Institution: University of Warwick	
Unit of Assessment: D26 – Modern Languages and Linguistics	
Title of case study: Representing Islam: Challenging Preconceptions, Strengthening Empathy, Empowering Voices	
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2009-2019	
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:	

Name(s): James Hodkinson	**Role(s) (e.g. job title):** Associate Professor (Reader) in German	**Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:** September 2006 - present

Period when the claimed impact occurred: September 2015 – June 2020	
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N	

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Drawing on his research into representations of Islam in German history and culture, Hodkinson's project has benefitted both Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the UK, and internationally. His work has used exhibitions, public talks, workshops and teaching programmes to change public thinking and educational practice, challenge Western stereotypes of Muslims in society and the media, and change preconceptions on cultural difference. The project has created new spaces for cultural exchange within diverse urban communities. Innovative 'encounter' events and collaborative arts programmes have also driven community engagement with the arts and facilitated new debate in the UK Midlands, while online arts events during the COVID-19 pandemic extended these benefits globally. These activities have created space for Muslim participants to explore their identity and inspired provocative new artworks from Muslim artists.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Hodkinson's research reflects critically on the contrasting ways in which Muslims, and the power relationships between Islam and the West, have been represented in a range of canonical and less well-known cultural sources from the German-speaking world during the period 1750-1918, including literature, academic scholarship, travel writing, journalism, and political documents. His key findings are that:

1. German culture of the period reflects diverse and shifting representational practices whereby Islam and Muslims were not only presented as the *others* of Christian European culture but were also depicted in terms of their relative cultural and religious *similarities*. Those similarities, however, functioned in an ambivalent way. Whilst many texts and images envisioned political kinships between German-speaking Europe and the Islamic world in a way that served Germany's colonial aspirations during the age of Empire (1871-1918), other sources illuminated religious/doctrinal affinities in a bid to conceive a less oppositional and antagonistic relationship with the Muslim world (3.1; 3.2; 3.4; 3.5);

2. A range of artistic and intellectual traditions throughout the period sought to reimagine the cultural, historical and religious relationships between Islam and Europe. Literary texts in particular staged fictional encounters between reworked historical and imaginary figures. These encounters did not merely constitute representations of intercultural dialogue, but also experiences of imagined cross-cultural immersion, whereby individuals could cross into and share in the world-view, experiences and values of the other. This research shows the arts to facilitate encounters, transform relationships and promote empathy across ostensible cultural divides (3.3; 3.2; 3.6);

3. Johan Wolfgang Goethe's poetry collection the *West-Eastern Divan* (1819), in particular, exemplifies the complexities and contemporary relevance of Germany's unique relationship to Islam. Written in an age before the German Empire, the collection can be read both as a work of 'orientalism' which exoticizes and 'others' Islam, but also as a modern literary experiment in cultural re-positioning and devolving cultural agency. The

collection's poetic voice not only enacts an imagined, trans-historical dialogue with 14th century Islamic poet Hafez of Shiraz around shared beliefs and experiences, but also 'empathizes' with Islam by imagining itself as Muslim. The poetry thus models ways in which artists can promote cross-cultural empathy, though also acknowledges the limitations of this practice and highlights the dangers of appropriating, re-colonizing and silencing the voices of that other culture. These messages are also reflected, as Hodkinson's research shows, in ongoing contemporary artistic responses to Goethe's collection, such as the Hafez-Goethe Monument (3.3; 3.6).

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

Hodkinson's publications include articles in peer-reviewed journals and chapters in edited volumes, one of which he co-edited:

1. **Hodkinson, James R.** (2012) *Romantic cosmopolitanism? On the tensions and topicalities of an ideal.* In: Dieters, Franz-Josef and Fliethmann, Axel and Lang, Birgit and Lewis, Alison and Weller, Christiane, (eds.) LIMBUS: Australisches Jahrbuch für germanistische Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft. Germany: Rombach Druck- und Verlagshaus, pp. 69-90. ISBN: 9783793097044
2. **Hodkinson, James R.** (2012) *Der Islam im Dichten und Denken der deutschen Romantik: zwischen Kosmopolitismus und Orientalismus.* In: Hofmann, Michael and von Stosch, Klaus, (eds.) Islam in der deutschen und türkischen Literatur. Beiträge zur Komparativen Theologie (Bd.4). Paderborn: Schöningh, pp. 61-80. ISBN: 9783506771339
3. **Hodkinson, James R.** (2020) *Transnationalizing faith: re-imagining Islam in German culture.* In: Braun, Rebecca and Schofield, Benedict, (eds.) Transnational German Studies. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, pp. 193-212. ISBN: 9781789621419
4. **Hodkinson, James R.**, Walker, John, Mazumdar, Shaswati and Feichtinger, Johannes, eds. (2013) *Deploying Orientalism in history and culture: from Germany to Central and Eastern Europe.* Rochester and NY: Camden House. ISBN: 9781571138828
5. **Hodkinson, James R.** (2013) *Impersonating an ideal? Orientalism and Cosmopolitanism in political, academic and popular literary discourses of fin-de-siècle Germany.* Comparative Critical Studies, 10(2). pp. 283-302. doi:10.3366/ccs.2013.0092
6. **Hodkinson, James R.** (2020) *Towards a Socially Engaged Academy: Islam in German History and its Relevance for Non-academic Publics.* In: **Hodkinson, James R.** and Schofield, Benedict, (eds.) German in the World: The Transnational and global Contexts of German Studies. Rochester & NY: Camden House, pp.194-218. ISBN: 9781640140332

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

Excessive negative media attention in the aftermath of 9/11 has stereotyped Islam in terms of its 'otherness' and presented it as oppositional to Western culture and values. This climate has made many Muslim communities in Europe the objects of hostility and suspicion, leaving them feeling increasingly discriminated against, excluding them from many of the cultural and media discourses in which they are portrayed, and stifling their cultural agency: 'As a Muslim, I am afraid of the stereotypes that I might be associated with as I am my own person and should not be blamed for the actions of others' (5.1).

Hodkinson's research has crucially intervened in these cycles of power and representation by uncovering non-binary models of Muslim/ Non-Muslim encounter and traditions of intercultural dialogue and empathy. Subsequent collaborations with interfaith groups, schoolchildren, teachers, regional community groups and Muslim artists have ensued. Public talks, exhibitions, and school lessons have enriched public knowledge and critical thinking on the position and representation of Islam in contemporary culture, while creative writing competitions and urban art installations have driven the visibility of established and emerging Muslim artists and created new contexts within which cross-community encounters and debate have occurred. These new, open and accessible spaces for exchange are not provided in many schools, public institutions or increasingly segregated social environments. Hodkinson's work has measurably improved cross-

community communication, trust and relationships, especially in the culturally diverse UK Midlands with its sizeable Muslim community, though also, increasingly, in international contexts.

Following Islam through German History (2015 - 2017): exhibition and public talk programme

Hodkinson's *Following Islam through German History* programme used public talks alongside an exhibition to extend knowledge and enrich debate on Islam amongst diverse audiences. Responses to **public talks** demonstrated significant shifts in audience thinking around themes of power, representation and bias with regard to Muslims in European history and contemporary media. The programme enabled Hodkinson to present his research to 119 participants in 4 interfaith and community centres across the UK. 90% of participants commented that they had gained new knowledge about the relationship between the West and Islam, changing their view on the current representation of Islam within the media; 'you introduced me to a subject I had not considered before' (5.2).

The **exhibition** presented a selection of visual and textual sources from Hodkinson's research that explored issues of representation, otherness and similarity. It toured schools, universities, religious centres and interfaith societies in diverse areas of the UK, and also in Dublin and in Stockholm. It was seen by in excess of 3,500 visitors, encompassing a wide variety of socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. The exhibition programme offered 'a timely reminder that contact between the German-speaking world and the Muslim world didn't start with 20th century mass migration' (5.3, Visitor book comments). In doing so, it challenged the perception of Islam as separate from and oppositional to the Western world, with visitors commenting that they had not hitherto understood this 'link between Germany and Islam' (5.3, Visitor book comments). For non-Muslim participants, engaging with the exhibition programme increased their critical awareness of Islamophobia and insight into cultural similarities between Islam and the Christian West. Participants commented that the exhibition had 'opened my eyes to prejudice against Islam in Western culture', 'made me realise that discrimination is still very much present in ours [UK] and Germany's culture' and that 'my view on other cultures has changed' (5.3, St Catherine's Exhibition Feedback).

The *Two Chairs Exchange* (2016 - 2018): workshops, school lessons, community events and creative writing competition

The *Two Chairs* phase of Hodkinson's project drew on his research into the Hafez-Goethe Monument in Weimar, Germany, which responds to the ideas of dialogue, difference and empathy in Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan* through a public monument of two giant stone chairs. Working with secondary school teachers, Hodkinson created a programme of lessons around the ideas reflected in the two chairs, which enriched and complemented the delivery of Modern Language and Religious Studies teaching. These lessons were co-delivered by Hodkinson and teaching staff on university campus, in schools and were also placed online for use by teachers nationally, where they have attracted 9,029 views and 7,951 individual downloads between December 2016 and 31 August 2019 (5.4). Teaching staff commented that the lessons and the two chairs approach became a 'powerful thinking tool […] which has been used to stimulate students not just in Religious Studies, but across the curriculum' (5.5, p.3), and that lessons based on the material were evaluated as 'Outstanding' during school inspections (5.5, p.8). Teaching staff also noted increased participation from Muslim and BAME students within the programme, commenting that 'it was particularly noticeable that Muslim and other ethnic minority boys were engaged and interested in the presentation, as traditionally we have found it harder to get these boys motivated for whole-school events' (5.5, p.9).

The school project also stimulated extra-curricular activity in the arts at regional and national level: the PULSE youth drama group from Surrey wrote a play entitled *Two Chairs*, which offered a non-binary exploration of cultural identity, treated themes of social alienation and conflict resolution, and was performed as a sell-out show at the Edinburgh Fringe festival 2017 to approximately 300 visitors (5.5, p.5-7). Hodkinson launched an associated creative writing

competition, which stimulated original writing and critical thinking about contemporary cross-cultural issues. The competition received 130 entries from across the UK, demonstrating the value of art in promoting less exclusionary understandings of cross-cultural relationships. One competition entrant spoke of the competition as a 'character-forming experience' through which her 'awareness of others' stories has been massively heightened, resulting in increased empathy in new ways I couldn't imagine' (5.6). One of the judges commented on how the entries had provided the opportunity for her, as a 'visibly Muslim writer', and other people across the UK to engage in dialogues about difference and otherness: 'The competition felt like a starting point, a giving of permission, to interrogate our positioning and approach perceived differences with curiosity and creative dialogue' (5.6).

Hodkinson also ran 2 community-focussed events. The first, in collaboration with the *Woking People of Faith Interfaith* group, used Hodkinson's Two Chairs approach to facilitate an encounter event between group members and members of the Syrian refugee community in Woking, Surrey, attended by over 50 people. The second event, in collaboration with the Coventry United Nations Association, used fixed concrete chairs in the city centre (see photo) to encourage local residents to engage with people within their local community that they would normally walk past. Participants in the event sat across from a stranger in silence for two minutes, before engaging in a guided conversation that encouraged them to consider their own preconceptions about difference and to build connections across cultural lines: 'The two chairs challenge [...] helps people understand each other. It can also help two people with completely different backgrounds to like and have empathy for each other' (5.7).

Reimagining the Opposition and *Congregate*: The Art of Empathy (2017 – 2020)

This 2-year phase was co-produced with local artists and practitioners in response to Hodkinson's research. British artist Mohammed Ali produced a video installation of testimony from persecuted Muslims around the globe, while British-Iranian painter Mohsen Keiany, who was exploring the prevalence of violent extremism in contemporary culture, produced a new painting that responded to chairs of the Hafez-Goethe Monument. These works were exhibited at an interfaith centre at Coventry Cathedral and in an urban multi-story car park in the centre of Birmingham, as part of intimate and larger scale encounter events (respectively). Both events facilitated open community dialogues about cultural difference and empathy. Approximately 250 people attended, and participants testified to the 'absolutely amazing' and 'beautiful' experience of using art to 'deconstruct the pre-existing constructions that we do have' (5.8) that the events provided; 'I didn't realise what happens…when we don't have empathy, it's devastating. And I didn't realise that until I saw the visual art here on the wall, until I read the quotes [Goethe], until I looked at the art' (5.8).

Reimagining the Opposition has had a profound impact on the artists and practitioners involved in the programme. Hodkinson's commitment to 'co-production' as a foundation of the project directly impacted on the community leaders and artists he was working with. Keiany testified to the personal impetus the project gave him to speak to these issues through his art and offer diverse audiences 'the chance to see how different forms of art can work together along with philosophy to reflect and to bring sympathy, peace and reconciliation' (5.8). Ali commented on Hodkinson's work in building lasting, non-exploitative relationships, grounded in empathy, between researcher, artist and communities, and also on how this 'genuinely collaborative' project had resonated with non-academic participants, helping to 'break things down in a form that the community really could engage with' (5.8). Hodkinson's impact work has thus not only built trust within communities but also re-built trust and a renewed willingness amongst local communities to engage with researchers and institutions on fraught topics.

Across these events in schools, religious centres and urban spaces, Hodkinson's work has further shown how the historical arts can be used to intervene in current trends of cultural misrepresentation and exclusion. Audience members from Hodkinson's *Following Islam* exhibition

commented that 'Islam is represented negatively in the UK and German media because the past events have made us fear them. We emphasise the differences' (5.3, St Catherine's Exhibition Questionnaires). The project has also shown how contemporary arts practice can be refocussed to create both spaces for such dialogues on difference and otherness and the conditions and relationships necessary for cross-community empathy to emerge. Hodkinson's work has helped engender inclusive, cross-community, interfaith dialogues, which contributed to growing sense of cultural empowerment amongst Muslim participants specifically, and catalysed transformative shifts in participants' thinking generally: 'the main change for me was being aware of the other person's differences…at the start but becoming less fixated on that as the time went on. I felt more in the presence of another human, rather than an Other' (5.7).

Hodkinson and Ali's collaboration has endured and, building on *Reimagining the Opposition,* they created *Congregate.* This was a series of immersive, multi-media livestreams via social media, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and particularly the shutting down of Friday prayers in mosques and the collapse of the live arts scene. Between March and August 2020, 786 to 2,100 weekly viewers watched these livestreams on Facebook (5.9), which Hodkinson modelled on his research-based, collaborative approach to facilitating cross-cultural encounters, overcoming cultural differences and fostering empathy between communities. The project extended the reach of this work, with viewers from the USA, UK and Africa engaging (5.9). The artistic collaboration was likewise international, with Muslim and non-Muslim artists from around the world taking part. Ali created live digital paintings, while Australian Muslim poet Nour Abouzeid, British-Yemeni poet Amina Atiq and American-Moroccan hip-hop artist Essam Muhammad read from their work. *Congregate* covered topics as diverse as social isolation, the Black Lives Matter movement, language, media and scapegoating, and also engaged Muslim guest speakers from the medical sector to challenge narratives blaming Muslim communities as the principal drivers of COVID-19 transmissions.

Ali testified that *Congregate* marked a 'new and innovative approach to online art' which 'has continued to facilitate encounters between diverse communities, nationally, during the pandemic, and even extended our collaborations and audiences globally' (5.9). Facebook Live discussion threads allowed viewers from around the world to interact with discussants and with each other in real time. In the 'Black Lives Matter' special episode, one participant spoke of the need 'to up-skill […] emotionally, learning empathy and patience' and another described events such as *Congregate* as reflecting and driving a *Zeitgeist* for social change on matters of race: 'This is the tipping point for change and we need to use these emotions to drive the change' (5.9). This showed how the live stream continued to create encounters and foster empathy between diverse communities during a period of global lockdowns. Congregate thus marked both an ongoing and impactful application of Hodkinson's research to intercultural dialogue and relations and continued to provide platforms for Muslim artists to explore their own cultural heritage, whilst simultaneously responding to the experiences of diverse communities – now on a global scale.

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

1. Student Interfaith Responses
2. Interfaith Groups Feedback
3. Following Islam Through German History Exhibition Feedback (Visitor book, Feedback and Questionnaires from St Catherine's School)
4. Webpage Views and Downloads
5. Two Chairs Schools Resources- Teacher Feedback (statements from St Catherine's School, Bishop of llandaff CiW High School and John Hampden Grammar School; St Catherine's Speech Day programme)
6. Two Chairs Writing Competition Feedback (statements from an entrant and a judge)
7. Two Chairs Exchange Event Feedback
8. Art of Empathy Feedback (Car park event Voxpops, statements from artist)
9. Congregate Responses (viewing figures, viewer comments and locations, statement from artist)