

Institution: University of Central Lancashire		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 29 English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: <i>Poetry, Grief and Healing: Working with bereaved people to achieve creative, literary and wellbeing benefits through poetry</i>		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2017-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Yvonne Reddick	AHRC Leadership Fellow	2013-present.
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The Covid-19 pandemic is also a pandemic of grief, having caused over one million deaths. Grief and bereavement damages people's physical and mental wellbeing and NHS services are stretched to the limit. There is an urgent need for resources to help people cope with loss. Reddick founded the Poetry, Grief and Healing project in 2017 to support people's wellbeing and creativity through writing. Collaborating with psychologists, counsellors, poets and the poetry journal <i>Magma</i>, Reddick published an array of poetry and articles about loss from around the world in the <i>Loss Issue</i> of <i>Magma</i> (2019). A poem Reddick commissioned and published in <i>Magma</i>, by poet Malika Booker, won the 2020 Forward Prize for Best Single Poem. The winning poem, 'The Little Miracles', tells the story of Booker's mother's declining health and the moments of hope that can nevertheless sustain us in times of loss. Reddick ran highly successful writing workshops with hospices, museums and literary festivals in Lancashire and nationwide. As the pandemic struck, the NHS Lancashire Recovery College (NHS-LRC) asked Reddick to run online writing workshops and create digital writing resources for NHS practitioners and the public. In 2020 Reddick brought together poets from <i>Magma's Loss Issue</i> with her writing workshop resources and original poems written in memory of her father, publishing <i>Poetry, Grief and Healing</i>, a textbook taken up nationwide by the NHS Recovery College network and distributed to practitioners in India and South Africa.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Reddick is an experienced poet and critic, author of the monograph <i>Ted Hughes: Environmentalist and Ecopoet</i> (2017) [1] and articles on poetry in leading literary journals. Reddick's award-winning publication <i>Translating Mountains</i> (2017) [2], a poetic memorial to her mountaineer father, began her exploration of grief and healing. It won the 2017 Women's Poetry Pamphlet Prize from women's literary magazine <i>Mslaxia</i>. It was selected as a favourite poetry pamphlet of 2017 by the <i>Times Literary Supplement</i>. It has gained international recognition and reach, with poems translated into Swedish, Greek (<i>Chromata</i>), French (<i>Agenda</i>), Chinese (<i>Smoke</i> magazine) and Italian (<i>British and Irish Women Poets</i>). Reddick is an editor and board member of <i>Magma</i>. A special issue of <i>Magma</i>, <i>The Loss Issue</i>, was funded by an Arts Council England grant and developed from Reddick's editorial expertise and critical research. <i>Magma</i> has contributors across the Caribbean, Australia, India, Europe and Anglophone Africa, attracting both established authors and emerging poets.</p> <p>The literary significance and emotional resonance of Reddick's writing about loss have won her multiple prizes and fellowships. In 2016 [2] won her a Northern Writer's Award. This was followed by a Hawthornden Fellowship, which enabled Reddick to continue researching the project in Scotland. Reddick received a commendation in the 2018 National Poetry Competition, one of the most prestigious poetry competitions in the world, for her poem 'Muirburn.' The same poem won the Poetry Society's Peggy Poole Award for its exploration of personal and ecological grief. Further poems on the theme of loss received a Creative Futures Literary Award and first prize in <i>Ambit</i> poetry journal's poetry competition (2019). These prizes laid the foundations for Reddick to secure a major GBP93,000 AHRC Leadership Fellowship enabling her to write poetry exploring environmental and societal loss. Her latest creative work <i>Spikenard</i> (2019) [4] uses her oil engineer father's career as a lens to explore the global losses brought by climate change and oil conflict.</p> <p>The call for submissions to <i>Magma's Loss Issue</i> aimed to encourage poets to intervene in the literary canon by expanding the ambitions of the elegy to explore political, historical and</p>		

environmental losses. This was the first time that a poetry magazine had dedicated a special issue to loss, in all its forms [3]. The issue combines poems selected from public submissions with commissioned poems that poets wrote during a unique collaboration with counsellors and psychologists. Existing anthologies about loss are USA-focused and out of date. Other poetry and mental health collaborations focus on psychoanalysis from the early 1900s, which is not clinically proven to aid wellbeing. *The Loss Issue* is unique for the range of losses it explores and for its focus on contemporary, cutting-edge poetry. *The Loss Issue* developed from an innovative collaboration that brought together eight poets with eight therapists, with expertise ranging from neuropsychology to counselling and positive psychology. The poets wrote commissioned poems, developing new insights on the theme of loss. The commissioned poets were Jackie Kay MBE, Zaffar Kunial, Nick Makoha, Jhilmil Breckenridge, Jennifer Lee Tsai, Khadijah Ibrahiim, Malika Booker and Romalyn Ante. Reddick co-edited the issue with author and publisher Adam Lowe, also selecting 50 poems from 8,000 submissions from the public. These were published in the magazine alongside the commissioned work. 2020 Forward Prize winner Malika Booker praised the research collaboration for its contribution to her winning poem. Poems from *The Loss Issue* are reproduced in Reddick's textbook, *Poetry, Grief and Healing* [5]. The textbook developed from several series of writing workshops that Reddick ran from 2017 to 2020, in collaboration with counsellors, psychologists and NHS practitioners from the NHS-LRC. Narrative interviews and questionnaires captured participants' feedback, aiming to assess benefits to their wellbeing and creativity. After co-editing *Magma's Loss Issue* with Reddick, Adam Lowe wrote a new poem for the textbook.

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

1. Yvonne Reddick. *Ted Hughes: Environmentalist and Eco-poet*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2017.
2. Yvonne Reddick. *Translating Mountains*. Bridgend: Seren, 2017. Winner of the *Msllexia* magazine Women's Poetry Pamphlet Competition 2017. Selected as one of Leaf Arbuthnot's favourite pamphlets of the year in the *Times Literary Supplement*. Reviewed in leading journals such as *PN Review*, *The North* and elsewhere. Poems translated into Greek, Swedish, French, Chinese and Italian.
3. Yvonne Reddick, lead editor, and Adam Lowe, assistant editor. *Magma: The Loss Issue*. 24 October 2019. Issue 75.
4. Yvonne Reddick. *Spikenard*. Sheffield: smith/doorstop Laureate's Choice series, 2019. Commissioned by former Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy.
5. Yvonne Reddick. *Poetry, Grief and Healing*. Manchester: Dog Horn Publishing, 2020.

All outputs can be supplied by the HEI on request

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

Poets have a great deal to say about grief; many people read poems at funerals and poetry is the only kind of writing to have a special form devoted to mourning, the elegy. The Poetry, Grief and Healing project has led to transformative career impacts for poets engaging with health and loss, to the publication of a global array of poets engaging with grief, and to the development of writing and wellbeing resources with local, national and international impact.

Creative, Literary and Wellbeing Benefits from Magma's Loss Issue

Magma's Loss Issue and its unique collaborative approach had a profound and significant impact on participating poets, counsellors and psychologists. Poet Jackie Kay MBE said about writing in collaboration with a neuropsychologist: **"I treasure the experience of this kind of collaboration...where you find yourself drawn to something that you might not have otherwise written about."** [3] The poet Malika Booker wrote in *Magma* that **"My collaboration with Lowri Douthwaite, a lecturer in Psychological Interventions...had a profound effect on me as both a daughter and a poet"** [3], inspiring her poem 'The Little Miracles.' The poem captures moments of hope that Booker experienced while caring for her mother, who had suffered a stroke. The poem offered comfort and solace to readers who were looking after sick relatives during the pandemic. In 2020 Reddick submitted the poem for the highly prestigious Forward Prize for Best Single Poem, with the outstanding result that Booker won the prize. This coveted literary award provided a transformative impact on her literary career. In her acceptance speech, Booker commented that **"The collaboration.... for Magma's Loss Issue, captures the way light moments can and do manifest in the midst of extreme grief and/or upheaval,**

and interestingly resonates during this time of Covid, lockdown, revolution and social/economical upheaval and loss." [A1] She stressed the crucial impacts of the prize to her as a poet of the Caribbean Diaspora: a group that has historically been excluded by the literary establishment. She described the award as **"testimony to the long journey I've made in this British poetic landscape, from being ostracized and marginalized to creating emotional and powerful work on my own terms that enabled this great acknowledgement tonight."** [A1] Booker was contacted by members of the public who were profoundly moved by the way the poem resonated with their experiences of caring for sick relatives during the pandemic. Readers **"wept"** as they **"felt moved when they heard it because it resonated with them caring for their family."** Readers told Booker that the poem gave them **"solace and peace"** [A4]. In recognition of the way Booker's winning poem inspires Black and female-identifying authors, organisations such as Peepal Tree Press (publishing Caribbean and Black British authors) commented on the significance of the win [A2]. This is important as BAME and women authors have historically experienced discrimination in literary circles. Seven poets and two article writers from the USA, Nigeria, Jamaica, Canada, India and Trinidad benefited by gaining new readers through *Magma*. Delroy McGregor (Jamaica) said that **"Magma is the first time my poetry has been exposed to the U.K, and yes I am truly grateful that this opportunity has allowed my work to be seen through a different lens."** [B1] McGregor also had his poem reprinted in [5]. Poets see *Magma* as a publication that boosts their careers, as it provides emerging poets and editors with access to coveted literary opportunities. Reddick had poetry commissioned for *The Guardian Review* by outgoing Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy. For poet Jessica Sneddon, publication in *Magma* was a threshold in her literary career that led to important opportunities: **"The magazine's reach and reputation has made it a really important milestone in my writing career."** [D] Her publishing track record progressed from small online magazines to high-calibre literary publications such as the Leeds University-based magazine *Stand* [D]. Poets who read poems for the launch of *Magma The Loss Issue* in London reported the empowering and cathartic experience of sharing poetry around grief, a subject so often associated with silence and taboo. Poet Alice Hiller Tweeted: **"Thank you Yvonne Reddick and Magma Poetry for giving me the space to perform 'Brussels' about the day my father died when I was 8 – you gave back the voice which was taken from me when I lost him."** [E]

The *Loss Issue* received over 8,000 poems. This is the highest number of submissions that *Magma* has ever received: twice as many as typical issues. The arts sector also suffered severe losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the Arts Council grant that funded this issue became especially important to poets and to *Magma* journal. *Magma* is a charity with an annual turnover of GBP30,000/annum: the GBP11,800 grant represented a third of its annual turnover. The grant enabled *Magma* to branch out into innovative online events during the pandemic, such as the launch of the *Loss Issue* with Leeds-based poets. These digital methods were taken up by other *Magma* editors during the Covid-19 crisis, a productive model that offers *Magma* great resilience at a time of austerity for the arts [F].

The *Loss Issue*, the Arts Council grant, and Reddick's facilitation of Booker's Forward Prize win, have all had a transformative and enduring impact on *Magma* itself. *Magma* has now published three times as many Forward Prize-winning poems as the *Times Literary Supplement*. Two editors who have chaired *Magma*'s editorial board over the years, Lisa Kelly and Laurie Smith, commented that Booker's win was **"great"** for both **"poetry and Magma."** [A3] At the magazine's launch events in London, Manchester, the University of Central Lancashire and Preston's Harris Museum, Gallery and Library, 76% of survey respondents said that *Magma* introduced them to new ideas about poetry and loss, or helped them to approach a new theme in their writing [C]. *The Loss Issue* was praised as particularly 'diverse' [C]: 40% of authors published were BAME, compared to 17% in the previous issue, and LGBTQ+ participation was strong (12% against a UK national average of 2%). *The State of Poetry and Poetry Criticism* report on diversity in publishing singled out the issue's championing of diversity, reporting that the issue published more poets of colour than any other single poetry journal issue in their data set [G].

Helping writing workshop participants to cope with grief

Reddick led Writing for Wellbeing workshops at Preston's Harris Museum (2017-18), at Poetry in Aldeburgh festival (2018) and St Catherine's Hospice (2019) and the NHS Lancashire Recovery College (NHS-LRC) (2019, 2020). Reddick's workshops have helped 65 individuals and 17 participants write poems for the first time in their lives. Participants in the Harris Museum workshops commented that the social support provided by the workshops was **"really useful because I think a lot of people are quite isolated with grief."** The participant commented that **"meeting other people, even if you're not going to explain all of those things to them – you feel a comfort from that."** [H1] She had one of her poems published in *Poetry, Grief and Healing*. Another participant corroborated the importance of the social support provided by writing workshops, saying that they were **"most certainly good for me, in that it was not great for me to isolate myself."** [H1] Survey comments from participants at the Hospice included: **"A way to express my thoughts & feelings in a safe environment... To reflect on the person I am, which has been lost over the last few years."** [H2] A hospice counsellor noted that: **"writings were extremely thought provoking and captured how grief is unique for each person."** [H3] The counsellor and two of her colleagues continued to share the learning by participating enthusiastically in the collaboration with poets for *Magma*. All participants at the NHS-LRC sessions reported improvements to their wellbeing on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale [H4]. Six months after the workshops at St Catherine's Hospice, over 50% of writers said they had stayed in touch with other attendees and 50% were continuing to write creatively. One commented on how this had helped: **"During the night, a very windy night, when I couldn't sleep & was anxious, I started to write a poem."** [H5] The workshop at Poetry in Aldeburgh festival sold out, attracting 17 participants, two of whom were published in *Magma*. Poet Kostya Tsolakis wrote a blog entry about the festival for the Poetry School, commenting: **"Yvonne helped us approach the difficult topic of grief, be it over a person, object, country or the environment, with sensitivity but also humour."** [I] A poem that he wrote about LGBTQ+ perspectives on loss was published in *Magma's Loss Issue*.

Impact on NHS, museums and charities

The NHS-LRC serves a population of 1.5 million. Reddick ran trial workshops in Preston (July – August 2019), a four-session course (January-February 2020) and a new online course on loss and life after Covid-19 (July-August 2020). Jhilmil Breckenridge, writer and founder of India's Bhor Foundation mental health charity, participated in both the Harris Museum and St Catherine's Hospice workshops and shared the learning abroad, saying: **"I will continue to write for myself as well as spread information on how writing helps with overcoming trauma and loss. In fact, I have given a talk on exactly that in Malaysia.... to 400 people."** [B2] Reddick has created a downloadable 'Writing Loss' worksheet to engage further participants. The worksheet guides participants in evoking loss by writing about an object. This has been taken up by the national writing charity The Arvon Foundation, Hospice UK's website ehospice.com, *Magma* poetry magazine's blog; the Living with Loss project, a counsellor at Pendleside Hospice, Burnley and a London-based writing workshop series. The Arvon Foundation emailed the worksheet to its 581 subscribers. Reddick's writing workshop resources were taken up by the Living with Loss retreats, which take place in Sussex, Devon and Yorkshire. Seven participants attended a retreat in August 2019. All participants who completed a follow-up survey commented that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the content was helpful [B3]. Reddick's writing workshop resources were used by counsellor, writing therapist and writer Amy Tempest, at Pendleside Hospice, for 12 participants [B4]. Tempest's work with Khadijah Ibrahiim was the beginning of this longer-term collaboration as part of *Poetry, Grief and Healing*.

Magma's Loss Issue is circulated in the NHS-LRC's mobile vehicle for hard-to-reach populations to use. The vehicle had reached 2800 people before the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown [J1]. *Poetry, Grief and Healing* is now also available in the mobile library. As the COVID-19 crisis struck, the NHS-LRC again called upon Reddick to create new digital resources to help people cope with an unprecedented number of bereavements. An online writing workshop prompt to help people write about loss by focusing on an object they associate with a loved one was viewed 866 times after the NHS-LRC circulated it on Twitter [J2]. Reddick's final workshops for the NHS-LRC encouraged participants to write not only about loss, but also resilience and healing after the

pandemic. The three participants in the final workshops included an NHS psychologist who had worked on frontline COVID-19 mental health wards, an art curator and an emerging writer. All of their lives and occupations have been profoundly affected by the virus. Participants were empowered to submit written evidence and send their poems to a House of Lords Special Committee on Life After COVID-19. One participant sent two of her articles, while another participant and Reddick sent poems, following the Committee's invitation for creative responses [J3]. The Recovery College shared a participant's poem with other service users. One participant wrote: **"Thanks again Yvonne for your skilful and inspiring facilitation. I wrote a short paragraph to the Lords including 2 articles as attachments... I included a link to the Recovery College as an example of good practice."** [J3]. NHS-LRC staff have nominated *Poetry, Grief and Healing* for use nationwide as a Recovery College Network bibliotherapy resource.

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

[A] Malika Booker. Forward Prize

[A1] Malika Booker Forward Prize acceptance speech.

[A2] Response by Peepal Tree Press (publisher of Caribbean and Black British talent) to Malika Booker's Forward Prize win

[A3] Emails from Lisa Kelly and Laurie Smith, two former chairs of *Magma* journal, to the editorial board, following Malika Booker's winning of the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem.

[A4] Malika Booker. Recorded impact testimonial sent to Reddick.

[B] Testimonials, letters of support and evaluations from authors, counsellors and NHS staff:

[B1] Testimonial from Delroy MacGregor, International author;

[B2] Evaluation, creative writing piece and testimonial from Jhilmil Breckenridge, poet;

[B3] Letter of support from Abi May, Living with Loss Retreats

[B4] Letter of support from counsellor and writer Amy Tempest, Pendleside Hospice

[C] Evaluation surveys: London, Manchester and Preston Launches of *Magma: The Loss Issue*,

[D] Jessica Sneddon's poetry was published in *Stand*, after her work had appeared in *Magma*. She mentions *Magma* among her previous publication credits: this helped her to secure publication in *Stand*.

[E] Alice Hiller, Tweet about the significance of reading a poem written in memory of her father at *Magma's* London launch in November 2019.

[F] Web links to the film launching *Magma's Loss Issue*, and illustrating digital methods taken up for launching a subsequent issue (Issue 77).

[G] University of Liverpool, Centre for New and International Writing. 'Data analysis: Ledbury Poetry Critics 2020 Annual Report.'

[H] Feedback, evaluations and testimonials from workshops and events

[H1] Harris Museum follow up interviews 1 and 4.

[H2] Evaluation forms and feedback from the St Catherine's Hospice workshops.

[H3] Email of support from counsellor Olwen Sutcliffe at St Catherine's Hospice.

[H4] WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) scores, St Catherine's Hospice writing workshops, Sessions 2 and 6.

[H5] St Catherine's Hospice, follow up surveys 6 months after the end of the writing course.

[I] Kostya Tsolakis, blog for the Poetry School detailing Poetry in Aldeburgh festival and his participation in Reddick's workshop.

[J] Resources, statistics and participant responses from NHS Lancashire Recovery College workshops and Poems shared with the House of Lords; Special Committee

[J1] Emailed statistics about reach from Hasan Sidat, NHS Lancashire Recovery College.

[J2] Reddick's video created for the NHS Lancashire Recovery College – screenshot showing views and retweets. The artist who re-tweeted the video attended Reddick's course as a result of hearing about the course via Twitter.

[J3] Emails from participants in the August 2020 Lancashire NHS Recovery College workshops and Poems shared with the House of Lords' Special Committee on Life after Covid-19 after the Committee invited the sharing of responses via Twitter. The full texts were also sent by email at the Committee's request.