

<b>Institution:</b> University of Stirling		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 27. English Language and Literature		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Expanding representation of Black and Asian poets within cultural and educational institutions		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2006 - Present		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Gemma Robinson	Senior Lecturer in English Studies	2006 - Present
Vahni Capildeo	Research Associate	12/2015 - 04/2016
Kayo Chingonyi	Research Associate	05/2016 - 07/2016
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1 August 2013 - December 31 <sup>st</sup> 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>The creative practice of Black and Asian poets is underrepresented in cultural and educational institutions. University of Stirling research has played a key role in expanding representation of Black and Asian creative practitioners. The impact includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Diversifying delivery of school curriculum through teacher and student engagement with new resources for the study of poetry and place by Black and Asian writers, reaching over 5000 students and at least 250 schools across the UK and India.</li> <li>2. Diversifying and enriching the British Library sound archives and the curatorial practice of the British Library's Windrush exhibitions on site and online (157,000 visitors, 2018).</li> <li>3. The composition and production of a new opera, <i>The Knife of Dawn</i> (Roundhouse 2016), about Martin Carter (a Guyanese poet and political activist) by Hannah Kendall, and a second production of <i>The Knife of Dawn</i> at the Royal Opera House (2020).</li> <li>4. Creating and diversifying audiences for new opera in the UK through four positive-action performances at the Roundhouse and Royal Opera House (2016 and 2020; total international radio, online, and live audience of approximately 50,000) and associated school activities.</li> </ol>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>The research focuses on poetry by Black and Asian writers and demonstrates how place, race, identity, and belonging are represented and questioned in poetic practice. The core work was funded by the AHRC through three projects: <i>Devolving Diasporas</i> (2007-10) (G1); <i>The Out of Bounds Poetry Project</i> (2015-16) (G4); and <i>Poet of the Americas: Martin Carter and Caribbean Literary Culture</i> (2011) (G2). Gemma Robinson was PI on one project; two were collaborative with James Procter (PI Newcastle), Robinson (CI Stirling), Jackie Kay (CI Newcastle), Vahni Capildeo (RA Stirling), Kayo Chingonyi (RA Stirling). The research encompasses transnational postcolonial literary histories (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5); editorial work on contemporary poetics (R2), theoretical analysis of poetic belonging (R1, R4, R5), and co-co-production of educational resources related to poetry, place and belonging (R6, G3). In co-authored work, Procter and Robinson's empirical and theoretical research on postcolonial audiences (R3) informs their co-created activities, which bring poetry and creative practice to new audiences in schools and non-metropolitan spaces (R6).</p> <p>The research underpinning the impact falls into two principal areas:</p>		
<b>Poetry of place in the UK</b>		
<p>This research brings together and theorises poetry of place by Black and Asian authors working in Britain, including award-winning poets, Vahni Capildeo, Kayo Chingonyi, Jackie Kay, and John Agard. The <i>Out of Bounds</i> anthology (R2, sales to Dec 2020: c. 2000 copies) is not only the 'most comprehensive collection of poetry to date by black British and Asian writers' (Kwame Dawes), it also presents an argument for mapping this body of poetry across the whole of Britain, by organising poems in North-South order of the locations with which they are associated, from Shetland to the Isle of Wight. The result is an A-Z of Britain that challenges readers to think about the meaning of belonging through diverse, decolonising literary geographies. Robinson's complementary work on postcoloniality (R3, R5) stresses the vexed and ambivalent identification and disidentification with Britishness in relation to Caribbean and Black British writing, and the</p>		

long literary history that this must entail. An innovative practice-based website of text and performance, as well as a poetry Activity Pack co-created by Capildeo, Chingonyi, Procter and Robinson for secondary schools accompanies *The Out of Bounds Poetry Project* (R6, G4).

### Caribbean poetry in a global setting

Robinson is a leading authority on Guyanese poet, Martin Carter. Her work has championed textual and oral history methods to analyse poetry rooted in the anticolonial politics and poetics of Guyanese society. Guyana's *Stabroek News* commissioned her to write their annual Carter memorial article from 2006-present. Robinson's work on Caribbean writing and its place within a global setting (R1, R3, R5, G2) is literary historical. It contextualises previously unpublished or unavailable work for a wider audience (R4), demonstrating the importance of particular legacies of enslavement and colonialism in Guyanese creative practice (such as Carter's poetic interest in genealogy (R1)). Robinson shows how Carter's politics, literary geographies and relationships operate within transnational networks of writers, readers, and cultural activists (R1, R4).

### 3. References to the research

- R1.** Robinson, G, "From the plantation earth": Subjects of Slavery and the Work of Martin Carter', *Moving Worlds*, 7.2 (2007), 17-30. <http://www.movingworlds.net/volumes/7/freedom-and-culture/>
- R2.** Kay, J, Procter, J., Robinson, G., *Out of Bounds: British Black and Asian Poets* (Tarsset: Bloodaxe, 2012).
- R3.** Benwell, B., Procter, J and Robinson, G. (eds) *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception* (London: Routledge, 2012).
- R4.** Robinson, G (2013). 'Textual Communities in Guyana: a "nearly go so" literary history', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 48.1 (March), 77-96. DOI: [10.1177%2F0021989412471137](https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0021989412471137)
- R5.** Robinson, G. 'Postcolonial Poetry of Great Britain', in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry*, ed. by Jahan Ramazani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). DOI: [10.1017/9781316111338.010](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316111338.010)
- R6.** (2016-2020) *Out of Bounds Poetry Project* website: <https://outofbounds.digital/>. Includes 21 film-poems edited as pathways on Water, Borderlands, Belonging, Voices. Also includes *Activity Pack: Poetry, Place & Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2018, 44pp plus poster, ISBN 978-0-9551062-3-1). Research- and practice-based Activity Pack, co-created by V Capildeo, K Chingonyi, J Procter and G Robinson in conjunction with participating schools.
- Grants**
- G1.** Benwell, B (CI), Procter, J (PI), Robinson, G (CI) (2007-10) 'Devolving Diasporas: Migration and Reception in Central Scotland, 1980 - present'. AHRC Grant AH/E508812/1 (GBP 269,399).
- G2.** Robinson, G (PI) (2011) 'Poet of the Americas: Martin Carter and Caribbean Literary Culture'. AHRC Grant AH/H00680X/1 (GBP 30,608).
- G3.** Robinson, G (PI) (2013) 'Black British Poetry in Performance'. Competitive application to the British Library Collaborative Doctoral Partnership to fund a PhD studentship with the British Library's Literary and Creative Recordings Department.
- G4.** Procter, J (PI), Robinson, G (CI), Kirk, D (CI) (2015-2017) 'Out of Bounds Poetry Project'. AHRC Follow on Funding Grant AH/N003578/1 (GBP 77,380).

### 4. Details of the impact

The Report, *State of Poetry and Poetry Criticism in the UK and Ireland 2011-18*, notes that the British poetry world is 'failing to meet even the most basic measurements of inclusivity'. Since 2014 Stirling's collaborative research has enabled new ways to engage with poetry by Black and Asian writers, helping create new and diversified audiences for poetry and opera. This has led to increased opportunities for audiences to reassess their understanding of poetry, place, and identity, learn about Guyanese cultural history, and engage directly with the creative practices of Black and Asian poets and musicians. The Artistic Director of the Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, Commonword, identified the significance of Out of Bounds (R2, G4):

'The Out of Bounds project has played a leading role in the UK in querying binaries of the type: white = country, black = urban. In breaking this false dichotomy, it has played its part in liberating black writers and communities from stereotypes that have bound them, and provided necessary new perspectives on the deep presences of black people in areas outside the urban

South. In drawing together and enabling these disruptive energies, Out of Bounds began something whose ripple effects are being seen today in such diverse structures as Black Lives Matter, the National Trust and Green/Environmental movements.’ (S1)

**Impact 1: Diversifying, decolonising, and enhancing school curriculum delivery through teacher/student engagement with new resources on poetry by Black and Asian writers**

Over 5000 students/teachers and 250 schools across the UK and India have used Out of Bounds Poetry Project teaching resources, including the Activity Pack. The *Teaching Migration, Belonging and Empire in Secondary Schools* report (2019) notes that 78% of UK teachers surveyed wanted training on migration teaching. Out of Bounds resources answer this need through mobilising the power of poetry to imagine place and identity, specifically by decolonising regional geographies.

Dedicated Out of Bounds workshops and the project’s ‘In my country...’ Young Poets Competition directly benefited over 1000 students and teachers. Of 128 participants surveyed at two 2016 workshops – six schools at Pathfoot Gallery (Stirling) and Great North Museum (Newcastle) – 91% of students and 100% of teachers said that the events made them ‘think differently about poetry, place and identity’: ‘Previously, I had never particularly considered my heritage. This helped me be more proud of my identity’ (Student, Newcastle workshop, S2a). ‘We have made films, tweeted images, translated poems into Scots [and] will continue to do more!’ (Teacher, Stirling workshop, S2a). 44 schools across Britain entered the young poets competition (2020, partnered with Commonword and Scottish Poetry Library). Students and staff reported improved understanding of and approaches to creativity, regionality, national identity and racism. A Walthamstow teacher noted: ‘in diverse schools like ours, [the competition enabled us] to explore students’ personal perspectives and to give them the chance to voice their unique perspectives’ (S2a).

Representing Out of Bounds, Chingonyi worked with the Great Exhibition in the North (June 2018) to produce ‘new poetic word maps of the region’, reaching 400 students. The Director of Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums confirmed:

‘Out of Bounds’ innovative work with place-based poetry has been of particular value to GNM [Great North Museum] and TWAM [Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums] in helping us to articulate a more inclusive, diverse and outward-looking vision of the North East to local, national and international audiences.’ (S3)

The New Writing North writing agency (NWN) commissioned Out of Bounds workshops for 50 young people led by poet, Malika Booker, the success of which led to a further NWN commission for an 8-week teaching block of weekly onsite schools workshops on the theme of ‘From Here...’ (Feb-April 2020; ran until March; stopped due to Covid-19 restrictions).

Two former University of Stirling Charles Wallace Creative Writing Fellows, Mihir Vatsa and Snehal Vadher, ran Out of Bounds schools workshops in India (Hazaribagh and Dharamshala, 2018, Bangalore 2019) using the Out of Bounds Activity Pack. This is part of Stirling’s strategy to create collaborative educational legacy work through the Charles Wallace Fellowship. 90 people participated. The Hazaribagh workshop was featured in local Hindi press, and 100% surveyed said the event made them ‘think differently about poetry, place and identity’ (S2b).

167 teachers from 144 schools across England, Scotland, and Wales requested the Out of Bounds Activity Pack for training and to transform curriculum delivery. For example, one school in Whitley Bay used the pack with 370 students, commenting that it enabled them to ‘see the effects of this project in both the students’ appreciation of poetry, and in their development of a broader and more inclusive understanding of their regional and national literary heritage. Based on the enthusiastic response of our students, we are planning to use these materials again with future Year 9 cohorts’ (Head Librarian, S4). Another school in Islington reached 500 students, commenting that the Activity Pack ‘has delivered tangible benefits to our students who are not only demonstrating a new confidence with poetry itself but with the range of vocabularies and dialects available for expressing their own sense of place in British society’ (English Teacher, S4).

The British Library programmed Out of Bounds in one of its three annual flagship continuing professional development (CPD) events for secondary-level teachers (2019, 45 attendees). Commenting on Chingonyi and Robinson’s contribution, the Head of Learning Programmes said: ‘100% of the attendees rated the event as excellent or good overall. [The British Library Schools Programme] particularly benefits from working with partners, such as Out of Bounds, who can

have an immediate impact on the classroom. We are delighted by the success of the Out of Bounds CPD activities in raising teacher confidence about including Black British Literature in their school curricula, and giving teachers practical tools for developing their curricula in new and creative ways.' (S5)

The University of Worcester used the Out of Bounds Activity Pack (R6) in its Education programmes as best practice for 'creative, rich, safe techniques to explore identity and sense of place in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' (74 Geography trainees 2018-20) (S2a). Continuing impact is secured through the AQA Exam Board's ongoing work to decolonise its curriculum: following stakeholder consultation in 2019-20, the Out of Bounds anthology and Activity Pack will be recommended in its free online GCSE course for teachers, 'Building skills and confidence for unseen poetry'.

### **Impact 2: Diversifying and enriching the sound archives and curatorial practice of the British Library**

The 2016 poetry 'tours' of Britain curated by Out of Bounds research associates, Capildeo and Chingonyi (S6), directly enabled the British Library to increase its engagement with Black and Asian artists in a UK setting: the British Library partnered with Out of Bounds to receive its 58 poetry events/films in a permanent archive, securing them for future audiences.

The Out of Bounds Poetry Collection is the British Library's first sound collection with a regional British focus on Black and Asian Poets. The Lead Curator of Literary & Creative Recordings said:

'Without leading research and practice collaborators, such as the Out of Bounds Poetry Project, we would not have a sound archive. [The collection] fills an important gap in our archive and supports the British Library's core values. The collection is significant in helping us fulfil our aim to represent the regionality of Britain and to avoid a London-centric approach to curation.' (S5)

The Out of Bounds team were also commissioned to produce 7 film-poems for the *Windrush: Songs in a Strange Land* exhibition (July-Oct 2018, 154,813 visitors and 2444 school visitors (S5)).

The film-poems helped achieve the Library's curatorial goal to create multi-media, multi-disciplinary explorations of Caribbean migration to Britain and its legacies. The film-poems were subsequently chosen by the British Library Learning Team for its open access 'legacy online exhibition', *Windrush Stories* and also included in its Primary Level teaching materials (accessed by 6630 'unique users'). The Content Manager of Digital Learning described the films as:

'a brilliant addition to our *Windrush Stories* website, providing students, teachers and the public with unique access to readings by poets of Caribbean heritage in the landscapes that inspired their poems. Our statistics indicate that the poetry films have seen an increase in visits over 2020, when students and teachers have increasingly turned to digital resources to support and enrich remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.' (S5)

### **Impact 3: Production of a new opera, *The Knife of Dawn* by Hannah Kendall (Roundhouse 2016) and a second production of *The Knife of Dawn* (Royal Opera House 2020)**

Robinson was the Academic Consultant for *The Knife of Dawn* (2016), a chamber opera based on the imprisonment of Martin Carter during the anticolonial period in Guyana. Hannah Kendall (composer), Tessa McWatt (librettist), John Walton (director) and Eric Greene (baritone) drew on Robinson's research on the life and career of Guyana's leading poet to create a new opera based on his work and activism; the team met Robinson regularly through 2014-16. Kendall reflected on her relationship with Robinson: 'Speaking with Robinson more [ . . . ] helped me realise it would be possible to think about writing a piece of music theatre and that became *The Knife of Dawn*' (S7a).

In 2020, as part of Black History Month, a second production was commissioned by the Royal Opera House with Robinson as Academic Consultant. The production was part of the Royal Opera House's Covid-19 reprogramming (825 people attended the socially-distanced live performance; with international iplayer access for 30 days). Commenting on the new production at the Royal Opera House, Kendall said: 'Robinson's scholarship and involvement in the project was intrinsic not only to the development of the project, but my own compositional practice' (S7b). The CEO of the Royal Opera House stated in summer 2020: 'We must redouble our efforts, building on current initiatives that are addressing barriers to inclusion and progression within ballet and opera' (S8). In October 2020 Kendall became the first person of colour to have an opera performed on the Main Stage and the third woman in the opera house's history (S9a). The Production and Direction

team commented that Robinson's research was 'essential to the Royal Opera House production and it informed the whole creative process, directly guiding the introductory documentary, the performance of Peter Brathwaite, and the decisions that were made in the staging' (S8). *The Spectator* wrote: 'the whole thing came across as something born of the moment - a single cast member, minimal staging, a small orchestra - that could hardly have been done better pre-Covid' and the *Wall Street Journal* described Brathwaite's performance as 'forceful, passionate' (S9c).

#### **Impact 4: Creating and diversifying audiences for new opera through positive action-led performances and school activities**

The Audience Agency shows only 7% of classical music audiences are under 31 and less than 1% Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) (Audience Agency Report 2017). In 2016 *The Knife of Dawn* opera was watched live by 200 people in a sell-out performance and free schools performance at The Roundhouse, London. It attracted a 45% BAME audience through employing positive action, promoting inclusion with content and casting (S9b). The Arts Marketing Association (UK) used the 2016 production as a case study for how 'positive action attracts a diverse audience' for classical music (S9b). The opera was recorded and broadcast on BBC Radio 3's *Hear and Now* (Saturday evening listenership of 49,000) as part of the station's focus on composers from the UK's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. A preview performance, introduced by Robinson, attended by 50 sponsors and music professionals, was hosted by the Chair of the Royal Opera House. For the 2020 production, the Royal Opera House appointed a team of Black creative practitioners - Peter Brathwaite (baritone), Ola Ince (director) and Jonathon Heywood (conductor) - as part of its commitment to addressing barriers to inclusion. The 2016 and 2020 productions were reviewed positively by *The Times*, *The Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Spectator*, *The Stage*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, with *The Guardian* featuring it in the five best Classical events of the week in 2016 (S10). In 2016 and 2020 the opera was recognised as widening diversity in terms of both creative practice and audiences in UK cultural life (S9a, S9b).

The student Q&A at the Roundhouse (100 students, age 14-16) led by Kendall and Robinson answered student questions about marginalisation, race and, diversity in classical music and poetry. BAME students were the majority at the schools performance and Q&A, and in the 6 follow-on composition workshops (by Trinity Laban Conservatoire with 120 students) on Carter's poetry and *The Knife of Dawn*. The free performance and workshops enabled music teachers in Lambeth, Lewisham, and Southwark schools to engage in diverse curriculum design and delivery (S9b).

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

**S1.** Artistic Director, Commonword, letter, 12 February 2021.

**S2.** Out of Bounds Evaluation and Comments on Impact:

**S2a.** Summary of dossier of material relating to UK (scanned questionnaires available).

**S2b.** Summary of dossier of material relating to India (scanned questionnaires available).

**S3.** Director, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, letter, 5 February 2020.

**S4.** Letters from Schools: Whitley Bay (9.11.20) and Islington (22.2.21).

**S5.** British Library letters: Literary & Creative Recordings (22.2.21), and Learning Team (1.3.21).

**S6.** Vahni Capildeo, Out of Bounds, *PN Review*, June 2016, <http://stir.ac.uk/5fu>.

**S7.** Hannah Kendall evidence:

**S7a.** Clifton Harrison, 'Hannah Kendall Interview: Identity & Aesthetic: Five British-Caribbean Composers' (*The British Music Collection and Sound and Music*, 2019) <http://stir.ac.uk/5fi>.

**S7b.** Hannah Kendall quoted in Richard Mason, 'Scottish academic helps opera live stream take shape', *The National*, 24th October 2020, <http://stir.ac.uk/5fl>.

**S8.** Royal Opera House evidence: ROH Statement on #BlackLivesMatter (6.6.20), <http://stir.ac.uk/5g0>. ROH *The Knife of Dawn* production and direction team, letter (22.2.21).

**S9.** *The Knife of Dawn* opera independent analysis and reviews:

**S9a.** Neil Fisher, 'Composers Should Have Role Models', *The Times*, 21 October 2020, p. 8. <http://stir.ac.uk/5fo>.

**S9b.** Culture Hive Case Study, *The Knife of Dawn* (2017) <http://stir.ac.uk/5fr>.

**S9c.** *The Knife of Dawn* Press Reviews (2016, 2020)

**S10.** Andrew Clements, 'Five of the Best .... Classical Concerts', *The Guardian*, 30 September 2016, <http://stir.ac.uk/5fx>.