

Institution: Aberystwyth University
Unit of Assessment: 29: English Language and Literature
Title of case study: 'Contempo': Critically informed Contemporary Poetry in the Public Domain
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study concerns the impact of the research group 'Contempo', which engages in an iterative relationship between poetry and poetry criticism. Key themes for the critical basis of this group's poetry are: life and poetry-making; historically informed poetry; ekphrastic poetry. The group has generated two types of impact a) Cultural Life and b) Education. The beneficiaries are a diverse range of audiences: 1) those attending the poetry readings of this group in person; 2) those witnessing media events (especially Radio); 3) those using social media for discussion and comment and 4) those engaging in writing classes outside of the academy, particularly A level students and adult learners.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>A key research finding is that interactions between critics of poetry and poets themselves can define a moment in history which is later understood to represent a paradigm shift. This is exemplified in Barry's <i>Poetry Wars</i> [3.1] on the conflict between the mainstream and the experimentalists in the 1970s. The research emphasises the key roles of academic Eric Mottram, in his role as editor of <i>Poetry Review</i>, and sound-poet Bob Cobbing, who ran the Poetry Society print workshop and set up still extant reading/performance groups. The underpinning research is field-defining and much has reached a wide audience of readers through media and dissemination in accessible formats such as online journals. Barry's 'Contemporary Poetry and Ekphrasis' [3.2] was voted no 11 in <i>Cambridge Quarterly's</i> list of 50 most-read articles, for example. Barry's <i>Poetry Wars</i> was described as 'fastidiously researched' (Brownjohn, <i>Poetry Review</i> 97.2 2009, 106), 'exquisitely researched' (Sheppard, <i>Jacket</i>, 31, 2006, http://jacketmagazine.com/31/sheppard-barry.html) and 'meticulously researched' (Farmer, <i>Textual Practice</i>, 23.1. 2009, 171), and also informed a documentary on Radio 4, to which Barry contributed (20/3/11, 26/3/11). In the Department, 'Contempo' acts as a similar creative and critical grouping. Contempo therefore, specifically takes advantage of the greater synergies now allowed by the presence of poets within the academic department, and the dual identity of members of the 'Contempo' group (eg Atkinson, Francis, Marggraf-Turley, Davies) as both poet and critic / editor.</p> <p>The collaborative and interactive environment of Contempo has led to the specifically research-led poetic focuses on, for example, ekphrasis, historic language forms, and the poetics of the lived-in-body, where the resulting poetry is specifically informed by theoretical and archival research on, for example, the cartographic nature of ekphrasis (Davies, <i>Cartographies of Culture</i>) [3.3], medieval vocabulary and perception (Francis, <i>Mandeville</i>) [3.4]; seventeenth-century witch trials (Davies, <i>Witch</i>) [3.5]; and embarrassment (Atkinson, <i>Catulla et al</i>) [3.6]. The Contempo group has sought to investigate the interplays between what are broadly distinguished as i) practice (creative work) and ii) criticism (analytical work). Often working in a hybridised mode of these two broad categories, the group explores the ways that creative work can become a basis for analytical reflection on, for example, historical narrative, dialogue, 'voice' and narrative perspective; whilst critical work can open up trajectories of creative engagement through, for example, the analysis of topographical space or the habitation of literary historical eras and environments. In this collaborative practice/criticism based environment, the poetry itself also becomes the research for further critical work. Thus in her new collection, <i>So Many Moving Parts</i> [3.7], Atkinson pursues her investigation of the poetics of contemporary lyricism responding to a default setting in creative writing teaching, the neat lyric, and deliberately introducing an unanswerable question that disturbs the corporeality of the poem. Evidence of the impact of the practice/criticism interface, is found in Atkinson's role as a research- informed practitioner invited to a symposium on 'Women in the Classics' to speak about the creation of her poetry collection <i>Catulla et al</i>. [5.11]</p>

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The involvement of poets from 'Contempo' in the dissemination of other significant poets' works through editing is also a key element in the underpinning research: Francis's edition of the collected poems of W.S. Graham is published by the high profile poetry press Faber, for example, and his monograph *Where the People Are* (Salt, 2004) [3.8] on Graham, establishes Francis as a key editor and authoritative critic of Graham's work. [5.7b]

Collaborative working is identified in the Department's 'Framework for Impact' (see REF 3a) as key to developing the reach of our research. This particular collaborative environment has generated a creative and critical interaction as exemplified in the contributions of this group to an essay collection *Creative Interfrictions* [3.9], edited by Contempo member Marggraf Turley, eg Davies (in post until 14/8/13) 'The Alabaster Spell'; Atkinson, 'The Poetics of Embarrassment'. Contempo members also make contributions to other critical studies eg Francis, 'Re-writing Mandeville's Travels' in *Reconfiguring the Middle Ages*, ed Weiss (2012); Davies' work on Brenda Chamberlain in *Cartographic Cultures*.

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

- 3.1 Barry, P., *Poetry Wars: British Poetry of the 1970s and the Battle of Earl's Court* (Salt, 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1844712472).
- 3.2 Barry, P., 'Contemporary Poetry and Ekphrasis', *Cambridge Quarterly*, 31/2 2002, 155-162 (dx.doi.org/10.1093/camqtly/31.2.155).
- 3.3 Davies, D.W., *Cartographies of Culture* (University of Wales Press, ISBN-13: 978-0708324769)
- 3.4 Francis, *Mandeville* (Faber, 2008, ISBN 9780571239276)
- 3.5 Davies, *Witch* (Seren, 2012, ISBN-13: 978-1854115799)
- 3.6 Atkinson, T., *Catulla et al* (Bloodaxe, 2011, ISBN: 978-1852248888). *Submitted to REF2*.
- 3.7 Atkinson, T., *So Many Moving Parts* (Bloodaxe, 2013, ISBN-13: 978-1852249526). *Submitted to REF2*.
- 3.8 Francis, M., *Where the People Are: Language and Community in the Poetry of W.S. Graham* (Salt, 2004, ISBN 978-1876857233).
- 3.9 Marggraf Turley (ed), *The Writer in the Academy: Creative Interfrictions*, (D.S. Brewer, for the English Association, 2011, ISBN 978-1-84384-278-1). Contributors include Davies, 'The Alabaster Spell: Poetry as Historicist Method' and Atkinson, 'Black and White and Re(a)d all over: The Poetics of Embarrassment'.

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

Cultural Life: In our 'Framework for Impact' (see REF 3a), we identify the value of using a wide range of media types in order to extend the impact of the department's research. In this case study, publication, feedback and reviews in the public sphere (particularly through the national press) are significant areas of dissemination-leading-to-impact for the enhancement of the cultural life of the wider community.

Readings and performance relate to our FI's strategy of accessing a wide range of communications media. These include live events and other media such as radio and podcast. Atkinson's ticket-selling readings with audiences of 100-200 include Aldeburgh Poetry Festival (2008); The Times Oxford Literary Festival (2009); StAnza Poetry Festival (2010); Desert Nights Rising Stars Literary Conference USA (2011); Rosario International Poetry Festival, Argentina (2012) [5.1]; Granada International Poetry Festival, Nicaragua [5.2], The Hay Festival (2013). In two instances quantitative impact indicators are available in the form of viewing figures: Cuirt International Festival of Literature, Ireland (2013) (167 views) [5.3] Whitworth Gallery Manchester (2011) (500+ views) [5.4]. Performances include a range of events at Hay Festival; demonstrating a strategy of targeting an important literary and cultural festival to enhance the cultural life of an audience already interested in the arts [5.5 a-c]. Radio appearances include Marggraf Turley's

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second appearance on BBC Radio 3's *The Verb* (9/2/2008); an extract from Francis's *Mandeville* broadcast in Radio 3's *Traveller's Tales* (13 & 16/1/1113) and Barry for a documentary on sound poet Bob Cobbing (Radio 4, 20 & 26/3/11) which was *Time Out* magazine's 'Pick of the Week' (17/3/11) [5.6], indicating a secondary impact level in terms of its dissemination. Reviews in the national press also demonstrate the reach of the Contempo group's poetry and therefore their impact-through-dissemination. (e.g. Atkinson, *Observer*, 2012; Francis *Observer*, *Guardian*, *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Telegraph* (2008 and 2013) [5.7 a and b]; Marggraf Turley, *Western Mail* (2010) Prizes and nominations provide a clear indication of esteem which do, of course, help to increase audience awareness and reach. Atkinson's *Catulla* was shortlisted for Wales Book of the Year. Marggraf Turley was voted 2010 Wales Book of the Year 'People's Choice' award winner for *Wan Hu's Flying Chair*. [5.7c] As a vote, this clearly is indicative of a quantitative impact.

Education: The educative role of the Contempo group's work is evidenced in two main ways, firstly through the impact generated by dissemination in public media and secondly through specific education events such as writing schools. Additionally, analytical writing from the group has also generated educational impact by being readily accessible and popularly read. [see Barry, 3.2]

The Guardian's publication of Atkinson's poem 'Autobiography without pronouns' (8/4/2013) provides evidence for the educational impact generated through dissemination. The guided reading of Atkinson's poem provided by Rumens on *The Guardian* website generated 116 shares and 332 comments on *The Guardian's* Web forum [5.8] and led to dialogues between readers responding to the guidance offered by Rumens, as users developed the critical analysis for themselves.

'Hic7ubique's' comment (08/4/13) 'I'm stuck on ohms... I can't make any sense of...' answered by 'Bysshe 22' and 'irussell' on the same day with possible explanations from scientific vocabulary and wider reading gives a sense of the educative forum created here by the users. 'Parisa 1's' 'Like. Like much. "everything in slow-mo"= super cool Poem has lovely atmosphere - transports. Refrain from using 'I' is difficult!' (08/04/13) and 'I tend to think that emotions (can) inform our lives - in literature, music, movies, poetry etc. When I read this poem, it doesn't really make me go all emotional - cry or anything like this but it does still move me' (09/04/13) generated a number of responses and discussion around the issue of how the poem engaged with the emotions of the reader. For example, 'BillyMills' (09/04/13) answered, 'Genuine question. What do you find moving about it - apart from the things that move? Maybe she's on her way to meet a new love and start a wild affair, prompted by the seafront prophecies.' Here the users are developing views on emotional responses to art forms (eg poetry) and the impact this has on a life, clearly indicating how the impact pathway from poetry that is informed by a critical perspective on a poetics of the lived-in body, can result in public discussion of emotion and the use of the first person.

The educational impact generated (out with the academy) through writing schools such as Teifi Writers, Carmarthenshire, and Ty Newydd Writers' Centre, Gwynedd, allow the Contempo group (Atkinson, Davies, Marggraf Turley) to communicate their research-informed writing perspective to writing workshops. The organiser of Teifi Writers comments on the impact of the input of the Contempo group in the following way: 'we have the benefit of the academic insight of the tutors who generously share with us their knowledge of writers and literature, combined with their experiences as writers who are part of the contemporary writing scene and who themselves are constantly thinking about what to write and how to write it.' [5.9] And, testimonial evidence from a student now studying Creative Writing at University following a Ty Newydd Writing school with Atkinson demonstrates the ways that these non-university educative events can impact on individuals' decisions to commit to further study. [5.10]

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

- 5.1 Invitation to Rosario International Poetry Festival, Argentina
- 5.2 Invitation to Granada International Poetry Festival, Nicaragua
- 5.3 Atkinson, Cuirt International Festival of Literature, Ireland (2013)
<http://vimeo.com/21507200> (167 views)

- 5.4 Atkinson, Whitworth Gallery Manchester (2011)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v+FAXOV187wDA> (500+ views).
- 5.5 Hay Festival Events:
- a) Ekphrastic 'son et lumiere' given by Davies and Marggraf Turley at Hay Festival (2009) with podcast on The Telegraph Website (<http://www.hayfestival.com/p-1130-damian-walford-davies-and-richard-marggraf-turley.aspx?skinid=16>)
 - b) associated promotional video by Davies on Welsh Literature Exchange <http://waleslitexchange.org/en/authors/view/damian-walford-davies;>
 - c) readings by Francis (28/5/13), and Davies (5/6/2012) <http://www.hayfestival.com/p-4736-damian-walford-davies-and-samantha-wynne-rhydderch.aspx?skinid=16>
- 5.6 Barry, extracts from the radio programme on Bob Cobbing with Barry's voice-over
http://www.fallingtree.co.uk/broadcast_history/2011/make_perhaps_this_out_sense_of_can_you
- 5.7 Reviews:
- a) Francis, Review of *Mandeville*, *The Observer*
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/apr/13/poetry.features>
 - b) Francis, W.S. Graham, *New Selected Poems*, review of the book in *The Sunday Times*
 - c) Marggraf Turley, *Wan-Hu's Flying Chair* (Salt, 2009, ISBN 978-1-84471-443-8). Winner of the 2012 Wales Book of the Year 'People's choice'.
- 5.8 Atkinson, 'Autobiography without pronouns'
<http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/apr/08/poem-of-the-week-tiffany-atkinson>
- 5.9 Teifi Writers Organiser Report
- 5.10 Testimonial from student of Ty Newydd Writing School
- 5.11 Invitation to speak at Exeter University Symposium 'Women in the Classics'