

Section A		
The fields in this section are mandatory.		
Institution: Liverpool Hope University		
Unit of Assessment: 27 English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: The Poet in the Community: A new-materialist and posthuman approach to Impact		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011- 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Eleanor Rees	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: Sept 2015 - current
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Sept 2015 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
Section B		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Since autumn 2015, Dr Eleanor Rees has contributed to 50 poetry events benefiting international audiences, women and BAME poets, deprived localities and civic and local events. For Rees, impact does not occur after the event of writing poetry but is intrinsic to the creative process. Rees's work enacts an inclusive and non-dualistic poetics drawing inspiration from recent critical work in new-materialism and posthuman thought to understand poetry as an emergent phenomenon. Rees's work repositions the poet as working <i>within</i> and <i>through</i> their local contexts <i>as well as</i> national and international literary traditions. Rees's work nuances the notion of 'impact' itself arguing, through practice, against knowledge production methods which extract value from a system for consumption or sale, and for time and space as flux. Rees's cultural impact is always social as these are indivisible concepts.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The impact in this case study is underpinned by the publication of poetry in <i>Riverine</i> (Gatehouse Press, 2015) and <i>The Well at Winter Solstice</i> (Salt, 2019), translations of this poetry, and Rees's practice as a socially-engaged poet. The eligible poetry collections referenced here enact Rees's research perspective of a 'local poetics', which understands 'locality' as an assembly of divergent perspectives rather than a description of sameness. Rees 'writes with' and understands poetry as a social and public activity.</p> <p>There is a politics to the problem of the poet in the academy. In the humanities, dualistic thought is privileged over other epistemologies. The dualism of the notion of self and subject which dominates the academy can also be understood as the residue of colonial and humanist ideas which place control and dominance as central to the understanding of what it is to be a writer or thinker (Braidotti, 2013). Rees's poetics challenge this assumption and enact a non-hierarchical ethics. Her understanding of the 'lyric I', and of the self or subject, is that it is dynamically constituted in relation, in 'intraaction' between body, culture, environment (Barad, 2007). In the writing of poetry, Rees must therefore actively engage in these real material dynamics and work with her decentred subjectivity to bring forth poems made from this material.</p> <p>The reading of her poetry to varied audiences is therefore a crucial part of her poetics. The sharing of the poem <i>is part</i> of the work of the poet. Seeking to impact, even modestly, upon the consciousness of the listener or reader is the purpose of Rees's poetics. Rees hopes to persuade a reader or listener to shift their vision and become alert to the vitality of all material. In this way, she hopes to engender an ethics of respect for life in times when this regard is sorely required.</p>		

Rees's poetics can be understood within a new-materialist and post-humanist philosophy (that there are no divisions between matter and mind, and man is not at the centre of all thought, that time and space are absolutely and literally in flux). Rees does not think of poetry as representation. Rees understands poetry as a space which changes energy. Poetry is multivalent. Therefore, the poetic is real. Rees's practice as research seeks to engage with the problem: Why is poetry not considered thought? Also, why is the material world not understood as thinking? Rees's work challenges dualistic assumptions in light of her reading in contemporary philosophy. The advances in realist thought grouped under the terms new-materialism and post-humanism offer a rigorous context for, paradoxically, her understanding of poetry as thought. Contemporary understanding of what it is to think has shifted and 'to think' no longer denotes pure abstraction or logic. Subjects think with bodies, environment *and* abstract capacities. Yet, environs, histories, matter also speak and communicate. Rees's poetry intuits and then remakes. This poetics requires a new definition of the subject. Rees questions the assumptions present in the discipline of creative writing and the academy which seek to locate the thinking and knowing subject in a stable 'I'. This knowing subject is expected to know 'itself', but the notion of a singular subjectivity is not present in her poetics. For Rees, following Barad and others, the subject or self is multiple, indeterminate and porous (Barad, 2015). Any singular experience of self-identity is contingent, but not real. These ideas are visible in Rees's impact as a poet in local communities and beyond.

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

- [1] Eleanor Rees, *Riverine* (Norwich: Gatehouse, 2015).
- [2] Eleanor Rees, *The Well at Winter Solstice* (Cromer: Salt, 2019).
- [3] Eleanor Rees, trans. Dominykas Norkūnas, (Vilnius: Druskininkai Poetic Fall, 2015).
- [4] Eleanor Rees, trans. Elvira Haugová, (Bratislava: Ars Poetica, 2016).
- [5] Eleanor Rees, *No 22 Wo Lyrik zuhause ist Eleanor Rees*, trans. Renee von Paschen, (Wien: Edition Aramo, 2019).
- [6] Eleanor Rees, *Eleanor Rees Poemes*, trans. Linda Maria Baros, (Paris: La Traductiere, 2019).

The quality of Rees's research to date is evident in the award in 2018 of The Northern Writers' Award for Poetry 2018 for *The Well at Winter Solstice*. Judged by Queen's Gold Medal winning poet Imitaz Dharker, this prestigious prize for northern writers attests to the connection between Rees's work and region. £1000 was awarded for the development of the manuscript.

The completed book was published with an afterword by Rosi Braidotti in which she writes, 'Do not let the emotional impact of Eleanor Rees' poetry mislead you: there's intense intellectual rigour at work here, as well. The collection pursues a consistent hypothesis, supported by razor-sharp intuitions. And it builds them up into a sequential clear vision. It is moving on the affective level, but also knowledgeable and conceptually stirring.'

Poet Helen Mort says, 'Through Eleanor Rees' shape-shifting, muscular poems we enter a place where identity is fluid, where surfaces can't be trusted. A boy in the woods wakes up younger than he was, his body returning to seed. A clock 'wings the day dark'. The city is first an empty vein, then a place of abundance and beginnings. These poems stay with you long after reading. They bristle with images that you feel rather than just read: 'I am in the grass as the trowel rips through... / I am in the water as it strains through earth to sea...'

Poet Penelope Shuttle says, 'These poems probe the edge-lands of the possible, shifting the scenery of the past. They find their contemporary intent along borders and boundaries, welcoming the ghostliness of such territory, surveying threshold experience, and conjuring-up the sombre magic of resurrection and of re-location in time and space. This is a beautiful, grave, and expressive collection.'

Professor Sean Street wrote in international journal *Tears in the Fence*, 'Together, *Blood Child* and *Riverine* convey seductively cross-fading time-scapes; it is in the end this quality that makes these remarkable poems linger in the memory, unsettling and disquieting, redefining so-called realities. Dark, visceral, her use of language and image is controlled and concentrated, and through it the message is one of connections.'

Poet Nikki Arscot in *Poetry Wales* reviewed *Blood Child* in 2019 and wrote, "Rees has an outstanding ability to act as a conduit between past and present. It is as though she has tapped into an ancient reservoir 'remarkable and unsung' and stepped aside in order for the reader to experience the torrent of its mysterious element uninterrupted by poetic ego or personal agenda.'

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

Rees's artistic research directly underpins the impact of her work as a poet, working in the wider community and beyond, as attested to by posthuman philosopher Professor Rosi Braidotti in her afterword to *The Well at Winter Solstice*. (1)

Since 2015, Eleanor Rees has contributed to 50 poetry events benefiting international/national audiences, women and BAME poets, deprived localities and civic and local events.

International and National Readings and Publications

Selections of Eleanor's poetry have been translated into Slovak, Lithuania, German, French and Spanish. Four pamphlets have been published as a result of the Versopolis EU poetry project and Eleanor has read at four leading International Poetry Festivals (Paris, Krems, Bratislava, Druskinkai). For the Pavilion Poets Tour, Eleanor read at 7 national venues funded by ACE. (2)

Deprived Localities in Liverpool

Since autumn 2015, Eleanor has run 15 community-based creative writing activities with The Windows Project. Windows receives funding from Liverpool City Council, Arts Council England, The Big Lottery and others to deliver creative writing workshops in areas of multiple deprivation. These include Walton which is in the 1-10% most deprived area nationally (IMD 2015 A Liverpool analysis, Executive Summary, 2015). Eleanor has run 4 playscheme writing workshops with young people in these areas since 2015. Feedback from one session says, 'Excellent engagement with children and staff. Children, parents and grandparents always enjoy these workshops, and staff incorporated writing work into an ongoing art project we had running.' (Rice Lane City Farm, 2017). Rees also works on the Writing Advice Desk at Liverpool Central Library. Funded by ALCS and Liverpool City Council, these free two-hour sessions offer drop-in on-the-spot feedback on creative writing by established local writers. Eleanor has led 9 Writing Advice Desk sessions since autumn 2015 and advised approximately 54 local writers. Rees has also given 2 readings in community venues.

Rees is an advisory board member of The Windows Project, providing feedback on applications and advising on diversity strategy for a £49,680.00 ACE bid, which funded 95 workshops and 5 readings, with an estimated attendance of 1,290. (3)

Rees has also given three poetry readings for Not Just Collective. 'As a grassroots, self-funding group, we are committed to a cooperative way of working to build a community of creative practitioners in Liverpool and the wider area. Eleanor's sustained relationship with the collective has both strengthened our cause and opened us up to new audiences.' (4)

Women and BAME Poets

In June-July 2018, Eleanor worked with The Windows Project and University of Nottingham Centre for Regional Literature to deliver two poetry writing workshops at Liverpool Central Library with local women poets from diverse BAME backgrounds to explore the Windows Project Small Press Archive which is held in the Picton Library. (5)

Civic and Local Events

In 2017, Rees worked with The Black Chair Birkenhead Eisteddfod Centenary Festival 2017, a Heritage Lottery Funded Project organised by Wirral Council, Friends of Birkenhead Park and Merseyside Welsh History Society, Ys Ysgwrn. Eleanor led six workshops with an artist, impacting on over 200 Year Six primary school children, their teachers and volunteers in the north-end of Birkenhead. Rees also gave 2 public readings. 'All who took part agreed that the outstanding outcome was fostering a real sense of local pride within a community which suffers from high deprivation'. (The Black Chair End of Grant Report). Commissioned poem 'Memorial' is published in *The Well at Winter Solstice* (Salt, 2019). (6)

The launch for *The Well at Winter Solstice* was held at St Bride's Church, Liverpool on 21st June 2019, Summer Solstice. The event included the setting of two of Eleanor's poems to music by leading internationally renowned folk singers and musicians, Emily Portman and Mikey Kenney. The event was attended by over 50 people. Eleanor also collaborated with them on settings of six poems for 'Poem-Songs from The Well at Winter Solstice', Ullet Road Unitarian Church, 21st December 2019. Eleanor also read at five national poetry venues including Stanza International Poetry Festival, St Andrews 2020 as part of the launch activity. (7)

In 2019, Wirral Borough of Culture commissioned a poem for the handover ceremony to Sefton Borough of Culture. The poem was read by local children to an audience of 700. Testimonial from Wirral Council says, 'The poem powerfully and creatively explored the themes that each borough had chosen for their year in the spotlight. Following the event, the Mayoress of Wirral requested a copy of the poem and Sefton have expressed their desire to use the poem again during their Borough of Culture year.' (8) Eleanor also led two poetry workshops in primary schools in Birkenhead for the Wirral Borough of Culture and read her poem 'Memorial' at 'Made with Iron' at Williamson Art Gallery, a celebration of Birkenhead's shipbuilding heritage. As the evaluation says, 'Eleanor brought sensitivity and skilful word play and a hush to the room.' (9)

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

1/ Afterword to *The Well at Winter Solstice*, Professor Rosi Braidotti.

2/ Versopolis <https://www.versopolis-poetry.com/poets> Individual event adverts/ Arts Council England 'Pavilion Poets Readings' Application/ Activity Report Form.

3/ The Windows Project audited accounts and testimonial 2015-2020 listing payments and work in-kind with Eleanor Rees

4/ Not Just Collective testimonial from the Coordinator (email)

5/ *Ribbon*, Small Press Archive, The Windows Project and Nottingham University Centre for Regional Writing Workshops Feedbacks Forms.

6/ End of Grant Report, Birkenhead's 'The Black Chair' Centenary Festival: Community Engagement Project, Merseyside Welsh Heritage Society, Heritage Lottery FW-16-08821

7/ *The Well at Winter Solstice Readings*: Online advertisements/screen shots for readings, eventbrite page.

8/ Wirral Borough of Culture Handover Commission Testimonial, Partnerships and Participation Officer, Wirral Borough Council

9/ Wirral Borough Council, Poetry and Spoken Word Evaluation.

* Where the sources are individuals who could be contacted or have provided factual statements to the HEI, the submitted case study should state only the organisation (and, if appropriate, the position) of the individuals concerned, and which claim(s) they can corroborate. Their personal details (name, position, contact details) must be entered separately on the REF submission system and not on REF3. Details of a maximum of five individuals may be entered for each case study; these data will not be published as part of the submission.