

Institution: Brunel University of London
Unit of Assessment: 27 – English Language and Literature
1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

Redefining the Contemporary Literary Landscape: Research Culture in English and Creative Writing at Brunel

When Bernardine Evaristo was awarded the 2019 Booker Prize for fiction, it not only proved to be a watershed moment in British publishing, it also marked the culmination of a decade-long collaborative effort to develop a critical-creative research culture at Brunel. It is an effort centred on the very issues of identity, difference, marginality, and representation that Evaristo's novel so brilliantly embodies. Evaristo's work is of note not just because of its tangible impact on UK publishing and the wider culture, but also because it is paradigmatic of the research culture in English and Creative Writing at Brunel. This culture coalesces around a common project concerned with how our innovative academic research methods capture, critique and transform institutional and national conversations on identity, difference, and marginality investigated through literary modes of production as detailed below.

It is oversimplified to say English academics research issues of marginality and otherness, and our writers then investigate these concepts through their practice, but it does help to define the collaborative nature of our joint endeavour to bring about transformational change to British and cultural institutions and ingrained attitudes. It is this collaborative approach to impact—a theorist developing a concept, a writer investigating the concept, and a colleague applying the concept say to the organisation of a literary prize—that encapsulates our single research project, that of redefining the contemporary literary landscape.

Such a large, joint effort requires the correct institutional context facilitated by our well-established research hub The Brunel Centre for Contemporary Writing (BCCW) and Brunel's current research strategy and history. The kind of division we are is the result of being part of an institution that, since its inception in 1966, has a proud tradition of applied research and is committed to issues of equality and diversity that reflect its close connections to the communities that surround it in West London. It is also testament to Brunel's ongoing development of its research identity, in particular its commitment to research that addresses global challenges. It is this synthesis of critical and creative practice, supported by a well-established research hub, embedded in a university that shares our values and intellectual aspirations, that forms the less visible but still essential infrastructure behind the much-deserved headlines awarded to Evaristo's remarkable fiction.

Departmental context

English at Brunel is organised as the Division of English and Creative Writing, in the Department of Arts and Humanities (alongside Theatre, Music, Film and Television, and Digital Games), in the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences. Within the Division, there is one overall Division Lead and Programme and Research Leads for the two subject areas. Following consistent growth up until 2014, staffing has stabilised at 24, with a rebalancing between English (13) and Creative Writing (11). In total, 22 staff will be returned for assessment in 2021. Since 2014, English and Creative Writing staff have published 71 books, 171 chapters and journal articles, 45 other quality research outputs, and has been awarded £715k in external research income. The Division has hosted 4 full-time funded and 2 visiting Research Fellows since 2013. A central infrastructural support and collaborative hub is the aforementioned BCCW, founded in 2001 in response to an institutional strategy to organise research in Brunel around centres of excellence. The centre has been a key piece of infrastructure around which critical and creative practice has evolved. The unit supports the open access agenda and is well prepared for open access monographs through its participation in the Open Library of the Humanities. We support a culture of research integrity and ensure that research is conducted within its appropriate ethical and legal standards through the University Research Ethics Committee. The committee reviews all research that could impact others and oversees training for staff and students concerning research ethics.

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Redefining the contemporary literary landscape

Within Brunel's research culture, Evaristo works alongside an extensive list of writers and thinkers labouring together to redefine the contemporary literary landscape in the UK. If we now move to Nagra, his two most celebrated collections of poetry *Look We Have Coming To Dover!* and *The British Museum* encapsulate his attempt to address what he calls the strategy of 'over-representation' in British literary institutions such as the BBC, and the Royal Society of Literature (RSL). This is a strategy that openly seeks to over-represent, over-appoint, or over-commission work from sectors of British culture such as BAME, women, the working class, LGBTQ+ and the disabled, traditionally neglected by our cultural bodies. Nagra's work begins by speaking truth to institutional power from the margins and ends up speaking up for those on the margins from the very centre of institutional power, as he took up the reins of chairman of the RSL in 2020, the first BAME writer to do so in its 200 years history, and immediately pursued 'over-representation' by appointing 60 BAME fellows. If Nagra's approach has been public, and institutionally pitched, Lowe's contribution is more personal, intersectional, and materially located. Lowe's work is not merely situated at the intersections of Chinese and Caribbean culture, but also at the borderlands of the personal and the public. Hers is a self-conscious attempt to compensate for the dominant culture's tendency to negate the archival material of all its peoples, by re-narrativising and re-constructing this archive through her own experimentations in memoir and material cultures.

When Evaristo is on 'Question Time', Zephaniah is on 'Book of the Week'. When Zephaniah is on 'Question Time', Evaristo is on 'Desert Island Discs'; and so it is that two of the leading voices on the Black British experience have passed the baton of public engagement in recent times. If Zephaniah's concerns echo those of his fellow writers, his voice, however, is uniquely his own, pushing at the very boundaries of what can be considered 'poetry' and 'literature'. Zephaniah's generic experimentation, remind us that issues of marginality and representation can be as much textual as social, as Self's re-modernising trilogy comes to its fruition during the census period, with the publication of the acclaimed *Shark* and the controversial *Phone*. Self's work speaks of other kinds of fault-lines and problems of representation and subjectivity. The 'Concept House' in *Shark* for example, where a clarity of distinction between doctor and patient, institution and subject is blurred, offers us a free-form literary demonstration of the subject as endlessly becoming. If everything inside the text and inside the subject is potentially fluid in the new millennium, Evaristo, Nagra, Lowe, Zephaniah and Self all, in their way, also investigate the sobering, threatening presence of the 'sharks' of power which circle the 'Concept House' in Self's novel. It is often on these fault-lines of coercion, exclusion, prejudice and hostility, that the borderlands of our literary culture are investigated not just by Brunel's writers, but in the work on terrorism and Islamophobia you find in Watkin, Morrison and Mondal, the calling out of misogyny and homophobia in the work of Spurlin, Lynch, Cox and Houlden, or analysis of injustice and marginalisation in the work of Hubble, Tew, Sheeha and Horton.

Research strategy: how to build impact into all of research

In the last five years, research at Brunel has been dramatically transformed by an impact-driven strategy where thinkers develop concepts pertinent to contemporary culture and writers investigate them through their practice, all with an eye to bringing about behavioural change. As a team we have routinely returned to this model as a guide to how our overall impact-strategy is composed. For example, Spurlin writes about the problematics of heteronormativity in his essay 'Postcolonially Queer'. Evaristo develops this concept in *Girl, Woman, Other*. Nagra highlights the under-representation of LGBTQ+ in the RSL and actively appoints poets based on this problem. Brunel appoints Houlden whose work is firmly pitched towards globalised intersections of Queer literatures. Lowe is appointed to investigate the global-local postcolonial impact of Chinese Caribbean culture. Watkin uses his work on Agamben to embed that in real-world investigations of migration and holding camps. Problems of migration and borders are investigated by Mondal and Morrison, Lowe broadcasts her poem 'Borderlanders' on Radio 4, while Spurlin researches queering the holocaust and Hubble the border between mainstream and generic writing, and so on.

While we have always been known for our expertise in contemporary literature, postcolonial theory and our longstanding Creative Writing Program, it is during this census period that the parts have organically cohered around a shared research vision. This strategic direction has been driven, in part, by the maturity of our research culture (we have been at the leading edge of contemporary literary studies and creative writing for two decades now), and in part by strategic appointments.

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Naturally this strategy formed the basis for our first impact case study 'Diversifying Contemporary Writing and Culture' with its emphasis on institutional change located within the UK publishing industry. In that case study we detail several specific moments where the collective approach to this issue already described, resulted in tangible change in terms of 'The Complete Works Poetry' project increasing representation of BAME poets in the industry from 1% to 10%, Zephaniah's impact in increased literacy figures in UK schools across 105,000 pupils, and Evaristo being the first black woman to win the Booker prize.

Girl, Womxn, Other: intersectionality at Brunel

Brunel has historically been a centre for investigations of gender and sexuality. Evaristo's success with *Girl, Woman, Other* installs a key-stone to crown a supporting arch of critical and creative endeavour in this area, for example her judging of the Polari prize for LGBTQ+ fiction. Nagra is also committed to greater inclusivity for LGBTQ+ writers specifically in his commissioning of their work for BBC programming and as fellows to the RSL. Yet, as Evaristo's title suggests, issues of gender and sexuality intersect around the wider conception of otherness and alterity. Watkin's investigation of the philosophy of difference is a sustained questioning of the conceptual structure of otherness in the history of thought. Spurlin's work on queering translation and the holocaust is at the leading edge of the intersectional turn in 21st century identity politics. It is perhaps Lowe's work that is most significant as a public and creative investigation of ethnic intersectionality, with works such as *Long Time No See* investigating her relationship with her Chinese Caribbean father. Intersection and alterity as a construction is very much on the mind of Horton with her work on queer gothic spaces, Cox and her studies of Victorian Sensation and sexual 'abnormality', and Lynch's work on the queering of motherhood in her forthcoming *Small*. Motherhood and femininity being also an interest of Cox's most recent work and the community-based projects of Penny. Staying with Penny, our second impact case study, 'Using Creative Writing to Support Local Justice', is organised around her campaigning work in the fields of xenophobia and sexual violence. Penny's work is at the cutting edge of collective efforts within the unit to address issues of racism and migration, with its considerations of the effects of xenophobia in migrant populations of South Africa explored through creative writing workshops. This approach to applied research investigating global challenges is replicated in Penny's project using dramatherapy and creative writing workshops to investigate transition from the practice of FGM amongst the UK Somali populations with the specific aim of reducing this practice within those communities. Alterity remains at the very heart of much of our critical and creative practice. Zephaniah's much-read works for children, *Face*, *Terror Child* and *Windrush Child* are all creative investigations of cultural otherness. Working on the sense of the outsider is then to be found running through the historical work of Sheeha, for example, on gender, domesticity and working folk in Renaissance literature and O'Loughlin's investigations of the marginality and limitations of women in 18th century literary culture. Hubble's investigations of working-class culture, through the curation of the Burnett Archive, and his use of alternative research methods such as Mass Observation, also inflect his interest in 'outsider' forms of generic writing, notably science fiction.

BCCW: research infrastructure

As mentioned already, research in the division is organised around the central hub of the BCCW. In the current REF period, the Centre has continued its past practice of organising international conferences and symposia. As part of our objective of defining contemporary British literary culture for a global scholarly audience, the BCCW has continued to bring together national and international scholars for its ongoing 'Decades of British Fiction' symposia held at Brunel, six in total during the census period. The BCCW-branded Bloomsbury Academic book series, 'British Fiction: The Decades', is edited principally from within the Division and currently runs to 6 volumes published within this REF period, with the final four in various stages of production. When completed, this series will map out a century of transformational change for British fiction since the First World War. One of the most notable outcomes of the BCCW's commitment to the investigation of the critical/creative nexus, and its interest in marginalised genres is our third impact case study 'The Pagan King' which details the success of Kinnings' script for the Latvian English-language feature film *The Pagan King*. This film has led to cultural, economic and educational impact both regionally within Latvia and internationally via the film's global distribution. Aside from

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being the country's second highest grossing film ever, the study also details the impact on the nation's sense of national identity and shared history.

The BCCW also runs themed research seminar series, targeted at postgraduates and colleagues, and one-off research talks and panels which are specifically designed to disseminate research and foster public engagement. Every year the 'Brunel Writers Series' (co-ordinated by Evaristo with 12 events so far) brings contemporary writers to Brunel to talk to staff, students and members of the public about their practice as research. This series links to the annual Hillingdon Literary Festival, hosted by the department, which brings headline writers such as Jonathan Coe (2018) and Ben Okri (2019) to a local audience and hosts multiple workshops and discussion panels, with BCCW staff moderating or interviewing writers. Through such activities, the BCCW seeks to bridge the gap between local and global by bringing international research and researchers to Brunel and its neighbouring public community.

From "Coming to Dover" to "The British Museum": global-local institutions of power

Nagra's poetic journey mapped across his two most celebrated collections moves from looking up at the cliffs of the empire to transforming from the inside its literary institutions, is a perfect representation of our joint commitment to transforming the institutions of literature through critical and creative responses to their power structures. That all of these institutions are based on the legacy of empire is an essential assumption within our division, leading to a perpetual global-local interchange of ideas and influences. This global-Local approach finds common cause in the numerous responses to the Windrush scandal both direct, Zephaniah's *Windrush Child*, Lowe's radio work with Berry, or Watkin's various videos and pieces of journalism on immigrants; and indirect, Mondal's work on radicalised Muslim youth or Morrison's considerations of terrorism and radicalisation. Lowe's 'Borderlanders' encapsulates our collective approach to the borders and limits of the academy, whether these be geographical, political or generic. The appointment of Horton, Houlden and O'Loughlin has literally expanded the borders of our sense of literature, in the form of Horton's development of the innovative World Literatures modules as an example of research-led teaching; O'Loughlin's work on women and travel, who is vice-chair of the four-year EU-funded PIMO project; and Houlden's research on expanding the limitations of postcolonial thought with her interest in the intersectional aspects of colonialization. Returning to Lowe, her leading interest in Chinese-Caribbean culture has taken her work around the world with her joint project on Global China Towns for example.

As individuals cross borders, languages transmute perhaps resulting in the 'word salads' of Self at his most textually confrontational, or the performance poetry of Zephaniah's recent album *Revolutionary Minds*. Sometimes this hybridised language literally needs translating, at the same time as imposed identities are being questioned; witness the influential work of Spurlin on queering translation in this regard. An influx of new, potentially canonical, texts, or the possibility of exploding the canon entirely, is the motivation behind Hubble and Tew's epic endeavour to capture the contemporary canon in transformation over time with their ambitious and extensive Decades Project. A landscape that both includes 'old' literary relationships with historical colonies, and new conceptualisations of literacy as explained by Lynch's *Cyber Ireland*. Which brings us to the ultimate borderland of literacy in the contemporary age, the end of print culture and the rise of the digital, investigated by Lynch and Watkin in their various pieces of journalism, podcasts, vlogs and blogs. In support of these research interests the Division has received internal funding for a CBASS interdisciplinary Global Lives Research cluster, started in 2019, on 'Working-Class Lives as Global Lives' which draws on research into Brunel's Burnett Archive of Working-Class Autobiographies to research histories of migration, World War memoirs, colonial experiences, and narratives of Comintern trips and visits to the Soviet Union.

Summary

Redefining the contemporary literary landscape is a joint research strategy adopted by the division to capture and develop the way in which academic research informs creative practice leading to tangible institutional and cultural change. It is as much concerned with reconfiguring ideas of otherness, or conceptualisations of intersectionality, as it is with nurturing the production of novels, poems and public performances. The BCCW acts as an organisational hub, providing infrastructural support for the multiple conversations and interactions needed for such a collaborative approach to research led by impact. The strategy is in keeping with our historical identity as a department, and

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the future directions of the wider institution with its emphasis on challenge-based, globally-orientated research. The literary landscape can be redefined along lines of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity; it can be practical, making sure more BAME poets are published; or conceptual, questioning the very idea of inside and outside in relation, say, to national borders. It has deep historical roots pertaining most notably to empire, and an eye to the future by asking, in a digital age, what a text or indeed literacy consists of. It can question generic definitions, institutional divisions, assumptions around class, or structures of power. Yet whatever one's sense of the contemporary literary landscape, Brunel's impact driven, critical-creative responses are demonstrably pivotal in bringing about significant behavioural change within the UK literary landscape and beyond.

2. People

The staffing strategy of the unit has been aligned to our overall research strategy, embedding our values as regards representation and marginality into our professional practice. During the census period staff turnover facilitated a shift in strategic emphasis thanks to a fresh cohort of new early career staff (Horton, Houlden, O'Loughlin, Sheeha, Filtness), and mid-career writers (Nagra and Lowe) appointed since 2017. These replacement appointments constituted a renewal of a third of all our posts and naturally required strategic consideration as to their impact on our research culture going forward. The decision was made to rebalance the English and Creative subject areas, to fulfil the teaching needs of a changing cohort, but also as an opportunity for us to actively pursue our emerging research strategy. These appointments also improved the diversity within the department. At the present time of the 8 full time Creative Writing Staff, the data pertaining to ethnicity, gender and sexuality are far above national averages. It is a strategy that we hope to extend to English in the coming years. As may be noted, in regards of the four new colleagues in English, all are women, and more widely as we have detailed, a large proportion of all our research is pertinent to issues of diversity, intersectionality, and marginality.

As impact is at the heart of our strategy, institutional support for impact is central. The department has an impact champion, Schuppert, and impact is a component part of promotion applications and annual appraisals, and centrally organised training and support for impact is easily available to all staff if required. Impact is also discussed as a matter of course during our annual away days and staff meetings. The awarding of a sabbatical to Evaristo (2020) is a specific example of how leave can be granted within the department solely to capitalise on and extend the impact of our research, as and when appropriate.

Staff development is enabled generally by the research support mechanisms such as the probation process, research mentoring, training sessions, BRIEF and sabbatical leave awards, Athena SWAN funding, and conference travel support. And more specifically by strategic objectives, such as supporting Creative Writing staff gaining PhDs and the targeting of interdisciplinary collaborations. There are also strong formal provisions, including flexible working arrangements, and informal provisions within the Division to support equal opportunity for colleagues including access to the Department Director of Equality and Diversity (Lynch). Research in the Division is supported through the College and Departmental structure: the College Vice Dean, the College Research Office, and the Departmental Director of Research (until 2020, Hubble), who sits on the College Research Strategy Group and chairs the Departmental Research Committee, on which sit the Creative Writing Research Lead and the English Research Lead. There is an annual College Research Away Day and an annual Departmental Research Away Day, which typically include an outside speaker and training sessions, e.g. on data sharing or developing impact. The DOR also supervises the departmental research mentoring system, which is designed to intersect with HR processes, such as induction, probation panels, promotion panels and annual PDR, all of which might entail individual members of staff being advised to seek research mentorship for general or specific purposes. In particular, the induction process of new staff now includes contact with the Subject Research Lead to determine research needs and mentorship requirements.

Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are eligible for and supported to apply for the University's BRIEF award, which provides start-up funds for projects. The scheme is open to staff in the first three years of their contract. Since the wave of new appointments starting in 2017 two applications from this cohort have been successful so far with mentoring and peer support. For the 2019-2020 round, Sheeha has recently been awarded £13k BRIEF funding and Lowe £13k BRIEF funding, both

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including teaching buy out. Both projects were chosen for their relevance to our overall research strategy and are already bearing fruit. Lowe has been supported in using part of her time out to apply to the AHRC/BBC New Generation Thinkers Scheme and has met the criteria to be promoted to Senior Lecturer with effect from 1 October 2020.

Research Leave is organised through the University's Sabbatical Scheme, which is awarded at College level. This has resulted each year in between one and three members of the Division of English and Creative Writing receiving a sabbatical (of up to 5 months) releasing them from one of the two teaching terms in a Brunel academic year. Staff are normally eligible for one period of Research Leave every five years although there is the capacity to make exceptions to this rule when a compelling research case exists. Applications are coordinated from within the Division with priority given to projects in accordance with individual and Division research plans and which will result in major outputs for the REF and/or major funding bids. The Division also supports the Athena SWAN scheme and encourages eligible staff to apply, Horton for example is a recent success. There is also a system of Internal Research Centre funding in place which has benefitted the divisions Global Lives seminar series (£2,500). Conference funding is allocated within the Department of Arts and Humanities in response to an application form giving details of conference title, costs and the nature of the presentation to be given.

The number of PhD students (28) in the Division since 2014 has continued to maintain the level that was the result of the trajectory of growth that was in evidence between 2008 (16) and 2014 (36). A significant proportion of these students come from one of the Brunel English or Creative Writing MAs. In 2018, Brunel joined the Techne AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership and Watkin is one of the assessors for the scheme. Since 2014, all students have had a supervisory team of three, comprising of a first and second supervisor and a Research Development Advisor. Supervisory meetings are recorded online by both student and supervisor; independent reviews of student progress (by three members of staff excluding the first and second supervisor) take place at nine-month intervals for full-time students and eighteen-month intervals for part-timers. Ethics and generic research training is provided by the Brunel Graduate School. Subject-specific doctoral training is provided by a programme within the Department of Arts and Humanities, which also holds an annual postgraduate conference for students within the Department. Students may apply to the Department DOR for conference funding and to a competitive scheme run at university level. The university also runs a teaching training programme for postgraduate researchers, which can lead to Associate Fellowship of the HEA, and supports those students who undertake the seminar teaching of English or Creative Writing undergraduates. During the current REF period, the Division has so far had 34 completions, an increase of 24 on the 2008-2013 period which illustrates how we have continued to grow since the 2008 RAE, which recorded 10 completions. After completion, Brunel PhD students continue to a variety of destinations, including academic posts in Higher Education. While several creative students graduating with doctoral degrees have been successful in attracting book contracts.

As equality and diversity is central to our research strategy it is essential that this includes our own institutional context. The recent appointment of Lynch to the departmental position of Director of Equality and Diversity, and the lead taken by Cox in preparing the departmental Athena SWAN application, are both strong indicators of the active pursuit of this strategy. Cox's stewardship of the English subject area and her now working as division lead has had a significant impact on the appointing of 100% women into English since 2017. Women now form the majority in both subject areas. The promotion of Evaristo to Professor and Lynch to Reader begins to redress the historical gender imbalance within the professoriate. With the appointment of A&H colleague Royona Mitra to the Vice-Dean Equality and Diversity, there has been a concerted push to diversify curricula across the department, with English and Creative Writing at the forefront. Brunel remains one of the most ethnically diverse campuses in the UK, and our student cohort reflects that; we are proud that increasingly our staffing reflects this also.

Brunel has a working policy which supports flexible and/or remote working for staff with caring responsibilities and/or disabilities/ill health. Three members of staff within the unit have formal flexible working arrangements, while others benefit from tailored support structures. Conference funding includes provision for assisted travel when required. The extensive mandatory Equality and Diversity training programme run by the university for all staff is supported within the Division by the diversity of staff and their research interests in queer theory, black and Asian writing, gender and sexuality, and working-class studies. This staff diversity is in keeping with our diverse student body. Our REF

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submission demonstrates our commitment to equality through the correspondence between the outputs submitted and the demographic breakdown of the staff in the unit. PhD students, as well as MA and undergraduate students, include significant numbers of EU and international students (in 2018-19: 47% UK, 24% EU). Approximately one quarter of our PhD students have a declared disability. The gender breakdown has shifted from being approximately half and half male and female at the beginning of the current REF period to a 3:1 female to male ratio, which reflects demographic trends in the subject area. Brunel has a fully inclusive transgender policy as part of a suite of policies supporting LGBTQ+ rights and advertises its support for these rights. One final issue of note is the extensive support for maternity leave. Cox and Lynch are both strong examples, both have taken multiple parental or maternity leaves, yet Cox has been promoted during this period to division lead and Lynch to Reader and a senior post within the school. The mutually supportive environment within the division, backed up by shared values on diversity and equality, hard-wired into our research strategy at every level, means such levels of support are a given.

REF2021 submission process

Brunel, as a research-intensive university, is submitting 100% of all eligible academic staff. We followed the processes set out in our Code of Practice for the fair and transparent identification of independent researchers and to ensure that the submitted outputs provided a balanced and unbiased representation of the work of our diverse academic community, their characteristics and contractual positions (age, disability, race, sex, part-time workers and fixed-term employees). Output selection was monitored through regular Equality Impact Assessments. Our Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the outputs submitted for English are a well-balanced representation of the protected characteristics and contractual positions of staff. This includes 39% of female staff contributing 42% of the outputs.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

At the beginning of the current REF period it was decided that the unit needed to improve its success rate in funding applications, and a pragmatic strategy aimed at building track-record and research capacity was adopted. At that time, the unit possessed a strong cluster of staff in early modern studies and a strategy of targeting European funding was adopted resulting in significant funding successes for the Division. These successes were then used as a base for establishing best-practice across the whole unit, leading to the success of a number of smaller projects for staff looking to establish track-records, increase access to archives, establish valuable collaborations with other institutions, and drive up the quality of their resulting publications. Our prime objective was to move from occasional, large-scale successes, to a sustainable pipeline of credible funding submissions across the work of all staff members, based on mentoring, strategic planning and, specifically, an enhanced impact strategy. Funding strategy, for example, was a key topic on our annual research away-days, and all major funding bids were assigned an experienced mentor with a successful track-record in attaining funding. The unit is managed pro-actively to identify specific research opportunities that tally with our expertise, and then target these opportunities to build capacity and track-records over time. This targeted, managed and strategic approach has paid dividends to a unit that historically has struggled to maintain a sustained stream of externally funded projects. In line with our aim of developing new staff as researchers, the Division has hosted five post-doctoral research fellows since 2013 and successfully supported a number of internally-funded research projects. In total, during the current REF period, the Division has received external research income of £494,000 and internal research income of £108,000 (including the various BRIEF and Athena SWAN awards discussed above). Following staffing turnover and changes to the sector, a strategic repositioning has led us to switch focus onto awards in the field of contemporary literature in accordance with the emerging research strategy of institutional transformation, but the overall strategy remains unchanged.

A strong example of strategically targeting European money based on research expertise in-house was Betteridge's project 'Adapting Dickens - Dickens, Adaptation, and the Nineteenth-Century European Theatre' which was awarded £144k from the European Commission leading to the appointment of Research Fellow, Dr Marty Gould. Having established a credible track-record again in line with our strategy of building capacity, Betteridge continued his investigations of issues of

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performativity in his project 'Exploring the potential of combining performance and digital research in a heritage context' which received AHRC funding of £79k in 2016. Another example of targeting European funding streams to support early modern research was Knowles', 'Mapping Anna', which received £147k from the European Commission in 2016 and led to the appointment of Research Fellow, Dr Jemma Field. The project investigated how the Anglo-centric approach to Anna of Denmark has clouded our understanding of how Anna's Oldenburg birth right and European connections shaped her role and value at court and impacted Stuart foreign policy. Again in the period of early modern we have Trevisan's 'From Noah to King James: Genealogy and the Invention of Britain', for which the British Academy awarded £1400 in 2014-5, leading to the publication of a monograph investigating European concepts of absolutism as founded on genealogical mythmaking.

As our strategy has matured, the nature of our funded projects has also altered focusing more on contemporary projects and the centrality of creativity although the topic of capacity-building through establishing track-records, then leveraging best practice through mentoring of junior staff, has continued. A strong example is Hubble's 'Understanding Social Change through Autobiographical Narratives', British Academy, £4,300, (2018-20), an interdisciplinary project investigating the role of narrative self-reflexivity in helping people understand and adapt (sometimes retrospectively) to two key periods of change, 1939-43 and 1981-4. The project involves archival research at the Mass Observation Archive (Brighton) and the Burnett Archive of Working-Class Autobiographies (Brunel University), and critical analysis of selected published sources. While Carney's 'Necessary Fictions? Text and Response in Depression and Anxiety' was submitted to the Wellcome Trust Fellowship scheme and received £262k (2017-20); and Holloway-Smith was a visiting Research Fellow in the Division from 2018-19 as part of an Arts Council funded project. Finally, at the beginning of the current REF period Jennie Taylor was a PDR on the ESRC-funded 'Fiction and the Cultural Mediation of Ageing: An Anthology Project'. (2012-2013).

Internal funding awards have been strategically orientated to meld with the wider themes and concerns of the unit, but also to the build experience and credibility in support of future external funding applications. In this manner Horton was awarded internal Athena SWAN funds of £15k, to support research on Migration and Technology in Contemporary Literature. Similarly, Watkin was awarded £7000 internal funded money to develop digital literacy among the student body, a project which led to his recent UKRI bid for £300k to study the cultural factors of Covid compliance and its innovative proposed use of data analytics. Although that ambitious bid was unsuccessful, it was this project that developed the links with the Cabinet Office which formed the basis for the new 'Culture and Policy' unit strategy. Staying within this thematic cluster Sheeha was awarded £10k internally to enable her to work on her second monograph, *Shakespeare's Neighbours: Communities of Surveillance and Support*. As with Horton this sabbatical is awarded to prepare the groundwork for a substantial external bid, a process for which she will be assigned a mentor. Not only do the topics of each internal award relate to the strategy of the unit, each application is a strategically identified means of building capacity, identifying infrastructural needs, developing mentoring and creating tangible and sustainable impact relationships.

Moving forward, the division is committed to a funding strategy that emerges from our core identity and which calibrates the division with the institutional commitment to funded research that is challenge-orientated, community conscious and tangibly impactful. An important component of this strategy has been investment in establishing more robust forms of knowledge exchange creating sustainable pathways to impact in the field of policy. Watkin and Morrison's recent work on the cultural impact of Covid-19, for example, working alongside the university's sponsorship of the UPEN program, has developed strong links between the unit, think tanks such as IPPR, and, most importantly, members of the Cabinet Office. The strategy going forward is to develop a unit called 'Culture and Policy' in combination with other institutions which will put civil servants and other significant policy stakeholders in contact with challenge-orientated colleagues through curated talks and articles. The value-added of this initiative is significant for our unit going forward. In future our funding bids will have robust and credible impact opportunities developed through mentoring thanks to the members of the Culture and Policy group. Over time, our aim is to scale up the unit and extend it across multiple institutions thus enhancing our application capacity and opening up new opportunities for successful funding bids. This pro-active approach to impact was made possible both by institutional infrastructural support, the UPEN project, and the strategic vision of the university with its commitment to applied research that is challenge-led.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

The research in this unit, directed as it is to redefining the literary landscape, is necessarily external-facing, collaborative and focused on contributions to the wider cultural economy and its ability to change the mood, ideas and eventually the behaviour of wider society. The aim of our strategy is to bring about change within literary institutions, most notably academia, publishing, broadcasting and learned societies, through a collective approach to a core of issues pertaining to identity, difference, and marginality. It is a strategy that can only really be pursued and gauged to be successful or not, through relationships with those who can, and will, make use of our scholarship and practice, the communities who benefit from it, and of course the ever-increasing audience for our work brought about as a result of a remarkable commitment from our staff to reaching out to the wider public and their cultural institutions.

Over-representation through collaboration with tangible impact on audiences, economies and culture

The importance and impact of collaboration is perhaps best defined by the career and activities of Nagra over the last census period, especially as it brings about positive change in institutions, audiences and fellow practitioners as a result of his research objectives. During this time Nagra actively developed his objective of 'over-representation', using his position of influence in collaboration with broadcasters, publishers and literary institutions, to increase the research-base and audience for poetry by speaking directly to communities previously excluded from such conversations and art forms. During the period in question Nagra was appointed poet in residence to Radio 4, the first BAME poet to hold this influential position. His '10 for 10' program showcased BAME writers for ten days at the 9:30am prime time slot. It is estimated it had up to a million listeners in 2015. His '5 by 15' program scheduled straight after 'The Archers', again with an estimated audience of up to a million, inviting members of the Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh communities through institutions such as the Hindu Temple in Neasden, and the Hindu Business Network to reflect on the Indian epic work the 'Ramayana'. Nagra's has been a member of the RSL for several years and in 2020 became the first BAME chair of the organisation since its inception 200 years ago. One of his first actions as chair was to appoint 60 new fellows through collaboration with agents, publishers and reviewers, the majority taken from under-represented, marginalised voices. Nagra has pursued over-representation in projects like 'Forty writers under Forty' and 'Writers across London' projects, which are composed of 80% BAME authors. As well as his collaborations with the BBC, for example his program 'Poetry Extra' which was on 4 Extra and since 2015 has had over 150k listens. In Nagra's tireless efforts we can have no better example of the central tenet of Brunel's research culture, the conceptualisation of problems of marginality, representation, and difference in academic work manifested by our creative colleagues through collaborations, commissions and cultural impact. And no better example of his success in impacting on British literary institutions and wider culture of this approach than the recent selection of Nagra's first poetry collection, "Look We Have Coming to Dover!" as one of the top ten poets to celebrate Faber's 90 years.

The concept of otherness finds a popular global audience

Although Evaristo, Zephaniah and Lowe are featured as part of our impact case studies, there are still many aspects of their wider activity that demonstrate public-outreach, knowledge exchange, collaboration, public engagement and contributions to society relevant to this section. Evaristo was awarded a sabbatical after winning The Booker Prize and has used this time in engaging the wider public in her work as a continuation of her extensive collaborative and public activities to vouchsafe the impact of her research on institutions, the literary economy and the extension of her audience base. Promoting *Girl, Woman, Other* has resulted in a 'South Bank Special' on Sky Arts, Zephaniah has also been subject of a recent special. Like Zephaniah she has been on 'Question Time' and 'Desert Island Discs'. She promoted her novel across all the major TV channels and networks, has been on Radio 4's 'Points of View', estimated to have 1 million listeners, and various other Sky Arts programs. A key collaborative effort on her part has been her extensive commitment of energy to creating, judging, and winning literary prizes. Aside from her documented Africa Poetry Prize in the Impact section, she has judged the Women's Prize for Fiction, a Sunday Times Journalism competition promoting Black journalism, the African Poetry Book Fund prize, the Polari prize, the Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition for Young People, and the Guardian BAME story prize.

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Her relationship with the Booker Ceremony, after of course winning the prize, extended to her appearing on the 2020 ceremony broadcast alongside other luminaries, most notably Barack Obama. Obama chose *Girl, Woman, Other* as one of his books of 2019 during this televised ceremony. The novel has now been translated into 35 languages and has led to invitations to speak all over the world including Nigeria, Holland, Hungary, Poland, Belgium, America, Switzerland, Singapore, Sweden, Denmark and Abu Dhabi. Evaristo has used the opportunity of her celebrity to collaborate with other BAME authors and publishers as part of her membership of the Black Writers Guild. This project works hand in hand with other related events highlighting over-representation, such as Evaristo's curation of 'Black Britain: Writing Back', working with publishers to recuperate lost works by Black British authors. The headline to be drawn from this immense effort is how Evaristo has been able to use her research objectives and her growing fame, to actively try to address the cultural and institutional restrictions that her work is designed to conceptually resist in the first place.

Expanding the research base, innovating the medium, changing institutions

It is arguable that with both Evaristo and Zephaniah on staff, Brunel Creative Writing is the national leader when it comes to creative practice as a means of investigating Black British identity as part of a wider intellectual investigation within the division on issues of alterity, under-representation, intersectionality and institutional coercion. If Evaristo is well on her way towards becoming a 'national treasure' surely Zephaniah can lay claim to that title already. His autobiography *The Life and Rhymes of Benjamin Zephaniah* was book of the week on Radio 4. He has been on 'Question Time' on multiple occasions, as has Self. The tour for this *Revolution in Minds* album spanned 29 dates reaching approximately 23k people. His tour for his autobiography reached a similar number and has led to a TV commission working with Jools Holland on a 'Later...with Poetry' program composed of 4 episodes. It is impossible within the confines of this document to name all the collaborations, public events and social interventions Zephaniah has been involved in over the last census period. A brief selection includes visit to the Acorn Kids Hospice in Birmingham to investigate the impact of Covid, a visit that become a Radio 4 program. A piece with Simon Hatterstone in the Guardian after the toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol. Being named as an Icon of Birmingham. Participating in a Radio 4 appeal for a Kenyan-based environment project. An online talk with Alex Wheelte on the Windrush Cane Warriors; as mentioned earlier we are a leading unit in the investigation of Windrush and hostile environments. A Podcast with Nicola Harris on teaching teachers to teach. And the unveiling of a Bob Marley blue plaque, representing Zephaniah's friendship with arguably the most influential musical artist, globally, of all time. Amidst this myriad of activities one issue remains very close to Zephaniah's heart, prisons, in particular the impact of prison on black British citizens. Zephaniah has spent a considerable amount of time during the census period working with prisons and prisoner associations: the Koestler Trust, the Good Vibrations Project, the Prison Phoenix Trust, patronage of Haven Distribution, a Sky based documentary 'Making Your Past Pay' on the difficulty of ex-prisoners finding work, as well as various visits to prisons.

Rediscovering the materials and intersections of colonialism through institutional collaborations

Nagra, Evaristo, Zephaniah and Self are all writers of national importance, embodying our collective research interests through their many public engagements. This is not to say that an arguably less-well-known writer such as Lowe is making any less of an impact on our society, the economy of our publishing industry, through her collaborations and contributions to the research base. She participated in a Windrush arts program on Radio 4 collaborating with BAME poet James Berry. She wrote introductions to Berry's work and that of Andrea Levy for their newly acquired archives. She was also part of the BBC3 'Free Thinking' program, talking again about Windrush. Lowe is possibly the leading public voice and intellectual investigating the under-represented Chinese Caribbean community. Her 'Borderliners' was a Radio 3 commissioned poem. The memoir *Long Time no See* was book of the week on Radio 4. In 2018 she was commissioned to work with the Colonial Countryside Project in conjunction with the National Trust visiting the great houses of Britain and uncovering their imperial and colonial relations with China through their wallpaper. This is one of several projects Lowe is involved in looking at the traces of empire and marginalisation on urban/rural locations, another being her investigations of gentrification of London's urban landscape in the chapbook *The Neighbourhood* and her work with the Hillview Estate. Staying, however, with the theme of the post-colonial intersections of her Chinese-Caribbean heritage, she received an Arts

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Council grant to do research on the old Chinatown at Limehouse, she is a member of the British Chinese Studies Network, she has worked with Princeton University on a project concerned with Chinese reggae, and has done a public talk at Westminster Library, which holds the UK's largest collection of Chinese Literature.

The global-Local embedded in community collaborations

While much emphasis has been on national, indeed global, collaborations, Brunel's location within its West London communities has always been an essential part of its identity and this is reflected in collaborations and relationships formed closer to home by many staff. An important case study on the collaborative spirit of Brunel research and its contribution to our local society with clear economic impact is the Hillingdon Literary Festival (HILF) which has been running from Brunel since 2015. The festival received Arts Council funding 2015-16 and is supported by sponsorship from Heathrow Airport's Community Trust, along with support from Waterstones and Portakabin. In 2019 Phil Coy was appointed artist in residence. As one would expect, the festival collaborates with numerous external authors providing workshops for the local community. The festival has a strong social media presence created by paid student interns and is supported by the university-named Civic Engagement strategic aim. Infrastructural support is given through the provision of space on campus, funding and staff. Aside from space provided by Brunel, Hillingdon Council also support the festival co-hosting events with their libraries team. The festival is run out of BCCW and is an archetypal example of our impact-led research strategy, especially our interest in the global-local.

An essential form of collaboration in the unit is the organising of conferences and symposia. The BCCW has continued to bring together scholars for its ongoing 'Decades' symposia held at Brunel. Other symposia were organised by Cox on 'Maternal Bodies' and Penny's 'Seeds of the Future' project. In September 2014 Evenden ran a graduate symposium at the Institute of Historical Research, hosted by Sir John Elliott. Hubble and Tew have continued their ongoing collaboration with the Institute of English Studies with events such as the first-ever UK edition of the annual 'Space Between: Literature 1914-45 Society Conference' (2014) and the first-ever conference on the work of Jonathan Coe in (2015). Both events offered opportunities to our doctoral students to participate.

Much of our work in this field takes place as contributions to professional bodies, editorial projects and reading the work of others for journals and publishers. Betteridge, Tew, Morrison, Spurlin, and Hubble have all been members of the AHRC Peer Review College during this REF period. Spurlin was a member of the AHRC Peer Review College in Knowledge Transfer, Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK) from 2012-2016 and appointed AHRC Director of Research Programmes. Betteridge was a strategic reviewer. Spurlin was the Chair of the Comparative Gender Studies Research Committee, International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) (elected three-year term) from 2010-2016. He is an elected member of the Executive Council, ICLA (2010-present). He is chair, ECARE Committee for Supporting Doctoral Students and Early Career Researchers in Comparative Literature, ICLA (2019-present). Spurlin was made a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences (FACSS) in 2017 for recognition of his outstanding research contribution on Queer Studies to social science scholarship. Hubble is the Auditor for the Literary London Society and was a member of the Advisory Board of The Space Between Society from 2013-17. Houlden is on the Steering Committee of the Northern Postcolonial Network.

Contributions to the wide research community take place in the form of editorships and reviewing. Staff have made contributions of this kind to the following journals: *Wasafiri*, *Symbiosis*, *Postcolonial Text*, *African Studies Review*, *PMLA*, *Comparative Literature Studies*, *Sexualities*, *The Journal for Cultural Research*, *College English*, *Textual Practice*, *Sexuality and Culture*, *Mosaic*, *PMLA*, *Modernism/Modernity*, *Modernist Cultures*, *Open Library of the Humanities*, *Sociological Research Online*, *The Space Between*, *Textual Practice*, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, *Twentieth Century Literature*, *English*, *Victorian Popular Fictions* and *The Open Library of Humanities*. Staff have made similar contributions as readers, advisors and editors for the following academic presses: Rowman and Littlefield, Routledge, Bloomsbury, Wiley-Blackwell, University of Minnesota Press, Cambridge University Press, Stanford University Press, Bloomsbury Academic, Peter Lang, Palgrave Macmillan and Manchester University Press.

The examination of PhDs is a key component of our professional collaboration duties and contribution to research. During the census period staff have been external examiners at the following institutions: Sussex, Kent, Oxford, UCL, Birkbeck, Western Australia, McGill, Salford, Aberystwyth, Portsmouth, UEA and University of Valencia. Finally, many staff have participated in

Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

wider professional duties such as the revalidation of the MA in English Literature Programme at the Arab Open University, Peer Reviewer, Irish Research Council, Advance Laureate Awards Programme, External Examiner, MA English, Canterbury Christ Church University, and external validator for the new creative writing program at Oxford Brookes.

A notable contribution made by the section are the number of invited keynote lectures and public speaking engagements provided by staff. Spurlin leads the way in this field having given a range of international public lectures on topics such as 'LGBT Rights' (Auckland 2019), 'Translation, Diaspora, and Queer Politics in Contemporary North African Writing' (Chicago 2017), 'The Persecution of Gay Men and Lesbians under the Third Reich' (London 2017), 'The Legacy of Nazi Persecutions against Lesbians and Gay Men in Contemporary Society' (Christchurch 2016), and 'Post-Holocaust: Continued Persecutions of Sexual Dissidents since World War II' (Wellington 2016). Spurlin also gave keynotes or invited academic lectures in South Carolina (April 2014), University of Pretoria (April 2015), Victoria University Wellington (March 2016), Texas Tech University, USA. (April 2016), and University of L'Aquila (March 2017). Other staff have given invited keynotes during the census period at UEA, Lancaster University, KCL, Malta, Durham, Cambridge, Kent, and Greenwich and Sophia. In 2019 Watkin was invited to participate in a day-long symposium on his book *Badiou and Indifferent Being* at University of Kent, and then again for another one-day symposium on his forthcoming *Badiou and Communicable Worlds*.

Summary

The ethos of our research demands that we simultaneously contribute to the research base through establishing academic partnerships, and that this research base speaks to culture and society at large, through collaborations with institutions that our research seeks to change. Whether it be the idea of over-representation, developed through institutional presence as an outcome of that research; taking theoretical concepts such as otherness and investigating them fictionally to open up the world to these ideas as agents of change; using generic innovation as a means of literally opening the closed doors of institutions like prisons; or utilising one's practice to establish collaborations with institutions as a means of reading empire and intersectionality literally on the streets of London and on the walls of stately homes, research within the unit is exemplary of this category. In each instance noted above, ideas that contribute to the research base are simultaneously explored in the world at large, working with non-academic partners, to bring about economic benefit, speak to large and diverse audiences, and bring about institutional change, all working towards a single, research objective: 'Redefining the contemporary literary landscape'.