

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UoA 29: English Literature and Language</p>
<p>Title of case study: Public understanding of poetry</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Mediating the complex and rewarding pleasures of poetry to a wide audience is central to the Department of English at Queen Mary's impact on the public understanding of the medium. Poetry has very high status in conceptions of literary merit and ambition, and commands large public audiences; yet it is also seen as difficult to understand by that audience, especially in the case of contemporary poetry. At Queen Mary, research on poetry includes scholarly modes of close reading and explication, analysis of poetics, women's writing, and poetry's print culture. Drawing on this research, we have used diverse strategies to enhance public understanding of poetry, including broadcast and internet dissemination, publishing ventures, poetry readings, and public archiving of poetry recordings. This has extended to work with teachers on teaching modern poetry in schools, the location where most general readers first encounter poetry.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) The Department of English at Queen Mary has a well-established reputation for research on poetry in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, especially on the contexts of literary production, poetics, and women's writing. Researchers in the Department have made a wide contribution to scholarship in this field, including important monographs, edited collections, scholarly editions and anthologies. The impact-related activities described in the case study use insights from this research, both at the level of analysis and of methodologies for reading, to deepen and extend public engagement with poetry and verse, using broadcast media, web-based media, print publishing, and public events, to disseminate poetry in print and performance, information about poetry, and skills for poetry reading, to a wide public audience.</p> <p>Margaret Reynolds (QMUL, 1999-) has an established international reputation in nineteenth-century literature, especially poetry, and the history of women's literature, including her anthology of <i>Victorian Women Poets</i> for Blackwell (1995, with Angela Leighton). Reynolds's more recent research, in her monograph <i>The Sappho History</i> (2003) extends this examination of the relationship between women's literary creativity and historical consciousness. Reynolds's research on Victorian women poets was at the forefront of a return to the archive in the 1990s, work that both recovered and evaluated a wide range of women's poetry, broadening scholarly understanding of the contextual print culture and aesthetics of women's poetry in the nineteenth century. Reynolds's research has taken place within the context of a concentration of research excellence in Romantic and Victorian women's poetry at Queen Mary by professors Anne Janowitz (QMUL 1999-), Paul Hamilton (QMUL 1998-), and Catherine Maxwell (QMUL 1997-), joined more recently by early-career-researchers Shahidha Bari (QMUL 2011-) and James Vigus (QMUL 2012). Howarth's research for <i>The Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry</i> examined changing conceptions of poetic form in the twentieth century, particularly the impact of anthropology and pedagogy in expanding 'form' to include audience, situation and media.</p> <p>The contemporary poetry and poetics group at Queen Mary has a leading role in this field. Brady's (QMUL 2007-) research on contemporary poetry examines contemporary experimental poetics in Britain and America. Brady's work as a critic, editor, and practitioner of contemporary poetry has been mutually informing, both about contemporary poetics and women's writing. She has published extensively on contemporary poetry in peer-reviewed academic journals. Brady's own poetry has been the subject of extensive academic debate and publications. She has performed her poetry (20 performances 2008-2013) in a very wide range of non-academic venues in Britain, Europe and America – for example, the Bowery Poetry Club in New York (2010), Double Change in Paris (2010), and on a north-east US tour sponsored by <i>The Chicago Review</i> (2011). Her poetry has been translated into Spanish, French and German. She has served as an expert for the Arts Council, the Poetry Society, the British Council and the BBC. Brady and Howarth (at QMUL from 2008) supervised a Collaborative Doctoral Award in partnership with the British Library Sound</p>

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Archive (held by Stephen Willey, dissertation passed March 2013), allowing detailed exchange in auditory archive methodologies. The Department's contemporary poetry and poetics group has supported further research by Clair Wills (at QMUL from 1994) and Katy Price (at QMUL from 2012). Howarth's work on how performance context (audience, location, space, price) shaped poetic form led to archival work on lost recordings of poetry in performance, and an article on site-specific poetry (*Dart*).

Key researchers employment at submitting unit:

- (i) Margaret Reynolds: 1999-present: Reader in English, QMUL 1999-2010; Professor of English, QMUL, 2010-present;
- (ii) Andrea Brady: 2007-present, Senior Lecturer in English, QMUL;
- (iii) Peter Howarth: 2008-present, Senior Lecturer in English, QMUL.

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

1. Margaret Reynolds, *The Sappho History* [monograph], (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), 301pp. ISBN: 978-0333971703 — monograph, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: publication peer reviewed, submitted for RAE2008.
2. Margaret Reynolds, 'Lostlings, Foundlings and Changelings', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 151, (2006). Print ISBN-13: 978-0197264249 DOI:10.5871/bacad/9780197264249.003.0001 — journal article, can be supplied by HEI on request; quality justification, submitted for RAE2008.
3. Andrea Brady, *Wildfire: A Verse Essay* (San Francisco: Krupskaya, 2010) ISBN: 978-1928650317; — monograph, can be supplied by the HEI on request. Reviewed and debated as follows: debated in John Sears, 'Andrea Brady's Wildfire: Generation', *Temporel: revue littéraire & artistique* (29 April 2012). <<http://temporel.fr/Andrea-Brady-s-WILDFIRE-Generation>>; Ange Mlinko, *Chicago Review* 56.4 (Winter 2012): 122-124; Catherine Wagner, *Poetry Project Newsletter* (April-May 2011): 17-18; Daniel C. Remein, 'Kinesis of Nothing and the Ousia of Poetry (Part Review Essay, Part Notes on a Poetics of Auto-Commentary)', *Glossator: Practice and Theory of the Commentary* 3 (2010): 67-94; Tom Jones, 'Andrea Brady's Elections', *Litteraria Pragensia* (December 2007): 139-147; Jon Clay, *Sensation, Contemporary Poetry and Deleuze: Transformative Intensities* (London: Continuum, 2010).
4. Andrea Brady, 'Making Use of the Pain: the John Wieners Archives', *Paideuma* 36 (July 2010): 131-179. [peer reviewed]. ISSN: 00905674; — journal article, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: publication peer reviewed, submitted for REF2014.
5. Peter Howarth, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) ISBN: 978-0521147859 — monograph, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: publication peer reviewed, submitted for REF2014.
6. Peter Howarth, "'Water's Soliloquy": Soundscape and Environment in Alice Oswald's *Dart*", in *Poetry and Geography*, eds. David Cooper and Neal Alexander (Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 190-203; ISBN: 9781846318641 — book chapter, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: publication peer reviewed, submitted for REF2014.

7. Research grants:

Archive of the Now: Collaborative Doctoral Award with the Sound Archive at the British Library (c. £50,000) for a project on British Poetry in Performance, 1960 to the present, 2008-2011; £6500 from the Westfield Trust (Feb 2010); £8730 from the Centre for Public Engagement, QMUL (April 2012); £7040 from QM Innovation Fund (July 2013)

Howarth: £1564 from British Academy Small Grants to research recorded poetry performances in the KPFA/NPR archives in Los Angeles, in preparation for larger funding bid.

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

Scholars in the Queen Mary's Department of English have exploited their research on poetry and poetics in the Victorian period and twentieth century to enhance the public understanding of poetry, using broadcast media, web-based media, and public events, to disseminate poetry in print and performance, information about poetry, and skills for poetry reading, to a wide public audience.

Broadcast media

In broadcast media, Reynolds has lead by exploiting her research in nineteenth-century poetry as

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a writer-presenter of 'Adventures in Poetry' on BBC Radio 4 (since 1998). By its twelfth series, Reynolds had produced over 50 broadcasts, including 20 in the REF period (2008-2012), with an audience regularly assessed at over 750,000 listeners. The programmes 'explore the background, effect and lasting appeal' of a poem over 26 minutes, including recitation of the poem, and interpretative commentary by Reynolds and invited guests, exploring moments of insight and difficulty, poetic technique, form and meaning. In the series she has addressed poems by women poets (Barrett Browning, Rossetti, Bronte, Hemans, Mew) explored in her underpinning research. Jane Thynne, reviewing the programme in *The Independent* (12-11-2009) wrote that 'of all the things that radio does better than TV, the best must be poetry. *Adventures in Poetry* is a quietly ambitious series, which sets out to anatomise a much-loved poem without killing it in the process'. Reynolds has reviewed contemporary poetry for *The Times*, spoken on poetry at the literary festivals, and appeared on BBC radio arts programmes (*Front Row*, Radio4; *Nightwaves* Radio 3). Brady has appeared on BBC Radio 4 (*A Few Don'ts*, December 2012) and the BBC World Service, and spoken at two literary festivals about contemporary poetry (Hay, Inside Out).

Online media

Impact achieved through web-based media is led by Brady, founder and director of the 'Archive of the Now' (www.archiveofthenow.org), an online repository of recordings of poetic performances commissioned and produced by Brady. Founded in 2006, the Archive presents readings by over 170 UK-based poets, available for download as mp3 audio and mp4 video, as well as an extensive collection of printed materials and poets' archives. The Archive is distinctive for supporting the experimental poetic tradition, for being a 'creative commons' site with free access and downloads, and for its commitment to fostering emerging poets. Peter Riley, a poet featured in the Archive, commented in feedback on the site that recording his performance was a 'valuable experiment' that altered his subsequent publication practice. In 2011, the Archive website had 4,815 unique visitors who accessed 53,338 pages and downloaded 16.5GB of poetry; in 2012, it had 6,706 unique visitors who accessed 112,792 pages and downloaded 16.63GB of poetry; January to September 2013, 7873 unique visitors accessed 60,670 pages, downloaded 31.69GB of poetry. Its holdings have been broadcast for eight weeks on the University of Pennsylvania's PennSound radio station; it has hosted poetry recordings from an independent London performance venue, Café Oto. Brady also supports poetry and poets through the small poetry press Barque (co-founded in 1995), which has published 70 books by 42 poets, 4 CDs, a DVD, and the little magazine *Quid* (the press has had over 1000 unique buyers). QMUL English hosted the eminent Canadian poet Lisa Robertson as a distinguished visiting fellow at the Archive in 2012, allowing her to pursue practice-based research, give a public artist's talk, and a performance. Of her work with the Archive, Robertson commented that it 'was extremely productive, and will have ongoing effects in my work', leading to a 'new direction in my thinking'.

Public engagement activities

Extending the reach of poetry research has been engineered through public engagement activities. Howarth and Brady organised a series of public seminars bringing poets and academics into dialogue (2008). Reynolds established a collaboration with the *Poet in the City* programme, a charity supported by businesses, including Lloyd's of London, BT, Pfizer, Pearson and Linklaters, whose aim is to promote 'a love of poetry amongst new audiences by means of live poetry events, and of funding educational work' (Charity No. 1117354). Reynolds organised five public poetry events with *Poet in the City* in 2010 and 2011 at King's Place and the V&A, to which Bari and Vigus also contributed in 2013. Brady commissioned the Archive's Poet-in-Residence, Sophie Mayer (one year 2012-13, stipend of £3,600) to organize three workshops on poetry, performance and digital publication for secondary school students, and to produce a new work in response to the Archive each month. Mayer commented 'Working with the Archive's material for live presentation, pedagogy and interpretative essays posted on its blog, has engaged me in a very immediate sense with the diversity of contemporary practice, and is moving my work towards new vocal forms of public performance and political engagement'. The Archive has teamed up with local arts organisations including Eastside Arts, the Poetry School, and Spread the Word to promote contemporary poetry and build audiences.

Secondary education

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Using his research into the performance aspect of modernist poetry and the sonnet, Howarth organised two one-day conferences on 'Teaching Performance Poetry' with the Higher Education Academy, the Poetry Society, the Poetry Library, and the National Association of Teachers of English (26-03-2010, 11-05-2011, c.35 participants in total). He also spoke about the performative dimension to 'traditional' poetry (Owen, Yeats) to three A-level conferences (12-03-2010, 02-03-2011, 22-03-2012, c450 students and teachers). These events with teachers resolved that secondary education is the primary route through which poetry is encountered in the UK, and almost the only one for socio-economic groups B, C, D & E. Furthermore, assessment objectives and teaching materials marginalise poetry's significance by recognising it as finished statement rather than the performative event essential to its twentieth-century formal development. Howarth has led a programme of consultation on reform of poetry teaching in secondary education, including (i) a consultant role with EdExcel during the reshaping of the Language and Literature A-level (2012), developing a unit on the sonnet as a genre, involving creative-rewriting and performance, questions of drama, confession, and audience manipulation; (ii) the award of a National Teaching Fellowship (2012) for work on improving poetry teaching; (iii) the establishment of an East End Teacher Network (18 March 2013, six participants) and a Queen Mary Teacher Forum (16 March 2013, 8 /15/23 June 2013, c. 15 Heads of English from schools with large A-level cohorts) to discuss difficult transition areas, including poetry, and develop podcasts and other teaching resources for schools without access to textbooks or journals.

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

Individual

1. Executive Producer, BBC Audio and Music.

Corroboration of role of QMUL researcher (Reynolds) as researcher, writer and presenter of the BBCRadio4 programme *Adventures in Poetry*.

2. Curator of Drama and Literature Recordings, British Library Sound Archive, London, NW1 2DB.

Corroboration of collaborative doctoral supervision with Brady and activities of the 'Archive of the Now'.

3. Poet.

Corroboration of 'Archive of the Now's' impact on a contributing poet, in relation to their own poetry writing and their engagement with the public.

4. Poet.

Corroboration of impact of 'Archive of the Now' on a contributing poet, in relation to their own poetry, and their engagement with the public, including work with schools.

5. Teacher, Subject Driver for English, St Paul's Way Trust School.

Corroboration of work of QMUL researcher Howarth with secondary schools and teachers to engage students with poetry through performance.

Other sources

6. *Adventures in Poetry* BBC archive:

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0081rm4/broadcasts/2012/04>>

<www.sed.qmul.ac.uk/english/research/projects/adventures/index.html>

Corroboration of content and broadcast date of Reynolds's programmes for 'Adventures in Poetry'.

7. 'Archive of the Now': website <<http://www.archiveofthenow.org/about/>>

Corroboration of open-access structure, content and scope of 'Archive of the Now'.

8. Barque Press: website <<http://www.barquepress.com/index.php>>

Corroboration of commercial publishing of new poetry by Barque Press and *Quid*, an occasional journal.