contrasting the lives and experiences of Doris Lessing and Anne Lister with some of the contemporary challenges faced by women today to celebrate International Women's Day 2011. 8 March 2011
3. http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/diversity/index_E53D4B8154934E57A085BACE7D4A3DF1.htm

The above sources corroborate the impact on the public of Susan Watkins's research on Doris Lessing.

4. Hilary Kacser, 'In Pursuit of the English: Rose'.
<http://www.postwarrose.blogspot.co.uk/>

The actress's website corroborates the impact of the research disseminated at the Doris Lessing conference to the wider public.

5. The website of the CWWA can be found at the following address:
<http://www.the-cwwa.org/>
6. The website of the PGCWWN can be found at the following address:
<http://pgcwwn.wordpress.com/>

The details of members' profiles on the above websites corroborate their reach.

7. Alex Pryce

<http://www.the-cwwa.org/about/executive-committee/#pryce>

(Alex Pryce's profile on the CWWA website)

<http://pgcwwn.wordpress.com/steering-group/> and

(Alex Pryce's profile on the PGCWWN website)

<http://www.alexpryce.com/>

Alex Pryce's professional website

Alex Pryce is an individual who is an example of a postgraduate student who is a beneficiary of the work of CWWA who corroborates the claims that the impact of the website goes beyond academia and the submitting HEI. She is on the steering group of PGCWWN and is the website officer of CWWA. She is a postgraduate student, but also a published poet and Director of 'poetcasting', a poetry podcasting project which works with poets throughout the United Kingdom. The project features published, performance, emerging and established poets reading their own work online and out loud.

8. User data

User data and statistics for the CWWA website are available from the HEI and corroborate the claims for the reach and significance of the CWWA website and the information provided about beneficiaries.

9. AHRC-funded Contemporary Women's Writing skills development series

<http://cwwskills.org.uk/>

The website for the skills development series corroborate the reach of research in contemporary women's writing to PGRs beyond the submitting HEI.