

Institution: The University of Manchester		
Unit of Assessment: 27 (English Language and Literature)		
Title of case study: The Centre for New Writing: Developing New Writers and Audiences, Enriching Public Debate and Informing Arts Policy		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2007-2020		
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:
Jeanette Winterson John McAuliffe Ian McGuire	Professor of New Writing Professor of Poetry Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing	2012-present 2004-present 1998-present
Kamila Shamsie Beth Underdown Honor Gavin	Professor of Creative Writing Lecturer in Creative Writing Lecturer in Creative Writing	2017-present 2016-present 2017-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013-November 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>This case study draws on practice-based research by writers working in The Centre for New Writing (CNW). CNW brings together writers at different career stages, whose work spans different forms, in one vibrant, creative hub. Distinctive as a unit with a pedagogic, professional and public-facing profile, CNW has developed and encouraged outward-facing activity, fostering a fluid connection between different reading and writing publics and academics working in the industry. The research has: i) enabled the shaping of public debates on inequalities and identity; ii) created new opportunities for young and underrepresented writers; iii) developed audiences for new writing; and iv) influenced arts policy and investment strategies in the North West of England and Ireland.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The impact is underpinned by staff research and writing which locates and historicises gendered identities and issues of race, class and nationhood. CNW research ranges across contemporary and historical novels, short fiction, and poetry, much of which seeks to interrogate, articulate and advocate for a more nuanced and inclusive, historically-informed understanding of identity and the critical role a writer may play in contemporary society. In moving from what began in 2007 as a pedagogic project built on MA and PhD provision, to a hub for networking writers and their research, CNW encourages writers to enhance their work through an iterative process of dialogue with other writers and members of the public. This impactful aspiration is a key element of their research practice and culture.</p> <p>Winterson, Gavin and Shamsie's work explores questions of gender and identity in contemporary and historical modes. In <i>Frankissstein</i> (2019) [1], Winterson, widely regarded as one of the world's most experimental and boundary-pushing authors, known for "narratives of 'queer exuberance' which challenge the biopolitical codification of sexual identity" (Broadman, <i>Mosaic</i>, 2015), updates and transforms Mary Shelley's original novel, asking radical questions about the effects of AI and robotics on gender and on sexual identities. Winterson's <i>The Gap of Time</i> (2016) offers a retelling of Shakespeare's <i>The Winter's Tale</i> to challenge contemporary gendered inequalities. Honor Gavin's short fiction 'Home Death' (2020) [2] unusually combines comedy and transgression as it explores gender and trans issues. Shamsie's lecture, 'Unbecoming British' (2018) [3], negotiates key contemporary questions of race, gender and cultural inheritance. Developing themes established in her novel, <i>Home Fire</i>, this non-fiction piece situates her research into the story of Mahdi Hashi in the context of changing UK laws on citizenship.</p> <p>Underdown and McGuire's work locates issues around identity historically. For example, Underdown's <i>The Witchfinder's Sister</i> (2017) [4] uses seventeenth-century witch hunts to intervene in contemporary feminist issues. McGuire's <i>The North Water</i> (2016) [5] is set in Hull in</p>		

the 1850s and deals with important contemporary themes around masculinity, violence, and environmentalism, themes to which *The Abstainer* (2020) returns, this time set in nineteenth-century Manchester, whose response to Fenian terror offers a way to reflect on more recent events in the city. *The North Water* has been adapted by the BBC into a four-part series starring Colin Farrell and Jack O'Connell, with filming completed in September 2020 (see section 4 below).

McAuliffe's poetry examines what one reviewer suggested is "*the arbitrariness and inherent instability of boundaries, quietly summoning up the uneasy neighbourhood of Irish and British history*" (*The Poetry Review*, 2015). *The Way In* (2015) [6] includes an extended sequence which draws on Edmund Spenser's Irish poems to challenge fixed polarities of national identity. McAuliffe's practice-based research is centred on grounding poetry in everyday activities and, following on from ideas developed in his pamphlet, *The Siren Alps* (Dublin: Arts Council, 2007), is used to underpin substantial dissemination activities that emphasise audience engagement and development.

3. References to the research

1. Jeanette **Winterson**, *Frankissstein* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2019). Longlisted for the 2019 Booker Prize and Polari Prize; shortlisted for the Comedy Women in Print Prize.
2. Honor **Gavin**, "Home Death" (Galley Beggar Press, 2020). Available at: <https://www.galleybeggar.co.uk/2020-ssp-gavin-home-death>. Shortlisted for the Galley Beggar Prize 2020.
3. Kamila **Shamsie**, 'Unbecoming British: Citizenship, migration and the transformation of rights into privileges', The Orwell Lecture 2018. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-V4Y3n9MJcA>. This lecture was delivered at University College London on 13 November 2018 and published in *The Guardian* on 17 November 2018.
4. Beth **Underdown**, *The Witchfinder's Sister* (London: Penguin, 2017). Underdown became one of *The Observer's* 'new faces of fiction in 2017' as a result of [4]; awarded the Historical Writers' Association Debut Crown.
5. Ian **McGuire**, *The North Water* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2016). [text removed for publication]; longlisted for the Man Booker Prize; named *A New York Times* Book Review Editors' Choice; the basis of a new drama series for BBC.
6. John **McAuliffe**, *The Way In* (Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 2015). Won the 2016 Michael Hartnett Award for Best Collection.

References 1, 4, 5 and 6 are available on request.

4. Details of the impact

CNW has strategically supported its staff to produce and disseminate work that charts and changes cultural understandings of gender, race and inequalities. This research has, in turn, informed and complemented its work with young and underrepresented writers, as well as developing new audiences, and contributed to changes in arts policy which support writers in new ways (as in Ireland's 'Next Generation' scheme). CNW's iterative, practice-based research culture is consistently generated in dialogue with public engagement activities that aim to enrich communities in Manchester and beyond.

Enriching public debate about gender, race, identity and inequalities

By generating new ways of imagining the intersections of gender, race, and history, CNW research has made significant contributions to public conversations about gendered and racialised identities. Winterson's historical understanding of progressive feminism underpins *Frankissstein* [1] and *The Gap of Time* (2016). It led to her invitation to deliver the prestigious Richard Dimbleby Lecture in 2018, which drew on her fiction's sustained investigation of gendered histories to examine the contemporary and historical fight for women's equality. The lecture was broadcast on BBC1 on 6 and 7 June 2018 and on BBC2 on 7 July 2018, with a short clip viewed over 80,000 times on *The Guardian's* YouTube channel [A.i]. The lecture's success in stimulating and changing understandings of gendered inequality within the public is illustrated by comments by viewers on popular online discussion forums such as Mumsnet: "*I want everyone I know to watch this ... Can we get her lecture into the school curriculum? ... that would make such a difference*"; "*That was really enlightening ... The rise in AI, especially in female form is something I hadn't considered previously; it's made me feel quite uncomfortable especially in the current climate.*" [A.ii]

Subsequently published as *Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere* (2018) [text removed for publication], the lecture contributed to Winterson's impact in influencing public debates, evidenced by her inclusion as one of the BBC's *100 Women* (2016); election as Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2016; and her CBE in 2018 for services to literature. *Frankissstein* [1] and Winterson's accompanying solo performances have also made influential interventions in debates about concepts of humanity, AI and trans bodies, for example as reported in the *Daily Mail* on 30 May 2019 [A.iii] and in her leading position in more recent debates about trans controversies as reported in *The Guardian* and elsewhere in September 2020 [A.iv]. [text removed for publication]

Shamsie's interest in questions of nationality and identity is evident in the Orwell Lecture, 'Unbecoming British' [3], which was delivered on 13 November 2018 with 350 attendees, viewed over 3,000 times on YouTube, and was subsequently published in *The Guardian*, where it received 385 comments [C.i]. It stimulated public discussion about race and power, subjects Shamsie positioned in relation to national debates. As one of the few contemporary female British-Pakistani public intellectuals given significant public air-time, her research has shaped urgent debates around citizenship and race by criticising and humanising the experiences of asylum seekers in Britain [C.iv]. Shamsie was invited to guest-edit BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme (approximately 6,800,000 listeners per week in the last 3 months of 2018, C.ii) on 26 December 2018 and interview Sajid Javid MP. The interview reflected Shamsie's concerns in her lecture and in her bestselling novel *Home Fire* (2017) as noted by Javid himself on social media: "*Finally read this book last weekend. Superb. Very well deserved recognition for Kamila Shamsie. Not too happy about what happens to the Home Secretary*" [C.iii]. Shamsie's discussion with Javid in light of his comments regarding gang-based abuse and exploitation was widely covered in the UK media, including in *The Independent* and *The Sun* [C.v].

Shamsie's work has also shaped public understandings about the role of writers as activists, and was seen as a test case by international organisation *Index on Censorship*, which used her example to declare, "*Increasingly we are seeing fiction writers being policed for their political opinions and books cancelled as a result.*" [C.vi], provoking an open letter by 250 writers defending the right to protest and highlighting the contribution artists make to contemporary politics [C.vii]. A patron of Manchester Literature Festival (MLF), Shamsie's research has influenced the Festival to produce a more diverse programme. As the MLF Co-Director testifies: "*Shamsie's commitment to the importance of bringing great writers to new audiences, and to art that can speak to contemporary injustices, is now part of our vision.*" [D]

Developing writers and audiences

CNW has developed and nurtured audiences for writing by pursuing an extensive programme of engagement activities and workshops in Manchester and through a strategic partnership with MLF. The CNW 'Literature Live' reading series has expanded from six events in 2005 to nearly 20 events per year between September 2013 and 2019. 'Literature Live' is notably international and has brought over 120 writers to Manchester since 2013. The partnership with MLF has generated multiple benefits. CNW staff have informed the Festival's programming, developed event ideas, chaired events and interviewed visiting writers. As the Festival's Co-Director writes, "*the research of [CNW] staff has crucially shaped our curatorial vision*"; CNW's understanding of literature as both feminist and activist has been "*a prompt to our own activity*" and "*an important programming resource*"; without CNW research and activities, "*many of our events would either not happen or have a much reduced reach*" [D]. CNW events in partnership with MLF drew 7,740 attendees between September 2013 and 2018 [D]. In 2019, CNW staff hosted 13 events across the 17-day MLF programme [D]. The MLF Co-Director summarises: "*I, and our audiences, value these writers' careful, informed work as chairs, readers and interviewers... their events with us make an impact because of the excellence of their publications and deep knowledge of the literature landscape, and the accessible manner in which they bring that expertise to our audiences.*" [D]

CNW researchers have pursued an outward-facing approach to developing new audiences. For example, the BBC adaptation of *The North Water* [5] completed filming in September 2020 (delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic). Director Andrew Haigh testified that "*[t]he novel by Ian McGuire is a darkly brilliant piece of work, propelled by a vision of the world that is both beautiful*

and brutal. It feels bracingly modern and is piercingly perceptive about the nature of what drives us all." [E] McAuliffe has also actively engaged public audiences for poetry by writing one of the UK and Ireland's only regular poetry columns, with his writing appearing every four weeks in *The Irish Times* since 2013. His poetry's response to Edmund Spenser (2015) [6] led to his co-convening and chairing sold-out symposia (Poetry Ireland 15 February 2018, 100 attendees). The book's central sequence, 'Home Againe', funded by an award from the Broadcast Authority of Ireland, was broadcast on RTÉ LyricFM on 9 December 2018 to an audience of 20,000, with the same number again listening online. [text removed for publication] tweeted in response: "*That was brilliant*" [F].

CNW has developed and supported new writerly communities beyond those registered for degree programmes. For example, it has developed innovative research-led schools initiatives. The *Schools Poetry Competition*, running each year between 2017 and 2020, targeted high schools in areas of high deprivation, such as East Manchester Academy (with free lunches at 63.5%) and Whalley Range (with more than half the student population supported by Pupil Premium). The programme used CNW practice-based research to provide pupils in Years 7 to 11 with access to mentoring and advice from professional writers to prepare a submission for competition, attracting participation from a total of 218 pupils between 2017 and 2020 [G.i]. One teacher noted that the project would "*help our pupils feel connected to Higher Education from an early age, and we hope that after participating in the project pupils will be encouraged to consider attending university in the future.*" [G.ii] Another teacher highlighted the transformational impact on students' self-expression: "*Teachers were stunned at the quality and quantity of student response. We had created a voice for young people to share their experiences and feelings in a way we hadn't been able to before. The connection with the university and the seriousness with which their writing was discussed, gave the whole process, and the students themselves, such credibility.*" [G.iii] The process empowered and skilled teachers with a "*noticeable impact on their practice when teaching creative writing and their confidence in helping young students improve their work.*" [G.iii] Another schools writing project, led by Underdown in 2018 in collaboration with the National Trust's Quarry Bank in Cheshire, led the participating school to comment, "*It was invaluable to get the experience of meeting and interacting with an author*" and "*One of the students in particular generally does not engage in creative writing but had created a lengthy, insightful piece of work.*" [G.iv]

In summer 2019, Gavin drew on ideas developed in their short fiction 'Home Death' [2] to direct a series of workshops (33 writers total) at the University which created a supportive environment for trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming writers to explore questions of creative expression and representation. Led by the poet and performance artist Travis Alabanza and poet Caspar Heinemann, the workshops benefitted contributors by creating a unique arena to discuss gender and its relationship to writing. As participant [text removed for publication] tweeted: "*Full of admiration [for] the creativity you helped spark in a space that felt safe and fun*" [H].

Shaping arts policy

CNW practice-based research has created public profiles that have led to its members influencing new arts policies to support emerging writers. These have also helped to improve cultural investment strategies in the North West of England and in Ireland. In his role within the Irish Arts Council (Deputy Chair between 2013 and 2018), McAuliffe drew on his practice's emphasis on engagement to co-write the Council's new ten-year strategy, 'Making Great Art Work' (2015) [I.i], which rebalanced the Council's emphasis on the place of the artist in strategic initiatives alongside its commitment to developing audiences. McAuliffe chaired the policy and strategy committee, leading the charge on the strategy document [I.i]. The former Arts Council Chair writes, "*[McAuliffe's] own Arts Council publication The Siren Alps had previously made the case for thinking about the artist in relation to excellence but also to sitedness, and to the ways in which artists are crucial to place-making [...] the development of Making Great Art Work was grounded in John's research and experience as a writer.*" [I.ii] That strategy reframed the terms on which artists' development was supported, leading to the development of 'Next Generation' schemes, which have offered EUR20,000 bursaries and mentorship to between 16 and 20 emerging artists each year since McAuliffe piloted the scheme in 2016; over 100 artists have now been supported [I.ii]. In 2017, the Irish Minister for Culture acknowledged the role of the Strategy in the motivation

behind a EUR5,000,000 (or 8%) increase in funding for the arts [I.iii] of a total of EUR68,000,000 to the Arts Council in 2018, nearly half of the culture budget in that year. The Strategy also informed a public government commitment to double arts funding by 2025 [I.ii].

CNW is strategically committed to making its research and researchers available to the city through Manchester's UNESCO *City of Literature* initiatives, and to ensuing debates around policy and cultural understanding, to enrich the cultural experience of Manchester's public, as well as forging international connections with other Creative Cities. CNW researchers developed, and were central contributors to, the steering group that successfully led Manchester's UNESCO bid (designated 2017), and researchers continue to act as advisors in the development of City of Literature initiatives, co-designing *International Mother Language Day* activities since 2018 and the Libraries Festival (to commence in 2021) as well as the establishment of city-wide networks for literary organisations and freelancers. As Manchester City of Literature's Executive Director testifies, CNW's "decision to strategically rethink how a university research centre could contribute to the city through partnerships has had a terrific impact on the way in which literature is perceived in the city." [J] CNW is central to the networking of the city's many literature events and its raising of funds to appoint three staff to the new City of Literature team. The Executive Director credits CNW's commitment to public dissemination as central to the successful bid to UNESCO. The team also draws on CNW creative work in their projects and engagement with international networks, including in their presentation to the *Quebec Book Festival* and *World Poetry Day 2020* [J].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. Web links for Winterson's impact (see PDF submitted as corroborating evidence): i) Winterson's Dimpleby Lecture on the *Guardian* YouTube channel; ii) Responses to the Dimpleby Lecture on *Mumsnet* (6 June 2018); iii) Reporting in the *Daily Mail* (30 May 2019); iv) Reporting in *The Guardian* (30 September 2020).
- B. [text removed for publication]
- C. Web links for Shamsie's impact (see PDF submitted as corroborating evidence): i) Shamsie's Orwell Lecture on YouTube and printed in *The Guardian* (17 November 2018); ii) BBC Radio 4 *Today* listening figures reported in *The Guardian* (7 February 2019); iii) Sajid Javid on Twitter (8 June 2018); iv) Shamsie writing in *The Guardian* (4 July 2020); v) Media coverage of Shamsie's discussion with Javid in *The Independent* and *The Sun* (2018); vi) Index on Censorship (19 September 2019); vii) Open letter in *London Review of Books* (23 September 2019).
- D. Testimonial from Co-Director of Manchester Literature Festival (25 May 2020).
- E. BBC adaptation of [5], including comments from director: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2017/the-north-water>
- F. Response to 'Home Again' on Twitter [text removed for publication]
- G. Impact of work with schools: i) University of Manchester engagement data – Schools Poetry Competition project; ii) Testimonial from teacher at school participating in the project (provided 2020); iii) Testimonial from teacher involved in the launch of the project (22 June 2020); iv) National Trust evaluation of Underdown's schools engagement work with Quarry Bank.
- H. Response to Gavin's workshops on Twitter [text removed for publication]
- I. Irish Arts Council: i) *Making Great Art Work: Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland* (Arts Council Strategy 2016-2025): <http://www.arts council.ie/arts-council-strategy/>; ii) Testimonial from Irish Arts Council Chair, 2014-2018 (21 August 2020); iii) Dáil Éireann Arts Council Funding Debate (26 September 2017).
- J. Testimonial from Executive Director, Manchester UNESCO City of Literature (21 August 2020).