

Institution: Kingston University		
Unit of Assessment: 27 – English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: Transforming and Enabling Poetic Practice: The Enemies Project		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name:	Role:	Period employed by submitting HEI:
Steven Fowler	Lecturer in Creative Writing, Director of the Writers' Centre Kingston	Jan 2015 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

Steven Fowler's research has led to the development of 'The Enemies Project', a platform that promotes new forms of collaborative poetic practice, and which influences creative cultural production internationally. Since 2015, the project has engaged more than 22,000 participants in live venues and through online access, benefitting local and international creative communities by generating new ways of producing poetry as collaboration. It has widened access to poetry for artists and audiences from a diverse range of backgrounds, in addition to assisting English PEN ('Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, Novelists') by contributing to its work supporting the human rights of at-risk writers across the world.

2. Underpinning research

Since joining Kingston University in January 2015, Fowler has published multiple collections of contemporary poetry that have been translated into 22 languages. The work exemplifies the curatorial, collaborative, and collective ethos informing the Enemies Project, a model and platform named after Fowler's 2013 collection of the same name. Bringing poets from different backgrounds together to compose and perform new works, the project engenders an interconnective and dialogical approach that is both formal and social in orientation, aimed at transforming traditional, individual, and isolated modes of producing poetry. Building on research in avant-garde and modernist poetics, it fosters an open, inclusive, and collective practice designed to invigorate linguistic and formal experimentation. It promotes new and diverse poets, overcoming divisions of cultural boundaries and conventions (the 'enemies' of the title) to better generate new creative communities. It also involves national and international public events and online formats. Reviewing [Enemies](#), David Clarke observed how the dynamic engagement at the core of the work is neither harmonious nor easy, yet remains 'open to a dialogue with the reader' [R1].

Fowler's 2015 collection of poetry – *Enthusiasm* - consists of 81 poems that work as individual pieces yet are interlinked by common subjects, including conflict and violence, economy and population, self, modernity, and the past [R2]. *The Guide to Being Bear Aware* (2017) extends interconnectedness to reflect on the Anthropocene as a shifting relation of humans to language, consciousness and animals, breaking down the hierarchies between poet, environment and reader [R3].

Fowler's innovations in practice and performance are captured in *Enemies* (2013) and *Nemeses* (2019), two ground-breaking collections documenting some of the Project's international poetic collaborations with a selection of over 50 co-written and co-performed pieces and an essay on collaborative poetic practices [R4]. The work exemplifies the successful development of the 'camarade' mode employed by the Enemies Project, in which writers, often from different

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cultures and backgrounds, are invited to compose and perform together. Other recent publications extend the Enemies Project's collaborative ethos to interdisciplinary practice. *House of Mouse* (2016) is a collection of ten poetic collaborations written by Fowler and Prudence Chamberlain and developed in a process of performance, each responding to original illustrations by contemporary artists Lizzy Stewart and Duncan Marchbank [R5]. Fowler's work on 'neuropoetics' with the Wellcome Trust exemplifies the combination of collaborative research, inventive creative practice, and community involvement that explores relations between poetry, art, and neuroscience in academic contexts. The Salzburg Global Seminar on arts and neurosciences and 'School of Brain and Mind', Berlin Humboldt University, enabled artistic collaborations on film, radio and sonic. The work highlighted poetic language as a mode of diverse, malleable, and organic cognition, rather than simply as a vehicle of organic expression. It also led to the collection entitled *I Will Show You the Life of the Mind (on prescription drugs)* [R6].

3. References to the research

R1 – [Sabotage Reviews](#): Enemies: The Selected Collaborations of SJ Fowler

R2 – **Fowler, Steven**, 2015. *Enthusiasm*. Test Centre Publications, London, U.K. 96p. ISBN 9780992685867 REF2ID: 27-28-1427

R3 – **Steven Fowler**, 2017. *The Guide to Being Bear Aware*. Shearsman Press
REF2ID: 27-13-1426

R4 – **Steven Fowler**, 2019. *Nemeses: selected collaborations, 2014-19*. HVTN Press
REF2ID: 27-15-2091

R5 – Prudence Chamberlain and **Steven Fowler**, 2016. *House of Mouse*. Knives Forks and Spoons Press

R6 – **Steven Fowler**, 2020. *I Will Show You the Life of the Mind (on prescription drugs)*. Dostoyevsky Wannabe Originals. REF2ID: 27-14-2090

4. Details of the impact

Since 2015, the Enemies Project has engaged, in total, around 22,000 participants, including over 400 performers, and audiences of 3,000 (live) and 18,000 (online). Fowler's collaborative project has received commissions from organisations including The Hay Literary Festival and the Wellcome Collection, and has received funding from Arts Council England, The British Council, the UK National Lottery Fund, Jerwood Charitable Foundation, Creative Scotland, Arts Council Ireland, National Council for Culture and Arts, Mexico (Conaculta), and Arts Council Wales. Fowler's role was to curate performances and events that involve multiple poets and artists working across an international field. Joining poetry with technology, Fowler's exploitation of live streaming has benefited a wide range of participants and audience members who would be unable to attend events in person. His contribution has been to increase and expand the audience for poetry and to involve marginalised creative voices in public performance by reimagining the art form as one that is curated and collaborative. This innovative conceptualisation, and the activities that followed, helped reinvigorate poetic practice through interdisciplinary and transnational exchanges between participants and audience members on a global scale. This has led to important impacts on: (i) the development of models of inclusive and communal creative practice, (ii) the expansion of socially engaged creative production, and (iii) the transformation of poetic composition and performance.

Inclusive and communal creative practice

The Enemies Project has been an influential model of how poetic practice can be open to diverse voices. Supported by the Wellcome Collection, The Enemies Project's *Respites* programme brought artistic enablement to people with disabilities and from low-income

households in London. Through community outreach, *Respites* worked with benefits claimants, creating spaces of artistic and creative exploration for those without conventional access to such exploratory time and space. The project also collaborated with charities which support the visually and hearing impaired, leading to the publication of new works which would otherwise have remained unpublished [S1].

For example, in Kingston Upon Thames, The Enemies Project has enriched the cultural climate and benefitted residents through the Museum of Futures, a local community space curated by The Community Brain CIC, giving the community access to the arts [S2]. An annual photopoetry exhibition and accompanying poetry events organised by Fowler since 2016 has connected professional artists and academics with developing local community artists, each year bringing together more than 30 writers to share practice and build a democratic artistic community. This initiative has brought the arts into the local community in such a way as to 'normalise' artistic practice and instil creativity as a feature of everyday experience. It has enriched local creative practice by bringing it into contact with international figures and advanced the reputations of younger poets and performers. Underlining the importance of Fowler's contribution, the Director of The Community Brain has written that '*Steven's research and creative practice have had an important impact on our community interest company*' [S3]. He continues to note that:

The exhibitions and events Steven has collaborated on at The Museum have consistently been amongst our most well-attended and highly regarded projects, and have contributed towards our reputation not just as a hosting venue, but crucially as a credible partner for local, regional, national and international creative and community endeavour. [S3]

Extending social engagement

In partnership with English PEN (the UK arm of an international NGO campaigning against threats to freedom of expression across the world) the project showed its 'literary activism' by gathering support for the organisation and drawing attention to the plight of writers threatened with persecution. For example, Fowler devised and curated English PEN's first Modern Literature festival (#penfestuk) in 2016, an event that has continued annually under his leadership. In a letter to the University, English PEN's programme manager commented that '*the volume of work produced for and performed at the festivals was, I believe, unprecedented. The depth of engagement has also been very moving.*' [S1, S4]

These events made audiences aware of the plight of these writers while also enriching culture with new creative works inspired by this body of writings. Embracing diversification and democratisation of poetic practice, The Enemies Project was able to expose these works to a worldwide audience. For instance, Adam Baron's reading on two Turkish writers, Can Dündar and Erdem Gül, has been viewed more than 1000 times on Youtube [S5]. PEN's Programme Manager reiterated the importance of Fowler's work, stating that his '*involvement with English PEN has highlighted the value of creating new work with writers at risk and its ability to bring awareness of and stand in solidarity with them*' [S4].

Transforming poetic practice

The Enemies Project has changed the landscape of contemporary poetic practice on an international scale, establishing a model of international, transdisciplinary collaboration involving non-Anglophone poets and cross-cultural creative collaboration. This addresses a significant diversity gap evident in the literary and publishing industries in the UK and internationally. The European Council of Literary Translator's Associations estimates that only 3% of books published in the UK are in translation. Since 2016, the Enemies Project has engaged in collaborations with artists from Japan, Argentina, Sweden, and Portugal, and in interdisciplinary practice by pairing poets with folk musicians, graphic designers, and digital musicians.

A significant indicator of the project's impact upon project participants is that they have gone onto use Fowler's collaborative model in their own practice independently of Fowler's

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involvement. Christodoulos Makris, for instance, highlights Fowler's impact on poets in Mexico, Ireland and Norway as well as the influence of his '*innovative compositional modes*' and '*collaborative and cross-disciplinary practice*' on his own work [S6]. The practice has contributed to Makris' success in extending The Enemies project, subsequently winning the 2020/21 Literature Project Award from the Arts Council Ireland [S7]. Since 2016, The Enemies Project has led to 133 events, exhibitions and tours involving 1,240 poets from 16 countries [S1]. Its involvement with the European Poetry Festival (an organisation sponsored by a range of national-cultural institutions enabling live and online events across the near continent) has seen its collaborative practices successfully adopted in poetry organisations and events across Europe, the Baltic and Scandinavia, including the camarade model [S1, S8].

The model has been further developed across the world in countries such as Mexico and Argentina, as well as being used in educational and supportive contexts to help young writers enhance their experience of writing and performance and gain access to wider audiences. Fostering non-traditional forms of artistic performance and presentation, the University Camarade project has, since 2016, paired young writers from nine universities in the UK (Kingston University, Oxford Brookes, Kent, Essex, York, Royal Holloway, Edge Hill University, York St John, and Glasgow) and provided opportunities to perform new work in live events and through online forums. The project also hosts live poetry events such as 'Camaradefest', where 50 pairs of poets read their work and promoted their publications over one day [S1]. The collaborative practice has led to the publication of 12 volumes of poetry by different poets [S1].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1 – The Enemies Project Website: [Respites](#), [PEN events](#), [list of past events](#), [Camarade series](#), [publications](#)

S2 – Annual exhibitions with the Museum of Futures from [2016-2020](#)

S3 – Testimonial from the Director of the Community Brain

S4 – Testimonial from English PEN

S5 – English PEN Modern Literature Festival - [Adam Baron on Can Dündar and Erdem Gül](#)

S6 – Testimonial from the poet Christodoulos Markis

S7 – [2020/21 Literature Project Award](#)

S8 – [European Poetry Festival Website](#)