

<b>Institution: University of Bristol</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 28, Modern Languages and Linguistics</b>
<b>Title of case study: <i>Love and Anarchy: Increasing Awareness for Chanson in Britain: translating and performing the songs of Léo Ferré</i></b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>In contrast to many European countries, public performance of music in languages other than English is still rare in the UK. French specialist Peter Hawkins has been researching and teaching the genre of <i>chanson</i> as a key element of French popular culture for most of his career. His research has fed into a regular series of public engagement activities over the past decade and beyond, including public performances of French <i>chanson</i> at a variety of venues. In a set of concerts given in spring 2013, Hawkins performed his own English translations of French <i>chansons</i> by the sometimes controversial Monegasque writer Léo Ferré, who is exceptionally well-known in France but much less so in the UK. The aim was to bring this particular type of musical poetry to a non-French-speaking audience. Feedback from the various audiences shows that some 70% feel that singing French <i>chanson</i> in English was a success and significantly extended and enhanced their cultural experience.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research underpinning this case study was carried out by Peter Hawkins, formerly Senior Lecturer in French and, since his retirement in 2008, Senior Research Fellow in the School of Modern Languages. His research grew out of extensive practical experience of the genre, which led to numerous television and radio programmes with the BBC and the teaching of <i>Chanson française</i> as a very popular final year undergraduate teaching option between 1993 and 2008 at the University of Bristol. In addition, Hawkins presented his work at a number of academic conferences in the UK and France, often supplemented with actual performance of Ferré's work.</p> <p>'En France, tout finit par des chansons' is a well-known phrase which sums up the importance of <i>chanson</i> for the French. A song tradition that goes back to the Middle Ages and troubadours of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, <i>chanson</i> is part of the texture of everyday life in France – a part of the national identity and a barometer of popular taste. In the first academic study of <i>chanson</i> in English, <i>Chanson: The French Singer-Songwriter from Aristide Bruant to the Present Day</i> [3], Hawkins examines the background to the genre and the difficulties in defining what is and what is not <i>chanson</i>. The focus of his monograph then moves to the development of the singer-songwriter of <i>chanson</i> from 1900 to the present day. This period saw the emergence of national icons from Aristide Bruant at the end of the nineteenth century through to internationally recognized musicians such as Jacques Brel and Serge Gainsbourg in the mid-twentieth. The book provides bibliographies, discographies and details of video recordings for each of the singer-songwriters whose work it analyses. It is an essential reference guide to the genre, an in-depth case history of the adaptation of an ancient form to the demands of the modern mass media and a model for the analysis of the cultural and aesthetic contribution of important song writers. The book – widely referenced in a 2003 collection of essays on French popular music (ed. Dauncey and Cannon) and described there as 'the most recent and arguably most authoritative study of the <i>chanson</i>' and 'an invaluable study' (p. 244) – continues to sell even after more than a decade. Research was also disseminated via academic and popular lecture. Other published research ([1] and [2] below) appeared in reputable peer-reviewed journals including <i>French Cultural Studies</i>.</p> <p>The case study focuses on Hawkins research and performance of the work of Léo Ferré (1916-1993) who was a poet, a composer and a dynamic and controversial live performer whose career in France dominated the years after the Second World War until his death. He is the least well-known of the major practitioners of the genre in the Anglophone world, and in several articles and conference papers Hawkins documented the reasons for his influential</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

status in France. Whereas the other defining figures, such as Jacques Brel and Georges Brassens, had been the subject of academic studies (Poole, 2000; Tinker, 2005) and had been translated and performed in English, Ferré had not been given comparable attention. Of all the figures in the *chanson* genre, Ferré has the strongest links to the French poetic tradition of the previous century, and illustrates the incorporation of poetry into the electronic mass media in contemporary France.

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

All the publications listed below are single-authored by Hawkins:

- [1] 'Léo Ferré: Modernism, Postmodernism and the Avant-Garde in Popular Chanson,' *French Cultural Studies*, 16.2, (2005), pp. 169-178. Can be supplied on request. First delivered as a conference paper at the national conference of French Studies (Bristol, 2003), along with a recital of Léo Ferré songs in French
- [2] 'The career of Léo Ferré: a Bourdieusian Analysis', *Volume*, 2.2 (2002), 55-67. Can be supplied on request. First delivered as a paper at the University of Manchester in 2001
- [3] *Chanson: the French Singer-Songwriter from Aristide Bruant to the Present Day*, Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000, 256pp. Can be supplied on request.

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

Hawkins' academic work has broadened the audience for *chanson* and significantly increased popular knowledge of it in the U.K. In recognition of the impact of his research, He was made *Officier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques* in 2009, an order bestowed specifically in recognition of contributions by members of the academic and teaching communities to the growth and development of the impact of French culture internationally.

Léo Ferré (1916-1993) was one of the greatest French-language singer-songwriters, along with Jacques Brel, Georges Brassens and Charles Aznavour. Unlike theirs, however, his songs are very little known in the English-speaking world. He was a poet, a classical composer and a dynamic and controversial live performer whose career in France dominated the years after the Second World War until his death in 1993. He released some forty albums over this period, composing the music and the majority of the lyrics, and released many hit singles, particularly between 1960 and the mid-seventies.

The *Love and Anarchy* project central to this case study aims to create similar success for Léo Ferré in the UK – a figure so popular in French culture that even the French President François Hollande has identified himself as one of Ferré's admirers. Ferré's music had a considerable influence over the development of French music culture during the 1970s, inspiring celebrated French artists such as Bernard Lavilliers, Jacques Higelin and Julien Clerc. The project, therefore, is intended to enhance the cross-cultural nature of British and French popular music, but also puts the cultural heritage of French music into an international context.

*Love and Anarchy* incorporates three impact initiatives:

1. concerts of Ferré's work since 2011, of which three from 2013 (Bristol, London, Sheffield) are central for this Impact case study, where Hawkins performed translated versions of Ferré's music and introduced Ferré's songs with contextual information based on Hawkins' research on *chanson*;
2. public songwriting and guitar workshops on the day after the concerts where Hawkins met with members of the audience, in particular guitarists and songwriters, who used the opportunity to learn about popular French music, and to experiment with and incorporate this music genre into their own music production;
3. the publication (March 2013) of a CD *Love and Anarchy – The Songs of Leo Ferré*, containing 25 studio recordings of Ferré's songs and an extensive 50-page booklet with

## Impact case study (REF3b)

Ferré's songs and poetry in English translation. The CD has a 'print-run' of 1000 copies and is being sold world-wide;

4. a website ([www.onemanchanson.com](http://www.onemanchanson.com)) that presents Hawkins' work on Ferré, offers 'tasters' of his public performance, and includes a feedback section for the public.

Each concert was followed by an opportunity for the audience to comment in the form of a feedback questionnaire. In addition, Hawkins engaged in discussions and answered questions during an audience forum after each concert. Furthermore, those attending the concert were given Hawkins' contact details and web address, and encouraged to visit the website and leave comments about the performance, and the project more generally. This information was provided on the concert programme and in the form of a business-card-sized contact card, which ensured that the audience was able to take the details home with them. The concerts taking place during this Impact period were attended by up to 90 people each and comments included references to increased 'understanding of Léo Ferré [and] his music' and of 'an interesting period of French cultural change', to 'open[ing] everyone's minds to places where they [otherwise] miss things' and the 'transcend[ence] of culture and language' and a broad appreciation of the extent to which the material presented was culturally distinctive.

During the concerts and the workshop, Hawkins offered substantive introductions to each song and provided the audience with further contextualization of Ferré's songs, both in their historical dimension and their current appreciation in modern French society. The feedback suggests that most of the audience had been familiar with French *chanson* in general but not with Ferré in particular. 70% of the audience say that they enjoyed listening to French *chanson* in translation and that it worked well, whereas 17% prefer the original French. Overall, Hawkins' scholarly contribution and his artistic work have significantly furthered an awareness of Ferré's work in particular and French *chanson* more generally. *Love and Anarchy* is internationally available on the iTunes store, downloadable from amazon.com and available via Spotify.

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

- [a] Statements to corroborate the broader impact of Hawkins' research on *chanson* on curriculum development in the teaching of French culture at UK universities are attached: Professor David Looseley (Leeds), Dr Fiona Cox (Exeter), Dr Helen Abbott (Bangor/Sheffield) and Dr Barbara Lebrun (Manchester).
- [b] Sales and library borrowing figures for Hawkins' book on *Chanson* [3 above] can be provided on request (from Ashgate Publishing).
- [c] Statements from the Cultural Service of the French Embassy in London, the Alliance française in Bristol (Françoise Evans) and the Honorary French consul in Bristol (Mrs Annie Burnside) can be provided on request.
- [d] Questionnaires completed immediately after the workshops and concerts can be provided on request.