

Institution: Swansea University		
Unit of Assessment: 27		
Title of case study: <i>'Making Ethnic Minority Women Visible: Research on memory, commemoration and recuperation raises awareness of minority ethnic women in Wales via documentaries and public debate'</i>		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2019		
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:
Jasmine Donahaye	Professor of Creative Writing	October 2010 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact <p>Under-represented communities in Wales and the UK benefitted from Donahaye's Creative Writing work on memory, commemoration and recuperation. Her recovery of lost Welsh-Jewish women's history and literature changed community perceptions, deepened public awareness of the multi-cultural history of Wales and exposed the invisibility of Welsh women, particularly women from ethnic minorities. Her work provided content for production companies, enabling them to secure substantial budgets for new broadcasts in Welsh and English. The public debates on memorialisation and suppression initiated by Donahaye led to the public recognition and memorialisation of BAME women, and contributed directly to the commission of the first statue of a historical woman in Wales.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>Donahaye's Creative Writing research has focused on overlooked or suppressed perspectives and narratives, and explored the ways in which public recognition sidelines minority experience and minority cultural contributions. Her creative work of recuperating invisible experience builds on her literary and cultural research since 2010, which laid the foundations of the field of Welsh Jewish Studies.</p> <p>Donahaye's work on memory, memorialisation and recuperation led to three life-writing outputs in 2015 – a memoir; an essay on life-writing, and a popular biography – and a new edition of a 1931 novel by minority writer Lily Tobias.</p> <p>Her award-winning memoir, <i>Losing Israel</i> [R1], dealt with the lost history of place, investigating suppressed communal and family narrative, and exploring Welsh and Jewish identity. In the <i>Times Literary Supplement</i>, Ahdaf Soueif described it as '<i>an interrogation of accountability</i>' [29/01/2016], while Michael Kerr characterised it in the <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> as '<i>a brave book, unflinchingly honest, and a beautiful one</i>' [29/08/2015]. As a result of her work on life writing, an essay was commissioned on dominant and suppressed narrative, 'Ideology and Story in Life-writing' [R2], which explores what gets omitted from biography and autobiography, and why.</p> <p>This broad research interest in memory, suppressed narrative and invisible life-stories led Donahaye to the case of Lily Tobias (1887-1984), a once-prominent Welsh-Jewish writer and peace campaigner in the 1920s and 30s, who was subsequently forgotten. Tobias's work is unique in its vivid portrayal of British Mandate Palestine and Jewish experience in the UK, while her first novel examines British antisemitism, and the spectrum of 1930s British Jewish political attitudes.</p>		

As growing fields in the late 1990s, the study of British Jewish literature and Welsh writing in English had been **projects of recovery**, respectively, of ethnic and national minority culture that had been rendered invisible in the dominant English critical tradition and canon-formation. But despite Tobias's significance in Welsh and UK Jewish political and literary circles into the 1930s, she was invisible to these recovery projects: British Jewish studies neglected the national context of Wales, and Welsh writing in English neglected the contribution of ethnic minorities, while both foregrounded work by men to the detriment of women. **Donahaye's publications challenged the triple erasure of Tobias by virtue of nation, ethnicity and gender.**

Donahaye's research, including extensive oral history collection from family members, and archival and textual research in Wales, England and Israel, led to **a critically acclaimed popular biography** of this forgotten minority woman writer [R3], thus making Tobias's life story accessible and available to the general population, including the national and ethnic minority communities to which she had contributed. The book inaugurated Honno Welsh Women's Press's popular biography series and was described in Welsh cultural journal *Planet*, as **'an essential work within the fields of Welsh writing in English and Jewish cultural studies'** which **'critiques the still-exclusionary practices of the canon-makers who clearly find people like Tobias who intersect different identities hard to comprehend'**. A second output, the introduction to Tobias's republished novel, *My Mother's House* [R4], out of print since the 1930s, followed Donahaye's 2004 introduction to Tobias's republished novel *Eunice Fleet*. These were the first titles by a **minority writer** in the celebrated *Welsh Women's Classics* series, which mirrors the Virago Classics series in its intent and cultural impact. The biography, and the introduction to the new edition of Tobias's novel, *My Mother's House* [R4], explored **how and why, despite inaugurating a Welsh Jewish literary tradition, Tobias had been omitted from both the canons of Welsh writing in English and British Jewish literature.**

3. References to the research

The underpinning research was supported by public funding, commissioned by publicly-funded publishers, and has received critical acclaim in the form of reviews and prestigious awards.

[R1] Donahaye, J. (2015). *Losing Israel*. Seren.

- Winner, Open University Creative Non-fiction Wales Book of the Year 2016.
- Winner, Best Travel Book, *New Welsh Review* 2016.
- *Sunday Telegraph* best travel books of 2015.
- Literature Wales Bursary, 2008 [GBP5,000].

[R2] Donahaye, J. (2015). 'Ideology and Story in Life-writing'. *New Welsh Reader*, 108, pp. 6–9.

- Commissioned essay.

[R3] Donahaye, J. (2015). *The Greatest Need: The creative life and troubled times of Lily Tobias, a Welsh Jew in Palestine*. Honno.

- Commissioned biography.
- Welsh Books Council Author Advance Grant, 2014 [GBP5,000].
- Critical acclaim: 'It is striking how invisible this exceptional woman was, and would still remain but for the determination of Donahaye and [...] Honno Press' (*The Jewish Chronicle*, 2015); 'an essential work within the fields of Welsh writing in English and Jewish cultural studies' (*Planet*).

[R4] Donahaye, J. (2015). Introduction and ed., Lily Tobias, *My Mother's House* [1931]. Honno Classics.

4. Details of the impact

Community impacts

Donahaye's publications triggered **new documentary broadcasts by the Welsh media** which in turn **changed perceptions in Welsh communities**. S4C commissioned a television documentary on Tobias, *O Ystalyfera i Israel* ('From Ystalyfera to Israel'), based on Donahaye's research. According to the producer the biography was important for her and for her independent company, Unigryw: *'[It] enabled us to make a documentary on Lily Tobias by first bringing her to our attention and then by providing the research and background needed to ensure a commission and programme funding from S4C. The documentary ... drew heavily on Jasmine's research and writing'* [C1]. The **programme budget was GBP24,000-GBP36,000** and audience reach, through more than seven screenings between 2017 and 2019, was approximately 16,000 [C1]. The response was particularly strong in the economically deprived area of the Swansea Valley, and among women: one resident remarked that it was *'fascinating [to learn] about the Jewish author from Ystalyfera'*, while two women from the Swansea Valley reported that *'they could hardly believe that they hadn't heard about [Tobias]'* [C1].

The documentary, the popular biography, and an article about Tobias by Donahaye in the *Western Mail's* Welsh History series **widened public awareness of Welsh multiculturalism**, and both the **Welsh Jewish and wider UK Jewish community also benefited from new communal knowledge and pride**. One reader tweeted: *'fantastic biography of author Lily Tobias. Must read if interested in Welsh &/or Jewish nationalism'*. Another reader said: *'I hadn't appreciated how Welsh she was, and how interestingly her Welsh experiences/Zionist views intertwine'* [C2]. One Jewish community organiser observed that this *'valuable work in both Welsh and English has widened public awareness of the history of Jewish settlement in Wales and their civic contributions, benefitting people in Wales as well as Jews all around the UK'* [C2]. After the documentary was first broadcast in 2017, members of the Jewish community approached Donahaye at a Cardiff Hannuka event and remarked: *'now everyone knows about Lily Tobias'* and *'you've made her famous'*, indicating the significance of this new information for the community both in terms of deepened self-knowledge and wider representation. The **Jewish community archivist** remarked that Donahaye's research had informed her for the first time about an important individual who had fallen from view, and that it underscored the urgency of capturing similar data before it was lost. [C1]. The biography and documentary thus helped strengthen the **case for securing the community's vulnerable oral and material heritage**.

The biography also **raised the profile of the publisher**, Honno (the longest-standing women's press in the UK), with a review in the leading UK Jewish paper, the *Jewish Chronicle*, read by approximately 67% of the Jewish population. The reviewer remarked: *'It is striking how invisible this exceptional woman was, and would still remain but for the determination of Donahaye and [...] Honno Press'* [C3].

Statues, public debate and BBC R4 documentary

Following publication of her research on Tobias, Donahaye used her work on memory and recuperation to underpin discussions of the evidence of the erasure of women in Welsh culture. At three book launches and public talks, and on social media she initiated public discussion of how the contribution of women, particularly ethnic minority women such as Tobias, gets overlooked [C4].

Citing public sculpture as an example of the suppression of women's voices and contributions, on June 16th 2015, via social media, she **challenged members of the public to identify any publicly sited statues of historical women in Wales**, eliciting engagements from Welsh writers, commentators and artists (@mikeparkerwales *'I'm struggling'*; @diferionDFE *'I can't really think of any'*; @KeithMorrisAber *'that seems to be a no, then'*) [C5].

In response to the revelation that there was not a single statue in Wales of a historical woman, digital and broadcast media platforms across Wales in both languages engaged with Donahaye's research, and **invited her to discuss the invisibility of women such as Tobias on political,**

current affairs and news programmes, in which, as noted by BBC Online and the Institute of Welsh Affairs, she called *'for debate on lack of statues of notable women'* [C6]. The **combined audience reach across BBC Radio Wales, BBC Radio Cymru, S4C, and BBC One Wales was nearly 300,000** [C7]. Two years later, reporting that developers' money had been allocated to commission a statue of a woman in Cardiff, **the BBC attributed this to the impact of Donahaye's statue awareness campaign**, noting that *'in 2015 ... Donahaye called for a national debate on why women were not represented as widely as men in Wales'* [C8]. Recalling Donahaye's campaign, BBC Radio Wales 'Sunday Supplement' presenter Vaughan Roderick, who had interviewed Donahaye on statues in 2015, remarked on Twitter: ***'Sometimes, we change something. Large oaks from little acorns grow. I'm glad we started the conversation'*** [C8]. Reflecting on the impact of Donahaye's public engagement, author Mike Parker recalled: 'I was writing at the time a book that explored amongst other things Welsh masculinity, and this one simple question illuminated for me so many truths about gender, sex and sexuality, about Wales, but also about art, civic identity and the values and self-expression of different eras. It caught a moment, and created many more' [C5]. Subsequently the organisation Monumental Welsh Women, which was set up in 2016 *'to do something about the fact that there is not one single statue in the whole of Wales of a "real" Welsh woman'*, secured GBP100,000 Welsh Government funding, and launched the '100 Welsh Women' project at the National Eisteddfod in 2018, working with the BBC to promote a public vote on a shortlist of five women. The artist Eve Shepherd received the commission to create a statue [costed at more than GBP170,000] of Betty Campbell, the first woman, and the first ethnic minority woman, to be memorialised in Wales [C9]. The statue is scheduled to be unveiled in 2021.

Donahaye's recuperative research on Tobias and associated campaign thus contributed directly to public discussion taking concrete form. As a Jewish community organiser remarked: *'Now what we need is a statue of Lily Tobias in Ystalyfera, as well as a more permanent centre in Wales to capture and preserve Jewish heritage before it is too late'* [C2]. A radio producer, familiar with the statues campaign, and with Donahaye's biography of Tobias and the documentary, **commissioned her to write and present a BBC Radio 4 documentary, entitled *Statue No. 1***, on the particular circumstances of the commemoration and invisibility of Welsh women. The programme, allocated an GBP8,350 budget, was broadcast on the 9th and 11th of September 2019. It reached an audience of some 1,100,000 and is now on BBC Sounds. According to the producer, ***'initial awareness of the statues issue in Wales' both for her and for BBC editors came from Donahaye's work***, and as a result of this new knowledge her editor also subsequently commissioned a programme on the Hidden Heroines campaign for BBC One Wales [C10].

Statue No. 1 and BAME representation

Through her work on Welsh Jewish women, her statues campaign, and the resulting Radio 4 documentary, Donahaye widened awareness of multi-cultural Welsh history within Wales and across the UK. One contributor to *Statue No. 1*, archivist Sara Huws, observed: *'The programme not only enabled us to add nuance and depth to national discussions around statues, monuments and the question of who gets remembered – it also gave us a chance to ... really gain an understanding of the impact they made on their communities – especially the case with Betty Campbell and her family.'* Huws's participation led to a collaborative project between Women's Archive Wales and Cardiff University Special Collections and Archives, *'to create a women's history walking tour of the area, so that others can retrace the steps we took while making the programme, and uncover the women's histories that surround us here in Cardiff'* [C10]. The documentary also had a direct impact on Wales's BAME community, providing a **platform for Butetown residents to reflect on the effect of Betty Campbell, 'the jewel in the Butetown crown'**, as one resident described her, being selected as the first woman in Wales to be memorialised. *'It would just be amazing to see a statue of somebody that we actually know, and ... who did so much good'*, another resident remarked [C10]. The Radio 4 commissioning editor was herself affected by the programme, reporting: *'I was surprised that a tear sprang to my eye at the end when [Donahaye] said that perhaps [in future] a boy would text "let's meet by the Betty Campbell statue"'* [C10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [C1] S4C documentary producer's testimony and audience responses
- [C2] Reader responses to R3 and R4
- [C3] Impact on the publisher's profile: Jewish Chronicle review and publisher testimony
- [C4] Event dates, locations, audience figures and social media responses
- [C5] Twitter debate on women statues: responses of artists, writers and commentators.
- [C6] Broadcast media call for debate: programme details and responses
- [C7] Broadcast media audience reach
- [C8] BBC reporting on funding for first statue, and Vaughan Roderick testimony
- [C9] Organisational information: Monumental Welsh women and statue commission
- [C10] BBC Radio 4 documentary evidence: producer's and participants' testimony, programme details