

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Swansea University
Unit of Assessment: 28a - Modern Languages and Linguistics
Title of case study: Hafan Books: Transforming Refugee Awareness and Integration in South Wales
1. Summary of the impact

The Hafan Books project publishes creative writing by asylum-seekers and refugees [henceforth simply: ‘refugees’] in South Wales. The project promotes a civic culture of hospitality, compassion and respect through the publications, large-scale festive launch events, and further creative outputs. Beneficiaries include contributors and other refugees, charity workers and volunteers, and arts organisations. The publications are widely used in professional refugee awareness training. The project has been recognised as exemplary for refugee awareness and integration through the arts and has been emulated in the UK and overseas.

2. Underpinning research

Dr Tom Cheesman: appointed Lecturer in German at Swansea 1990; Senior Lecturer 2003; Reader since 2009.

The Hafan Books project applies insights from Cheesman’s research since 1995 on migrant literatures, and develops collaborations with arts and charity organisations in Wales founded in that research process. It is underpinned by the findings of a multidisciplinary British/German comparative project: ‘Axial Writing: Transnational Literatures, Cultural Politics and State Policies’, within the ESRC’s ‘Transnational Communities’ Research Programme (1998-2002); see Section 3, output [R1]. As PI, with Co-Is in English and Sociology, Cheesman undertook ‘action research’ in Germany and the UK, participating in transethnic projects initiated by migrant writers and engaging with funding and policy agencies (e.g. [R4]). Exiled/refugee writers emerged as an under-recognised group, amidst celebrations of postmigrant hybridity.

Cheesman and Co-Is organised the ‘Writing Diasporas’ conference (Swansea, 2000, c.150 attendees) co-funded by the ESRC, British Council (‘Re-inventing Britain’), Arts Council Wales and Literature Wales (was: ‘Academi’), which many writer-activists attended. Cheesman convened a panel to discuss support for exiled/refugee writers by Welsh arts organisations, introducing officials from the Welsh Assembly Government, Arts Council Wales and Academi to representatives of English PEN, PEN International, the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN), and Exiled Writers Ink. A key conference output was the special issue of *Index on Censorship* co-edited by Cheesman (2002, [R2]), presenting 50 UK-based writers from 5 continents, thematising transcultural communication barriers. He also published in *Planet* (2001, [R3]) an article advocating Welsh engagement in PEN’s and ICORN’s exiled writers programmes (and later advised the group which took Norwich into ICORN in 2007). Another research-based policy intervention in Wales was a paper ([R5]) on ‘non-European’ language communities as a challenge and opportunity for European minority language activists.

Research findings in Cheesman’s final report on the project included:

- socio-economic and cultural-linguistic factors inhibit most cross-language migrant writers’ communicative participation in host societies/cultures;
- these factors particularly exclude exiled/refugee writers, despite programmes supporting some individuals;
- developing arts ‘diversity policy’ offers opportunities for projects promoting refugee participation, particularly at local levels.

Over the past decade, with Hafan Books (e.g. [R6]) Cheesman has pursued a practice of local cosmopolitan cultural political intervention, applying his comparative research insights to discover, support and promote exiled/refugee writers locally, to benefit them, fellow refugees, professionals and volunteers working to support refugees, and local civic culture.

3. References to the research

[R1]. Tom Cheesman. 'Axial Writing: Transnational Literatures, Cultural Politics and State Policies. Full Project Report'. 2002.

- ESRC project report, at: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/L214252030/read>.
- The project was graded 'Excellent' by ESRC. Award: £140,149.51. Period: 11/1998 to 03/2002. PI: Cheesman. Co-Is: Marie Gillespie (Sociology, Open University), Deniz Göktürk (Modern Languages, Southampton [now: Berkeley]), John Goodby (English, Swansea), John McLeod (English, Leeds), Sujala Singh (English, Southampton).

[R2]. Tom Cheesman and Marie Gillespie (guest editors). *Index on Censorship* 31/3 (July 2002): 'Home and Away: Diaspora Voices'. ISBN 9780904286892.

- Journal special issue. DOI:10.1080/03064220208537071.
- *Index on Censorship* has world-wide distribution among scholars, writers, and activists.
- Introduction by Cheesman and Gillespie, who commissioned texts from 10 of the 50 writers represented. The special issue arose from the 'Writing Diasporas' conference at Swansea University, 2000.

[R3]. Tom Cheesman. 'The Price of Welsh Internationalism: A Safe Haven for Exiled Writers', *Planet: The Welsh Internationalist* 147 (June-July 2001), 87-94. ISSN 0048-4288.

- Journal article (research-based, campaigning for cultural policy and attitudinal change). *Planet* was Wales's leading literary-political journal at the time.
- Available on demand. Contents: http://www.planetmagazine.org.uk/misc/contents_pages/147.pdf

[R4]. Tom Cheesman. 'Polyglot Politics: Hip Hop in Germany', *Debate: Review of Contemporary German Affairs* 6/2 (November 1998), 191-214.

- Peer-reviewed journal article. DOI:10.1080/09651569808454589.
- On multi-ethnic youth culture and the transformation of German national identity, based on participatory fieldwork among rappers and local arts activists. Submitted to RAE2001: Swansea's German Department was rated 5A. 19 citations (Google Scholar, July 2013). Danish translation: Henrik Houmark, 'En mangetunget politik. Rap og unge tyske tyrkere', *Social Kritik* [Copenhagen] 13/74 (June 2001), 102-20. ISSN 0904-3535.

[R5]. Tom Cheesman, "'Old" and "New" Lesser Used Languages of Europe: Common Cause?' in *Language, Ethnicity and the State. Volume One: Minority Languages in the European Union*, ed. Camille O'Reilly (Basingstoke: Palgrave; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), pp 147-168. ISBN 033392925X.

- Chapter in a peer-reviewed edited volume. DOI: 10.1057/9780230504639.
- Developed from a 1998 paper, 'New and Old Lesser-Used Languages of Europe: A Case for Reviewing Cultural Policy', presented at 'Mosaic: Promoting Literature Across Frontiers' (Mercator Media, Welsh Literature Abroad, Mosaic Publishers Network), Aberystwyth, November 1998, and published in the proceedings circulated among participant organisations, 1999.

[R6]. One indicative Hafan Books title is cited here. All titles after 2008 are accessible at lulu.com/hafan. Hafan's list includes: (a) 6 anthologies of 'refugee writing' (5 ed./co-ed. Cheesman, 2003-13), some co-funded by the Welsh Books Council (e.g. gwales.com/bibliographic/?isbn=9780954514747&tsid=6); (b) 6 volumes of poetry, stories or drama by individual refugee writers (2009-13); (c) a volume of 'poeticised transcripts' of Wales-based Holocaust survivors' testimony, *Fragments: Transcribing the Holocaust*, by Professor Frances Rapport (2013); (d) *Life Stories*, a resource for Keystage 2 oracy classes in the Welsh national curriculum based on refugees' stories (2012, also on <https://hwb.wales.gov.uk/cms/hwbcontent/layouts/NGFLSolution/MaterialDescription.aspx?LearninqMaterialId=52098&lang=en>); (e) non-refugee titles: experimental poetry from Wales, translations of German fiction and poetry.

Tom Cheesman (ed), 2013, *Are You Happy With That? Refugees Writing in Wales 6* (Swansea: Hafan Books). ISBN 9780956947376. 224pp.

- Edited volume: poetry, short stories, testimony and essays by 35 refugee writers (from 26 countries, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe) and 10 others (writers in solidarity), all associated with Wales.

Impact case study (REF3b)

- Cheesman's contribution: publisher, series editor, commissioning editor, co-translations from Arabic, French, Persian and Spanish, copy editor, typesetting, design.
- Reviews of previous (2008) volume in the series: (a) Jane Aaron, *Journal of Gender Studies* 19/2 (2010), 215f.; (b) David Constantine, *Modern Poetry in Translation* 3/10 (2008), 185f.; (c) Lenka Šafránková Pavlíčková (Multikulturní centrum Praha / [Multicultural Centre Prague](#)), at: [migraceonline.cz/e-knihovna/?x=2117655](#) (2008); (d) Zoe Thompson, *New Welsh Review* 81 (2008), 84-6; (e) Debi Withers, *the f-word: contemporary UK feminism*, at: [thefword.org.uk/reviews/2008/06/fragments_from](#) (2008); (f) Launch blog post: [elizabethbaines.blogspot.co.uk/2008/03/fragments-from-dark-edited-by-jeni.html](#) (2008).

4. Details of the impact

Beneficiary quotations were collected 09/2012–07/2013.

Hafan Books raises funds and awareness for Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group (SBASSG: [swanseabassgroup.org](#)). 16 titles since 2008 (22 since 2003). Small runs: c.4,500 combined since 2008 (c.9,500 since 2003). 95% self-distributed; c.40% sold at cost to charities, c. 30% given away. Over 80 refugee writers published; 35 in the 2013 anthology. SBASSG's Hafan-related grant income: c. £12k. Proceeds from sales: c. £3k since 2008 (c. £6k since 2003).

Books shift chiefly at Hafan events. Total attendance since 2008: c. 3,000 (since 2003: c. 5,000). Large events: c. 350 attend each, c. 250 being refugees. NB: Swansea's total refugee population is c. 2,500. *'[U]nique large-scale meetings of service users, workers, volunteers, and political supporters across South Wales, forging new relationships and networks'* (Chief Officer, **Displaced People in Action [DPIA]**). Since 2008, 3 large and 12 smaller events (50-150 attend) in museums, cafés, community centres.

In 2005/6 several UK-wide, third-sector publications presented Hafan as an arts-for-integration model (C1). Evidence of direct impact is emulation in Oxford (2005, 2009), Würzburg (2009), Prague (ongoing). (See Section 5a, C2.)

Chief beneficiary constituencies:**4.1. Refugees: integration, self-confidence and mutual awareness**

Hafan has *'made a big difference to building self-confidence and a sense of being welcomed, for those who have been published, and others as well'* (**DPIA**). Many writers discovered and promoted by Hafan go on to other projects: theatre performances, writing competitions, workshops, exhibitions, festivals: marking sociocultural integration. Four have joined Literature Wales's online writers database. Two had work selected by Jackie Kay for *Out of Bounds: British Black & Asian Poets* (Bloodaxe, 2012). One, Adel Guémar, won an English PEN award for his poetry volume, has published in *Modern Poetry in Translation* (lately: 3/17, 2012) and appeared at the South Bank 'Poetry Parnassus' (Cultural Olympiad) 2012. The project has wider impact as *'a compassionate link among refugees and political exiles with the Swansea and Welsh community, [...] a necessary part of an equation to bring back our sense of humanity and build a sense of hope. Hafan Books opened a door for our expression and gave us an audience to whom to speak'* (**writer**, Chile/Swansea). *'Not only I read works of talented asylum seekers and refugee writers, but also I got the opportunity to meet with other settled one'* (**writer**, D.R.Congo/Newport). *'The books help us asylum seekers to understand each other, and to put our own stories in a different perspective'* (**writer**, Iran/Swansea). *'Asylum seekers gain significant therapeutic value in being able to articulate their experiences in an artistic context and being appreciated by a wider audience'* (Director, **Wales Migration Partnership [WMP]**).

4.2. Charities and public bodies: internal and external awareness raising

The publications make *'a very significant difference to the way staff think about the experiences of refugees [and] enable our trainers to transform understanding among professionals in health, social services and education'* (Chief Executive, **Welsh Refugee Council**). *'The project is unique and incredibly valuable for organisations such as ours, in making visible voices that are very seldom heard'* (**WMP**). The books help train service providers, win politicians' and donors' support, and make *'a major contribution to informing the public in Wales about asylum seekers and refugees'* (**DPIA**). Local media coverage of launch events has helped alter perceptions of asylum seekers from 'scroungers' or victims to *'people of remarkable talent, imagination and creative energy'* (**DPIA**). With all-party support and Lottery funding, **Swansea City of Sanctuary** launched in 2010, using a mobile exhibition of Hafan poems and poem-videos to mark its presence and

Impact case study (REF3b)

showing poem-videos periodically on a city-centre public screen. By 'providing the many refugee communities with a public voice', Hafan helps build 'a mature and tolerant civic society' (Chair, **Welsh Books Council**).

The Chief Executive of **Race Council Cymru**, also Principal Equality and Diversity Officer at **South Wales Police**, describes Hafan Books as 'an important example of how academic work should be translated into a catalyst for social change', as 'instrumental in raising the awareness of organisations that work with refugees and asylum seekers in South Wales', and as having 'galvanised those individuals who engage with asylum seekers and refugees into a cohesive group that is better able to effect change'.

4.3. Arts organisations: connecting with refugee communities

Collaborations with Hafan have 'significantly informed our development of policy and practice in relation to cultural diversity' (Project Manager, **Literature Wales**), made an 'immeasurable contribution to our Literature Programme, breaking down barriers between communities' (Literature Officer, **Dylan Thomas Centre**), and 'allowed us to build successful relationships with asylum seekers and refugees as well as increasing understanding about [their] experiences amongst museum staff and members of the public' (Exhibitions/Events Officer, **Swansea Museum**; the 2012 Hafan-assisted exhibition 'Home from Home?' had c.12,000 visitors). 'The Museum's experience of working with Hafan Books [on the 2010-13 'Belonging' gallery] has fed into current plans for redevelopment [...] to reflect more of the diversity in Wales today, and allow more people to participate' (Keeper, **St Fagans National History Museum**; 500,000 visitors p.a.)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact**(a) Reports, reviews, web links, other information in the public domain****(C1)** Hafan Books project presented in third-sector UK-wide publications:

- *Small Places, Close to Home* (London: Community Links, 2005). ISBN: 0954404777. www.community-links.org/our-national-work/publications/small-places-close-to-home/ - full text at: <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=V8Kq6qO-HNEC> (Hafan: p.34).
- Beth Crosland, *Understanding the Stranger: Building Bridges Community Handbook* (London: Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees, 2006). ISBN: 1903080061. Launched at the National Refugee Integration Forum 2006: www.gulbenkian.org.uk/news/news/28-New-Publication--Understanding-the-Stranger.html
- *A Sense of Belonging: Arts and Culture in the Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers*, by Helen G Gould (London: Creative Exchange, 2005). ISBN: 9780954884116. www.researchasylum.org.uk/?lid=39 (p.26)

(C2) Emulation:

- *The Story of My Life: Refugees Writing in Oxford* (2005, ISBN: 9780954634247) and *See how I Land: Oxford Poets and Exiled Writers* (2009, ISBN: 9781906038380), both edited by Carole Angier, inspired by Hafan Books
- Lenka Šafránková Pavlíčková, Multikulturní centrum Praha / [Multicultural Centre Prague](http://www.mkc.cz) (www.mkc.cz), is preparing a publication modelled on *Fragments from the Dark*
- Würzburg: *Heimfocus. A Voice for Refugees*, www.heimfocus.net, since 2010

(b) Factual statements available on demand (*named in notes)

- Benefits to refugees: 6 contributing refugees; 3 other refugees
- Benefits to charities: *Chief Executive of Welsh Refugee Council; *Chief Officer of Displaced People in Action; *Director of Wales Migration Partnership; *Chief Executive of Race Council Cymru (and Principal Equality and Diversity Officer, South Wales Police); Chair of City of Sanctuary UK; Chair of Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group
- Benefits to arts organisations: *Keeper of Social and Cultural History at St Fagans National History Museum; Exhibitions and Events Officer at Swansea Museum; Project Manager at Literature Wales; Chair of Welsh Books Council