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| Institution: Leeds Beckett University | | |
| Unit of Assessment: 27: English Language, Literature, and Creative Writing | | |
| Title of case study: Carnival Cultures: Deepening Understanding and Inspiring Creative Practice | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010 to the present | | |
| 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: |
| Dr Emily Zobel Marshall | Reader in Postcolonial Literature, Course Director for English Programmes | 2007 - present |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: | | |
| From 2014 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N | | |
| 1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) | | |
| <p>Caribbean Carnival Cultures (CCC) has challenged the perceived barriers between artistic and academic approaches to carnival. It had the subsidiary aim of making the university a hospitable site for all the communities it serves. Zobel Marshall's research has led to positive changes in (a) the practices of a number of carnival artists; (b) in the local African-Caribbean community's engagement with the University, (c) in the understanding of Carnival as a resistant practice and whole-life culture. It has fostered positive partnerships with local council and a range of local, national and international arts organisations, and with a commercial company which is developing an online archive of Carnival practice.</p> | | |
| 2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) | | |
| <p>Zobel Marshall's research examines how carnival manifests itself as a series of transatlantic diasporic cultural activities. It has a particular focus on traditional masquerade (<i>mas</i>) and the trickster figure. As a member of the Harrison Bunday Mama Dread carnival troupe, she has also performed at the Leeds West Indian Carnival (LWIC) for over a decade, and she straddles what is often a difficult divide between practitioner, participant and academic communities.</p> <p>Carnival is a resistant practice which distrusts and disrupts hegemonic institutions. Its own traditions and origins often mean that there is a deep suspicion of any institution, no matter how liberal, and that has often included universities. The risk these suspicions is that resources that universities can offer may be harder to reach for some communities. Zobel Marshall's research was inspired by the will to bridge the gap between types of community, for the mutual benefit of both, to bring carnival artists and academics into meaningful and fruitful dialogue with one another. Her work is focused on exploring the roots of <i>mas</i> so that this artistic practice is valued as an aspect of intangible heritage, and on breaking down the perceived barriers between the academic analysis of carnival and carnival as an artistic activity.</p> <p>A key finding of Zobel Marshall's research is that the two ways of understanding an intangible culture (its practice and its critique) cannot succeed in isolation from each other. An example is her field work at Trinidad Carnival (February 2017) which directly fed into a <i>Caribbean Quarterly</i> publication (3.5) and several conference papers, and which inspired later work, including a</p> | | |

major academic and practitioner conference in 2017, and elements of her most recent book on the American trickster figure, *Brer Rabbit* (3.1). For some of this work she has undertaken field work in the Caribbean, working with and alongside Carnival practitioners in the Midnight Robbers tradition, as well undertaking more conventional forms of literary critical and literary historical research.

The results of this her research give an expanded understanding of carnival as resistant artistic practice, a clearer sense of its traditions, and a politicised reading of the multiple meanings of African, Caribbean and American trickster figures in transatlantic practices of cultural resistance. Her work demonstrates how the trickster figure and trickster strategies became emblems or resistance, and methods for (cultural and literal) survival in Black Atlantic cultures in the face of slavery and its long aftermath. She shows how Caribbean and African American authors and performers use the trickster to counter reductive representations of black identity and to experiment with the construction of meaning, challenging the legacies of enslavement and colonialism. Her work offers a corrective to the oft-repeated Bakhtinian description of the Carnavalesque as a limited, transient and licensed form of resistance. Her work with *Mas* performers shows that *Mas* is in fact a whole way of life, not just a fleeting moment in time. She has also explored how trickster novels and performances embrace ambiguity, transformation and transcendence and in doing so offer listeners, readers and viewers practical and psychological methods to challenge the traumatic legacies of slavery and racism. Her work on the trickster has resulted in two monographs, *Anansi's Journey* (3.2) and *American Trickster: Trauma, Tradition and Brer Rabbit* (3.1), as well as a range of other publications in multiple formats, from the academic to the popular (e.g. 3.4).

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

3.1 (2019) *American Trickster: Trauma Tradition and Brer Rabbit*. Rowman and Littlefield: London. [Listed in REF2]

3.2 (2012) *Anansi's Journey: A Story of Jamaican Cultural Resistance*. University of the West Indies Press: Kingston. [Considered by Unit 36 in REF2014]

3.3 (2018) 'It's not all Sequins and Bikinis? Power, Performance and Play in the Leeds and Trinidad Carnival'. Book Chapter. Riggio, M (ed.). (Ian Randle Publishers). [Listed in REF2]

3.4 (2018) 'Nothing but Pleasant Memories of the Discipline of Slavery': The Trickster and the Dynamics of Racial Representation.' *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies*. 32, 1. (Wayne State University Press). Available at: <https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/marvels/vol32/iss1/4>

3.5 (2019) [Edited collection] 'Power, Performance and Play: Caribbean Carnival and the Cultural Politics of Emancipation'. *Caribbean Quarterly*, Dec 2019. Special Issue.

3.6 (2016) 'Resistance Through 'Robber Talk': Storytelling Strategies and the Carnival Trickster in *Caribbean Quarterly*, Volume 62, 2. DOI <https://doi.org/10.1080/00086495.2016.1203178>

The sources listed here contain a mixture of some works which have been considered by previous REF panels, as well as some from the current REF cycle. All of these outputs show significance by their intervention in an under-researched cultural domain, rigour via the process of peer review, and originality in both approach and subject matter. Zobel Marshall's significance as a researcher is also evidenced by the fact that major scholars in the Carnival field have solicited Zobel Marshall's work, and have been keen to collaborate with her.

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

Drawing on the insights from her research, since 2014, Marshall has organised several events which have brought new audiences into the university, and which have taken the university out to the community, which culminated in **the Caribbean Carnival Conference** (May 2017) which brought together the academy and the practitioner communities in a unique way. It attracted 160 participants from across the globe, featured 45 speakers alongside dance, design, poetry and masquerade workshops and a Civic Reception, and brought internationally renowned practitioners to Leeds.

The conference was designed so that academic research and research as practice intersected. A testimonial from Leeds West Indian Carnival co-founder, Hughbon Condor (5.4), made the point that the relationship between practitioners and academics was essential to a proper understanding what carnival means.

Both practitioners and academics make ongoing use of the insights they garnered from the conference, and from the networks it constructed. Testimony from one practitioner describes how, having read articles by Marshall and others: 'I continue to learn from reading articles shared on this [Carnival Cultures web] page.' (Marina Poppa, artist, 5.1, p.10); and another wrote: 'The conference provided a fantastic opportunity to ... I have kept in contact with some of the people I met there, [who] have become key in providing feedback on my developing work.' (Adeola Dewis, artist, 5.1, p. 2). Angela Chappell (Arts Council England), describes professional benefits, which she uses in her daily activity: 'it gave me more credibility in the [arts-management] sector and has been used by me in presentations at other universities and with ACE colleagues when talking about carnival nationally, regionally and internationally'. It had also helped to raise the profile of Arts Council England activities as they impact on BAME communities. (5.1, pp. 11-12)

Sandra Whyles, of Leeds based charity Chapeltown Arts, writes that the impact of the conference 'has made a lasting impact on me as a woman of Caribbean heritage and an artist/community art facilitator.' (5.1, p. 15) It also had a lasting effect on Trinidadian carnival theatre director Tony Hall, following his creation of a 'Brexit devil' troupe for the conference. Hall explains that he has changed his creative practice as a result; 'We feel that the idea of utilizing aspects of the very versatile "devil masquerade" to penetrate and perform "fear", personal and collective ... is well on the way [to fruition].' (5.1, p. 19) Trinidadian playwright and performer, Eintou Springer explains that the collaborative partnership and resulting publication has been a way of introducing her actors to the history and culture of carnival: 'Our presence at the conference has given to our organisation and production an additional layer of respect.' (5.1, p.) Leeds carnival designer Rhian Kempadoo Miller also discusses the impact of her artistic input into the conference and how it has provided the platform to apply for an Arts Council grant to create her own carnival exhibition in 2019: '**As part of the CCC I was commissioned to create two large banners for the evening event Without this commission ... I [wouldn't] have had the confidence to take this new path**' (5.1, p.8).

There have been two **published outputs** from the conference. The first, a special edition of the academic journal *Caribbean Quarterly* (3.6) is claimed as impact because it includes academic work in literary and cultural studies alongside more practice-based articles from carnival makers who are usually excluded from the academic press, showing the ways in which Marshall has helped to cross the practice/academic divide. The second is a book titled *Celebrate! 50 Years of Leeds West Indian Carnival*, authored by Guy Farrar, Tim Smith and Max Farrar (2017, 5.5) was conceived alongside the Carnival Cultures conference. The book addresses Carnival for a general readership, while also being of interest to carnival researchers, in line with the Carnival Cultures' mission to link academic work with that of carnival arts practitioners, and to link both to the wider public.

The CCC website (<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/research/centre-for-culture-and-the-arts/caribbean-carnival-cultures/>), developed to support the conference organisation, is now a

repository for information on carnival research, and advertising space for upcoming Caribbean and BAME artistic and academic events locally and nationally. It is a lasting platform for carnival artists and researchers to find out more about the field and showcase their work, whether academic or artistic.

The conference also had a **media legacy**: it was filmed by four film crews for local news and a documentary and garnered a range of press attention. It also has had an impact on **local community events**. The Chapeltown Literature Festival focused their annual literary event **'Word Junction'** in September 2017 on carnival as a result of the conference and the CCC worked in partnership with Chapeltown Arts to deliver the events (<https://www.leedsinspired.co.uk/events/carnival-word-junction-chapeltown-arts>). A **'mini' carnival conference event** provided an opportunity for people in the local Chapeltown community to access the conference for free. It was well attended (over 80 participants) drawing a public which may not have been able to afford the conference fee or engaged with the university environment. The CCC also inspired the creation of a **mas troupe** focused on the tragic life of David Oluwale, a Nigerian migrant killed in Leeds by racist policing in 1968. The Mama Dread troupe took Oluwale's story on the road (2018) and the making of the troupe and the carnival parade was captured in the **documentary** *We are all migrants*, dir. Rowena Baldwin (5.3), winner of the Hebden Bridge Film festival documentary prize (2018) which was selected for inclusion at the Trinidad Film Festival for 2020. The CCC continues to work in close collaboration with the **David Oluwale Memorial Association**, where Zobel Marshall is Vice Chair (5.7), which promotes anti-racism and raises awareness of homelessness and mental health problems.

A further legacy is that the digital media company British Online Archives, based largely on Zobel Marshall's work, is beginning the process of documenting Carnival as part of its mission to make histories available. As Head of Content, Kathryn Rose writes of the urgent need for resources to teach a positive Black-British history, credits Zobel Marshall with providing some of the impetus for her company's move to this field, and commissioned her as consultant in the making of a new archive (5.6)

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

- 5.1 Emailed feedback on the Carnival Conference from individuals (Adeola Dewis, Enitou Pearl Springer, Calvin Beach, Guy Farrar, Rhian Kempadoo Millar, Marina Popper, Angela Chappell, Hughbon Condor, Sandra Whyles, and Tony Hall) who are carnival practitioners, artists, and arts managers about the effects of the Carnival conference on their practice and thinking. (This replaces Covid-affected interviews, scheduled for April 2020)
- 5.2 Video interviews with founders of the Leeds West Indian Carnival and other conference participants located at: <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/caribbean-carnival-cultures/>
- 5.3 Carnival Film, *We are all migrants*, dir. Rowena Baldwin.
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10917942/plotsummary?ref=tt_ov_pl
Winner of the Hebden Bridge Film festival documentary prize in 2018; selected for the Trinidad Film Festival for 2020 (postponed owing to Covid).
- 5.4 Media coverage with North Leeds Life (https://issuu.com/northleedslife/docs/2017_june_a – p. 18); BBC Radio 4 (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07q7jl2>); and *The Yorkshire Evening Post*.
- 5.5 Max Farrar, Guy Farrar and Tim Smith, (2017) *Celebrate! Fifty Years Leeds West Indian Carnival*. Arts Council Funding. Published by Jeremy Mill Publishing, Northern Arts Publications.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329170105_Celebrate_50_years_of_Leeds_West_Indian_Carnival
- 5.6 Testimonial from Kathryn Rose, head of content, British Archives Online.
- 5.7 David Oluwale Memorial Association – Remember Oluwale (<https://rememberoluwale.org/who.html>).