

<p><b>Institution: Aberystwyth University (AU)</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment: 29: English Language and Literature</b></p>
<p><b>Title of case study: Remembering the Land: Food Supply, Literature and Ecology</b></p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)  This case study concerns impact achieved through collaborative arts-science research on representations of agricultural land and the food chain in the works of two well-known English writers, Shakespeare and Keats. This collaboration has generated two types of impact, Cultural Life and Public Discourse. The beneficiaries are a wide range of non-academic publics who have gained access to the research through its global dissemination in media interviews, newspaper features, public lectures, and panel debates. Beneficiaries' responses through user letters and online comments, blogs, radio call-ins, poetry composition and social media attest to the educative and transformative quality of this research's impact.</p> <p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)  The underpinning research comprises a body of socio-literary/environmental output from Marggraf Turley and Archer, working with Professor Howard Thomas (Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences, AU), focused on Romantic and early modern culture. The central examples are co-authored scholarly articles on Keats [3.1], and Shakespeare [3.2]. Historicist, new historicist and ecocritical methods are used in each to explore the influence of food security, land use and ownership, and environmental sustainability on the literary imagination.</p> <p>This scholarship uses Thomas's research into grass and grain-crops and crop contaminants and his incorporation of literary representations of the worked land into scientific articles (e.g., the co-authored botanical essay). [3.3] Together, these essays investigate how a better understanding of political and environmental pressures affecting food production in the past can help to shape attitudes and public policy towards the food chain and food security in the present.</p> <p>The researchers' collaborative, interdisciplinary rendezvous allowed them to bring together key insights and archival discoveries relating to literary culture at two important junctures – the early modern period and the Romantic – and modern plant science, to develop new readings of representations of crops, weeds, worked land and agricultural economy in Shakespeare and Keats. These readings have been widely disseminated via scholarly, crossover and popular publications, international radio interviews, public lectures – including a filmed panel discussion at the Telegraph Hay Festival [3.4] – and social media, achieving significant cultural penetration, as outlined in Section 4. This case study clearly exemplifies the strategy of the department's Framework for Impact in its utilisation of collaborative research and a wide range of public engagement activities for the enhancement of its impact.</p> <p>This collaborative project set out to explore how modern scientific methods and insights into arable crops and weeds can illuminate hitherto neglected aspects of representations of land, food production and processing, and environmental resources in historical literature. For example, recent research into the molecular evolution of the psychotoxic cereal-mimicker darnel (<i>Lolium temulentum</i>) outlined in [3.3] has highlighted the way in which this crop weed mimics wheat in order to insinuate itself into the food chain as a means of propagation. This retrieves knowledge that has been lost in contemporary society and agriculture (darnel is of no significance today, and unknown, since it is extinct in the developed world).</p> <p>In contrast, darnel had a whole penumbra of significances in Shakespeare's time. The research allows the use of darnel in <i>King Lear</i> as a governing trope through which Shakespeare interrogates the political as well as familial and environmental relationships and responsibilities in the play to be unlocked [3.2]. This synthesis of literary-historical and scientific research has enabled us to recover dimensions to a canonical play that would have been apparent to</p>

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Shakespeare's first audiences, enabling us: 1) to re-reflect performances of the drama (see REF 3a,(d)); 2) to gain invaluable insights into our 21<sup>st</sup> century relationship with the land/resource management; 3) to open new lines of scientific inquiry into the historical conflation of darnel and other crop contaminants; 4) to re-establish historical continuity with respect to our perceived relationship to the land and food supply. [3.2]

Similarly, the discovery of an alternative site on St Giles's Hill, Winchester, for the inspiration for Keats's cornfield in the ode 'To Autumn' [3.1] provoked a wide public debate about conservation, food and locality, food security and literary representations of agricultural process.

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

- 3.1 Richard Marggraf Turley, Jayne Elisabeth Archer and Howard Thomas, 'Keats, "To Autumn" and the New Men of Winchester', *Review of English Studies*, 64 (2012), 797-817 ([dx.doi.org/10.1093/res/hgs021](https://doi.org/10.1093/res/hgs021)). Submitted to REF2. The advance online version of the article was RES "Editor's Pick" in March 2012 and most downloaded RES article in 2012.
- 3.2 Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Richard Marggraf Turley and Howard Thomas, 'The Autumn King: Remembering the Land in *King Lear*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 63 (2012), 518-43 ([dx.doi.org/10.1353/shq.2012.0059](https://doi.org/10.1353/shq.2012.0059)). Submitted to REF2.
- 3.3 Howard Thomas, Jayne Elisabeth Archer and Richard Marggraf Turley, 'Evolution and Toxicity of Darnel (*Lolium temulentum* L)', *Progress in Botany*, 72 (2011), ([dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-13145-5\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-13145-5_3)).
- 3.4 Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Richard Marggraf Turley and Howard Thomas, 'Reading with the Grain: Sustainability and the Literary Imagination', 3,500-word essay-lecture, winner of the 2013 INSPIRE/ASLE-UKI public lecture prize; delivered as a public lecture at the Hay Literary Festival (23.5.13).

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

The findings of the Shakespeare and Keats food security project enhanced public discourse by bringing back to the public's attention two well-known English writers in a renewed context. This generated public discussion of current economic, political and cultural debates about sustainability and resource distribution. The international media attention generated by the research also enhanced the cultural life of the wider public not only by educating but also by encouraging creative responses to the subject of the research.

The key finding from [3.1] that the site of Keat's cornfield in 1819 now lies under a multi-storey car park (which was discussed with John Humphreys on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme [23/3/12], and on BBC Radio Solent's Julian Clegg Breakfast Show [23/3/12]), generated an impact on the public's creative (cultural) lives such that Clegg remarked, 'the phone lines have been jammed all morning with callers ringing in with their self-composed "Ode to an NCP Car Park" odes' [5.1]. The Telegraph printed the editor's own 'Ode to a Car Park' [5.2], and numerous websites multiplied the story, enabling the wider public to reacquaint themselves with the poem and to find an imaginative way into debates around food and environment that were, this research finds, as relevant to the Romantic period as to our own. Newspaper coverage in the *Guardian* [5.3], *Telegraph* and other nationals revolved around educational debates about environmental and conservation issues. This included *The Daily Mail's* discussion of council planning and the loss of the Keatsian cornfield and its attention to Winchester Tourist Board's 'Keats Walk' which prompted the Winchester City Council to consider revising the walk to take in St Giles's Hill. Head of Winchester City Council Ellen Simpson said in response, 'People are not being duped....but it is quite possible that St Giles Hill was part of the walk, and that's where these stubble-covered fields were' [5.4].

The research into Shakespeare's involvement in grain hoarding [3.2, 3.3] generated significant worldwide media coverage (31/3/12-1/4/15), following a front page lead column feature on the research in *The Sunday Times* (31/3/13) [5.5]. Research findings also featured in four news

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bulletins on BBC Radio 2 and on Terry Wogan's Easter Sunday Radio 2 Breakfast Show.

Evidence for Public Discourse is found in secondary media coverage and in digital media: the critically framed 'Voices' commentary by Howard Jacobson in *The Independent* states that, 'Piffle, too, is the suggestion that Shakespeare is made more understandable by our seeing his accounts' [5.6]. This indicates that the educative role of the study's research was queried by some in a way which gave the general public access to ideas about what is (or is not) educationally beneficial thereby informing the public in a way that is enhancing to its cultural life. A blog entry from *History Today*, by contrast, accepted the findings of the research in order to assert that, 'A recent study of Shakespeare's life outside the theatre provides another, much more compelling, solution to the problem [of food-related "peculiarities" in Shakespeare's plays]' [5.7]. The 'sustainability and the literary imagination' element of this research also reached a specifically arts-focused public through *The Telegraph Hay Festival* (23/5/13) [3.4], with further media coverage and interviews of Archer on BBC Radio 4's *World and One* (24/5/13) and BBC Radio Wales's *Louise Elliot Afternoon Show* (28/5/13).

The wide range of national and international coverage and responses indicates the media's perception of this research as marketable to a wide public. There was coverage and commentary in English German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Taiwanese and Mandarin Chinese, including: *The Daily Mail* (123 comments); *LA Times* (including an 'opinion piece'), *El Mundo*, *History Today*, *The Mirror*, *BBC Online*, *Huffington Post* (600 comments), *Telegraph*, *Independent*, *Tagesspiegel*, *Forbes*, *Le Nouvel Obs*, *MSN*, *China Daily* and *Shanghai Times*. Indicative headlines include 'Was Shakespeare a tax dodger?' *The Daily Mail*, Bard was 'ruthless businessman who exploited famine and faced jail for cheating revenue' [5.8] and 'Forscher: Shakespeare war ein Gauner' (Researchers: Shakespeare was a Hoarder), *Der Tagesspiegel Welt* [5.9]. The authors were interviewed on BBC World Service's *Newshour*, featured on a Fox News podcast and on American Public Radio; their research was used to create a question to contestants on 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?' USA (9/4/3) [5.10]; and Russia Today TV financial commentators tweeted Marggraf Turley: 'Do you want to be interviewed on [#KeiserReport](#) about the bankster bard?' (31/3/13).

Blog responses to this coverage are indicative of the impact the research has had on Public Discourse. The role of academics and educators in public intellectual life is discussed by KM (UK, 31/3/13) in response to *The Daily Mail* article [5.8], with, 'Yet another attack by academia on a British icon. Always be careful not to judge the past by our current standards. Who says we're the ones who've got it right?' and by GoTerps (1/4/13) in response to a *Huffington Post* article on the subject [5.11], with, 'A word of caution: When you see an article, such as this one, with this attribution "according to a group of academics," there's always reason to doubt the validity of the findings! [...]'. Others comment on how to approach learning from the past for the benefit of contemporary life. With 'Given they got this info because he was repeatedly taken to court by the government for hoarding food while people were starving, which was very much against the law... it seems he was being judged for it by his contemporaries, no?' [Kowtow (31/3/13)] [5.8] and 'What about our modern day Shakespeares? Is this not part of our current problem? Except for us it is corporations and one single entities.' [AgingLady (2/4/13)] [5.11]. And there is also discussion of the interrelation of literary creativity and material history, such as 'Oh, our cult of celebrity. I love that the authors say no one wants to think of a creative genius as having self-interest, yet I'm not supposed to judge him harshly for being a profiteer, loan shark tax cheat because he's a creative genius.' [Brothaman2k (1/4/13)] [5.11].

These examples demonstrate that the research prompted individuals to think and comment (negatively and positively) about historical issues, favourite iconic authors, and current issues of concern like taxation and food security. All of which demonstrate that Remembering the Land has had an impact on the cultural life of a wide public audience alongside enhancing public understanding of major issues and challenges faced by individuals and society.

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

- 5.1 BBC Radio Solent's Julian Clegg Breakfast Show, 23/3/2012.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00pgwl8#programme-broadcasts>
- 5.2 'Ode to a car park: Keats's cornfield found' and editorial 'Ode to a Car Park', *The Telegraph*, 23/3/2012.
- 5.3 Flood, A., 'John Keats – autumnal idealist or trenchant social commentator?', *The Guardian*, 23/3/2012. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/mar/23/john-keats-autumnal-idealist-social-commentator>.
- 5.4 Cohen, T. 'Ode to NCP? How cornfield which inspired Keats' 1819 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' poem is now sitting under a multi-storey car park', *The Daily Mail*, 23/3/2012. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2119109/Ode-NCP-How-cornfield-inspired-1819-poem-Keats-multi-storey-car-park.html>.
- 5.5 Leake, J., 'Swan of Avon was tax dodger' (front page leader)/ 'Bad Bard: a tax dodger and famine profiteer' (Inside page), *Sunday Times*, 31/3/2013.
- 5.6 Jacobson, H., 'Knowing Shakespeare fiddled his taxes tells us nothing. And don't say it makes him 'human'', 'Voices' commentary, *The Independent*, 5/4/2013.  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/knowing-shakespeare-fiddled-his-taxes-tells-us-nothing-and-dont-say-it-makes-him-human-8561865.html>
- 5.7 Lee, A., "Making a Famine where Abundance Lies": Shakespeare the Hoarder', *History Today*, 3/4/2013. <http://www.historytoday.com/blog/2013/04/%E2%80%9Cmaking-famine-where-abundance-lies%E2%80%9D-shakespeare-hoarder>
- 5.8 'Was Shakespeare a tax dodger?', *Daily Mail*, 31/3/2013. <http://dailym.ai/121Tdcx>
- 5.9 Fiedler, M., 'Forscher: Shakespeare war ein Gauner', *Der Tagesspiegel Welt*, 1/4/2013.  
<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/getreidespekulation-und-steuerhinterziehung-forscher-shakespeare-war-ein-gauner/8007090.html>. [German]
- 5.10 Email (9/4/2013) from Senior Researcher for 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?', USA.
- 5.11 Responses to Lawless, J., 'William Shakespeare was a tax dodger, grain hoarder: Study', *Huffington Post*, 31/3/2013. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/31/william-shakespeare-tax-dodger\\_n\\_2989137.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/31/william-shakespeare-tax-dodger_n_2989137.html)