

Institution: Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU)		
Unit of Assessment: 29 – English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: The reception of the work of William Blake - His influence and significance today		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011-2020		
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 Sibylle Erle	Reader in English Literature	07/09/2006 to date
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 01/06/2014 – 31/12/2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>A series of engagement and co-production activities raised awareness of the work of William Blake (1757-1827), and enhanced the appreciation of his relevance and importance today. Impact was achieved locally, nationally and internationally, through events in Lincoln, London and Germany. Modes of impact incorporated collaboration with arts and heritage sector professionals, promotion of new forms of artistic expression, support of a learning society, celebration of a major literary anniversary (<i>Frankenstein</i>), and enhancing understanding of the cultural theme of monsters and of the contemporary issue of death. Beneficiaries comprised a number of public, professional, and third-sector partners, and public event participants.</p>		
2. Underpinning research – References in section 3 are indicated by number (e.g., R1)		
<p>New research on William Blake's art since 2014 has focused on four perspectives: his early years, reception in Europe, influence on the artist Ludwig Meidner, and the concepts of monsters and death. Interdisciplinary explorations across these dimensions have invigorated national and international debates.</p>		
Early Years		
<p>The rediscovery in 2012 of Blake's <i>Illustrations of the Book of Job</i> (1828) in the library of Alfred, Lord Tennyson at the Lincolnshire Archives developed into a project on Blake's early reception. This was reflected in a number of publications and events (R1, R3, R6) and in particular, the edited collection that won the Allan Lloyd Smith Prize for Gothic Criticism (R5), as well as others (e.g., 'William Blake in context' (for the 'Literature in context' series, Haggarty 2019, Cambridge University Press) and a conference paper (Oxford).</p>		
Blake and Europe		
<p>While much work has been done on Blake's British reception, scholarly work on his European reception are only just emerging. <i>The Reception of William Blake in Europe</i> (R1) presents a comprehensive picture of the reception of Blake's works in more than 23 European countries (19th to 21st centuries). The co-edited two-volume collection charting histories of discovery and identifying routes of influence is a landmark work of reference. Reviews have noted that that it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'gives the history and contexts of Blake's arrival in country after country ... is extraordinarily thorough in its reach ... The seeds of many dissertations lie in these volumes' (Eighteenth-Century Studies, 2020); 		

- ‘performs an important task in expanding Blake’s afterlife to better encompass its true reach and complexity, and in doing so, opens up foundations for new research that will surely be built upon in many years to come’ ([Romantik](#), 2019);
- ‘stands as an impressive and original contribution to Blake scholarship and will surely inspire future reception scholarship’ ([European Romantic Review](#), 2020).

Blake and Meidner

In researching the reception of Blake’s art in Germany, deep affinities were discovered between Blake and Ludwig Meidner (1884-1966), the German-Jewish expressionist painter (R1, R2). This is reflected in objects, letters and diaries in archives in the UK and Germany. Meidner was aware of Blake when in Germany, but only connected with Blake’s work during his exile in London (1939-1953). This relationship can also be understood in the context of a Blake revival in 1940s Britain.

Monsters and Death

Research investigating Blake, text-image relationships, his reception, and connections with attitudes towards death have been reflected in R3 and R5. In addition, this perspective also led to a related exploration of the concept of monsters which originated in collective work within the interdisciplinary ‘Literature and Literacies’ Research and Knowledge Exchange Unit at BGU, involving English and Education researchers in particular. Activities also extended to further collaboration with the BGU Chaplaincy, as well as the co-produced, open-access journal edition on the theme of ‘[Monsters: interdisciplinary explorations in monstrosity](#)’, *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* (Springer, 2019-2020).

3. References to the research

1. Erle, S. and Paley, M.D. (eds) (2019) *The Reception of William Blake in Europe*, 2 vols (London: Bloomsbury Academic).
2. Erle, S. (2018) “‘O warum wurde ich mit einem anderen Gesicht geboren’: Meidner und Blake” (“‘O why was I born with a different face’: Meidner and Blake”), in Riedel, E. and Wenzel, M. (eds.) *Expressionismus, Ekstase, Exil: Ludwig Meidner (Exile, Ecstasy, Expressionism: Ludwig Meidner)* (Berlin: Reimer and Gebr. Mann), 233-56.
3. Erle, S. (2018) ‘From vampire to Apollo: William Blake’s Ghosts of the Flea c. 1819-1820’, in Bruder, H.P. and Connolly, T. (eds) *Beastly Blake*, Palgrave Studies in Animals and Literature (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan), 225-52.
4. Erle, S. (2018) “‘How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe ...?’: Frankenstein, Walton and the Monster’, *Disbelief and Romanticism*, Tímár, A. (ed.) *AnaChronisT*, special edn, New Series, 144-67.
5. Erle, S. (2017) “‘On the Very Verge of Legitimate Invention’: Charles Bonnet and William Blake’s illustrations to Robert Blair’s *The Grave* (1808)’, in Davison, C.M. (ed.) *The Gothic and Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 34-47.
6. Erle, S. (2016) *Tennyson and Blake: Benjamin Jowett’s copy of Blake’s Illustrations of the Book of Job on the Isle of Wight*, *Tennyson Research Bulletin*, Monograph Series, 16 (Lincoln: The Tennyson Society).

4. Details of the impact – Sources in section 5 are indicated by number (e.g., S1)

The central theme of the impact was exploration of the diverse responses to Blake and his influence on different cultures – through literature, translation, art, exhibitions and music. This was channelled through public-engagement events, collaborations and projects in Lincoln, elsewhere in the UK, and Germany.

Impact types were diverse:

- Collaboration with heritage/arts sectors;
- Inspiring/supporting new forms of artistic expression;

Impact case study (REF3)

- Enhancing understanding of contemporary issues;
- Stimulating public interest/engagement in research;
- Contributing to commemoration.

Principal beneficiaries were:

- Public, professional, and third-sector partners;
- Public event participants.

Partnership and co-production

In 2018, there was a collaborative project with artist, Bridget Smith, for the Lincoln-city-wide Arts Council Funded 'Mansions of the Future' project. The poster on Tennyson, designed by Smith, included William Allingham's annotation and credited both Allingham and Tennyson (**S4**).

Also in 2018, as part of the bi-centenary of the publication of *Frankenstein*, there were the following public engagement events:

- BBC Radio Lincolnshire interview;
- Public reading of *Frankenstein* as part of *Frankenreads* with BGU Chaplaincy;
- Two film screenings (BGU Venue), with panel discussion (for adults, target audience) and artistic workshop (for children, target audience) (**S10**).

Throughout 2019-20, partnership with and support of The Blake Society expanded, as reflected in the organisation of:

- Four Society events relating to the production of *The Reception of William Blake in Europe*, attracting audiences from Brazil, Canada, USA, as well as the United Kingdom and Europe (**S5**);
- The Society's first ZOOM event (2020); a creative response to contributions to *The Gothic and Death* and *Beastly Blake*, in collaboration with artist, Marina White Raven. This resulted in *The Sick Rose: Encountering William Blake*, a live performance for lockdown one: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_MKE4nIZew&t=38s (**S8**);
- Production of the Society's new online magazine, *VALA*, from 28 November 2020 (**S5**).

Throughout 2017-20, collaboration and co-production has been central to the BGU-based annual public 'Death Conferences'. The 2020 event, which included further involvement of Maria White Raven, attracted the following comment from a professional practitioner: the "skilful organisation and caring facilitation opened up space to network and creatively explore that which is often taboo. As someone from a health background I learned that death and dying crosses disciplines and professions. There are many, unique perspectives to learn from and huge potential to grow and work together" (**S9**).

The Death Conferences, 2017-20, together with exploration of the theme of monsters, has extended to further engagement with Lincoln Cathedral, as reflected in various contributions (**S7, S10**):

- Displays on death and monsters, the Wren Library: 'A wonderful exhibition of these terrible monsters' (Visitor Book comment);
- Dragon Trail;
- Monster Wow Day;
- Monster Story-telling events.

Public talks and workshops

Various other public talks and presentations were given and extended the reach of the impact

internationally. Indicative feedback was received as follows.

Lincoln:

- New Mondays Art Group at The Usher Gallery/The Collection (Lincoln) (2018) (25 attendees); 'Due to Sibylle's knowledge and enthusiasm, we all felt we wanted to know more and expand our knowledge on Blake - I wish more university lecturers would share their knowledge in the local area!' (**S1**);
- Lincolnshire Archives (Lincoln) (2019), workshops on Tennyson and Blake: 'The outcome of the workshop demonstrated the importance of allowing access to original records in order to provoke discussion and engagement with an audience' (**S6**).
- Lincoln Theological Network Lecture Series (2019);
- BGU Associate Award Seminar Series (2016-2019) (**S10**).

UK:

- Whitworth Art Gallery (Manchester) (2017);
- Ben Uri Gallery and Museum (London), part of events programme, *Refugees: The Lives of Others: two exhibitions of works by German refugee artists*, works by Eva Frankfurter (2017), and *German refugee artists to Britain since 1900* (2017);
- Swedenborg House for the Swedenborg Society, to coincide with exhibition "Swedenborg and the English Romantics" (2018); the event was 'completely sold out ... the format of the room to allow more attendees ... Tennyson's links to Swedenborg are often overlooked' (**S4**);
- John Rylands Library (Manchester) (2019) (80 attendees) (**S10**);
- Tate Gallery (London) (2019); introduction to an invited symposium, 'Blake in Europe', with guided tour (25 attendees), and including work on Meidner. A contribution was also made to a second event (Senate House) on Blake's poetry (30 attendees) (**S5, S10**).

Europe:

- Museum Giersch der Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt, on Ludwig Meidner, accompanying exhibition, "Horcher in die Zeit – Ludwig Meidner im Exil" (2016) (**S2**);
- Haus der Romantik (2017); Phillips University, Marburg (2015 and 2017);
- A public lecture tour on Blake's German reception incorporated talks in Düsseldorf, Essen, Münster and Schwerin, organised by Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft Ruhr e.V. Essen (2018); and culminated in a lecture for Deutsch-Britische Nürnberg e.V. (2019); 'Dr Erle was recommended to us as someone with an unrivalled breadth and depth of knowledge about William Blake' (**S3**).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Testimonial: Hilary Bower (New Monday Art Group Lincoln)
www.newmondayartgrouplincoln.co.uk..
2. Testimonial: Erik Riedel (Curator Ludwig Meidner Archive, Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt)
[https://www.juedischesmuseum.de/en/connect/ansprechpartner/.](https://www.juedischesmuseum.de/en/connect/ansprechpartner/)
3. Testimonial: William Blundell, President, Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft Nürnberg, e.V.
[https://www.deutsch-britische-nuernberg.de/en/the-board-of-the-dbg/.](https://www.deutsch-britische-nuernberg.de/en/the-board-of-the-dbg/)
4. Testimonial: Avery Curran and Stephen McNeilly, Executive Director and Museum Director of the Swedenborg Society [https://www.swedenborg.org.uk/.](https://www.swedenborg.org.uk/)
5. Testimonial: Tim Heath, Chair of The Blake Society, St. James in London
<https://www.blakesociety.org/>; see also:

- 'In terms of numbers the first issue of VALA will be published digitally and made available through the Society's Newsletter, Twitter and FaceBook followers amounting

to 9,199 contacts. For the events of Dieter Loechle, Harriet Stubbs and Marina White Raven the participants who registered on Zoom numbered 66, 46 and 96 respectively ... Although geography may not be the sole measure of Impact, the range and imagination of her exegesis has brought William Blake's championship of the creative arts to a far wider range of people than has ever been achieved before'.

- [VALA](#) is 'a free online publication that celebrates William Blake's art and legacy in exciting new ways ... driven by the creative impulse to produce something that makes Blake relevant to the now and the everyday – in a magazine style'
6. Testimonial: Jess Hogg (Tennyson Research Centre, at Lincolnshire Archives in London)
<https://www.lincstothepast.com/home/tennyson-resources/309.article>
 7. Testimonial: Claire Arrand (Exchequer Gate, Lincoln Cathedral)
<https://www.lincoln.ac.uk/news/2014/04/884.asp>
 8. Testimonial: Marina White Raven (multi-dimensional, socially engaged artist based in London):
 - 'Creative conversations were conducted via Skype and a dialogue unravelled ... This collaboration has had a wide reaching impact and continues to expand. Creating a piece to be performed live on ZOOM brought in other collaborators ... Making work for ZOOM has been an unexpected revelation for myself as a live artist, providing a new canvas and materials, which have the added advantage of an unlimited reach and new audiences.'
 9. Testimonial: Anna Biley, Dip.N., MSc (Nursing), Doctorate Caring Science, Watson Caring Science Institute.
 10. Testimonial: emails and photographs from participants, academic and general public (Tennyson and Monster-related events, and Death-and-Dying related events).