

Institution:	Goldsmiths, University of London
Unit of Assessment:	29 English Language and Literature
a. Context	

The main impact of the research of the Department of English and Comparative Literature (ECL) has been on the knowledge and behaviour of individuals, groups and organisations in relation to society, culture and creativity. What all three ICSs share, however, is their impact on the reading practices of their respective audiences in ways which reach out beyond academia to inform approaches to the study and appreciation of literature in wider society. As explained below in section **b.**, the extension of academic debate about literature into a wider public domain is a major plank of ECL's approach to impact.

b. Approach to impact

As is explained under the section on Research Strategy in REF5, since 2002, and more especially within the current REF period, ECL has placed increasingly greater emphasis on creative writing at all levels, including extending academic debate about contemporary creative writing among the wider general public through the Goldsmiths Writers' Centre and the Goldsmiths Prize. Originating in 2010 in discussions within Goldsmiths about a means of drawing together the various creative writing activities taking place across the College, ECL has been the driving force behind the establishment of the Writers' Centre, with the aim of encouraging new writing, stimulating debate about literature and creating links between departments. From an early stage, consideration was given to the creation of a prize for innovative fiction. The first Goldsmiths Prize 'for fiction at its most novel', was inaugurated in association with *The New Statesman* in 2013, and awarded to Eimar McBride on 13 November 2013. Its twitter account (@GoldsmithsPrize), launched on 23 January 2013, currently has over a thousand followers.

Both the Writers' Centre and the Goldsmiths Prize are logical developments of the research strategy formulated on the creation of the Department in 2002 when the decision was taken to extend provision in creative writing from the existing MA in Creative and Life Writing to a pioneering PhD programme in creative writing, led by Professor Blake Morrison (as well as the introduction of a popular BA in English with Creative Writing). From 2002-2003 onwards, Professor Morrison was also given the responsibility for introducing ECL's Richard Hoggart Lecture Series which alternates (free) public lectures by prominent literary critics and cultural theorists (e.g. Judith Butler; Germaine Greer; Marjorie Perloff; Elaine Showalter) with readings of their own poetry and fiction given by leading creative writers. Readings have been given by the Nobel Prize winners Seamus Heaney, Doris Lessing, Sir Harold Pinter and Derek Walcott, as well as Julian Barnes, Alan Bennett, Ian McEwan, Les Murray and (more recently) the 2012 T. S. Eliot Poetry Prize winner, Sharon Olds.

In addition to reading from their writings, authors discuss their work with the Chair (usually Blake Morrison), as well as answering questions from the audience. These events, which normally take place two or three times a term, are extremely well attended by members of the general public, and those by Butler, Heaney and Pinter were vastly over-subscribed. (Indeed, the demand for Butler's lecture was so great that it had to be moved from the Hoggart lectures' normal venue, which can accommodate a maximum audience of 300, to Goldsmiths' Great Hall so that 600 people were able to attend.) Hoggart lectures are widely advertised on the College's events calendar and ECL's web-pages, as well as by an extensive email mailing list maintained by ECL's Postgraduate Secretary. Morrison continues to coordinate the series and to host the readings by creative writers, in conjunction with Dr Isobel Hurst, who is responsible for arranging those lectures given by literary critics and cultural theorists.

The establishment of the **Goldsmiths Writers' Centre**, with the aim of encouraging new writing, stimulating debate about literature, and creating links between the different parts of the College where creative writing takes place, was a logical development of **ECL's strategy of increasing participation in creative writing on the part of both staff and students while reaching out to**

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the wider community, particularly of South-East London. In turn, the creation of the Goldsmiths Prize sought to stimulate interest in innovative fiction among the wider reading public. After actively seeking partnerships within the media, ECL successfully established a link with *The New Statesman*. To contribute to the dialogue about literature referred to above, the Goldsmiths Writers' Centre will host a series of prize-related events each year, including readings from critically acclaimed contemporary novelists and the shortlisted writers themselves. As in the case of the Richard Hoggart Lecture series, Writers' Centre events are widely publicised, and advertised by *The New Statesman*.

As mentioned in REF5, ECL operates a generous study leave scheme, a requirement of which is that applicants for study leave stipulate how the resulting research will be disseminated. As part of this policy, members of staff are also encouraged to discuss their research in the media, and numerous researchers have taken part in television and radio programmes during the REF period, as well as being involved in giving lectures to the general public. Morrison, for instance, considered what being experimental and innovative means discussed for 21st-century novelists with Alex Preston and Mariella Frostrup on BBC Radio 4's Open Book programme on 21 February 2013; Spufford has spoken on Radio 4 about matters relating to his book, *Red Plenty*, and was even commissioned to write a documentary; Natarajan took part in the *In Our Time* programme on Hazlitt, also on Radio 4; and Blinder was interviewed on Channel 4 News and Sky News about the new film versions of Kerouac's *On the Road* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, respectively.

Morrison and Spufford have also addressed book groups and have given talks in public libraries and to literary societies, as have other members of ECL (e.g. Downie in Tonbridge Public Library on detective stories and in Tonbridge Parish Church on Jane Austen, Kirwan in the National Portrait Gallery on Native Americans for the George Caitlin Exhibition, and Blinder at the Photographers' Gallery and the Daniel Blau Photography Gallery, Hoxton Square).

c. Strategy and plans

As already noted in section b., and in our submission under REF5, in addition to fitting in with the Department's commitment to interdisciplinary research, ECL's impact strategy is an embedded element of our overall research strategy to extend the debate about contemporary creative writing by reaching out into the wider reading community: by encouraging members of the general public in the south-east, particularly south-east London, to increase their appreciation of literature by inviting them into Goldsmiths to attend lectures, readings from poetry and fiction, and to broaden their horizons by introducing them to new writing. ECL's use of twitter and Facebook to advertise its activities is part of this strategy.

Although it strictly falls outside the REF period, Spufford's appointment in 2007 was part of this research strategy, as was Morrison's involvement in the Pinter Centre's successful bid for AHRC funding for the project, *Beyond the Linear Narrative*, which, between 2009 and 2012, ran a series of events attracting artists and writers beyond the academy as well as members of the ethnically-diverse community of south-east London. Similar thinking was behind the establishment of the Goldsmiths Writers' Centre, and a number of literary events featuring the novelists James Kelman, Geoff Dyer and Ali Smith have already taken place. Future plans include conferences, master classes and residential courses, but the immediate focus is on The Goldsmiths Prize for fiction at

its most novel, awarded annually in conjunction with *The New Statesman*, and associated events. Central to the ECL's public engagement strategy (see above), one of the aims of the Prize is to extend academic debate about fiction into a wider public domain and the link with *The New Statesman* enables us to do this.

Throughout the REF period, Goldsmiths' Centre for Caribbean Studies has been based in ECL under the directorship of Professor Joan Anim-Addo. The Centre continues to invite those interested in Caribbean literature and culture into the College, particularly through its conference series on Caribbean Women's Writing.

d. Relationship to case studies

All three case studies have emerged out of ECL's research environment, and the research which informs them has taken place while the researchers were members of staff at Goldsmiths. Natarajan's rehabilitation of Hazlitt has been a major factor in the revival of public interest in his life and works. Morrison's appointment in 2002 as Professor of Creative and Life Writing enabled him to undertake the ethnographic research on reading practices which underpins his ground-breaking essay, 'The Reading Cure', which The Reader Organisation has acknowledged as informing a fundamental change in its approach to bibliotherapy, as well as stimulating further academic research into reading as therapy. Wide-ranging discussion in the media, including the blogosphere, of Spufford's *Red Plenty*, published in 2010, has had a notable impact on public policy, including international public policy. Researched and written between Spufford's appointment to Goldsmiths in 2007 and 2009, *Red Plenty* has been reviewed in *Policy Review*, the journal of the public policy Hoover Institution of Stanford University. In its exploration and exploitation of the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, it raised questions about genre, while, at the same time, requiring Spufford to undertake fieldwork in Russia in the form of interviews, as well as archival research in the UK.

Morrison's and Spufford's case studies both exemplify ECL's approach to encouraging and facilitating public debate about reading and writing, while at the same time it can be said that they have contributed to the formation of the Department's impact strategy, which increasingly concentrates on reaching out to the wider public, particularly of south-east London, inviting wider public consideration of literature and culture.