

Institution: University of Stirling		
Unit of Assessment: 27. English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: Terror and Wonder: Driving Social and Economic Impact of Public Understanding of Gothic Cultural Production		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2016		
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:
Justin Edwards	Professor	09/2016 - Present
Dale Townshend	Senior Lecturer	2003 - 08/2016
Peter Lindfield	Postdoctoral Researcher	09/2015 - 11/2017
Glennis Byron	Professor, Honorary Professor	1993 - 03/2013, 04/2014 - Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-Dec 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Research at Stirling has led the way on understanding the previously underexplored globalised aspects of Gothic cultural aesthetics. Our research into the socio-economic and cultural aesthetics of the Gothic led to a collaboration with the British Library (BL) on the exhibition 'Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination' (2014-15), which resulted in a new visitor experience at the BL, significantly increased visitor numbers, and exceeded target income at the BL. The exhibit attracted the highest number of visitors for a BL exhibit running over 16 weeks. The exhibition also caused a change in practice at Gothic-related heritage sites, with increased incorporation of research into cultural heritage activities. This impact was directly related to the AHRC network 'Global Gothic' (2008-09) and the AHRC award 'Writing Britain's Ruins, 1700-1850: The Architectural Imagination' (2014-17).</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The research for this project, Global Gothic, was undertaken by Glennis Byron and the AHRC Principal Investigator Dale Townshend in his research project 'Writing Britain's Ruins', and exploited in 'Tropical Gothic' by Justin D Edwards and Peter Lindfield. From 2000 to 2013, Byron undertook pioneering work on the international cultural influence of Gothic aesthetics, disseminated in the edited volume <i>Globalgothic</i> (2013) (R1). Byron's work is part of a new wave of Gothic Studies that has aimed to recast the debate about Gothic aesthetics beyond the Anglophone context. Byron and others have investigated the socio-economic and cultural impact of Gothic from an international perspective. 'In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries gothic has progressed far beyond being fixed in terms of any one geographically conscribed mode' and has developed alongside an 'increasingly integrated global economy' (R1). Byron focusses particularly on how globalisation has affected transnational Gothic production and popularity.</p> <p>Townshend and Edwards were on the advisory board and participants in Byron's Gothic network grant and they further investigated the international dimensions of Gothic from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Townshend and Byron co-edited the book <i>The Gothic World</i> (2014) (R2), a collection of essays encompassing new directions in cultural production and critical debates in Gothic. The collection draws together contributions from leading academics in history, architecture, music, fashion, film, new media and literature. Similarly, Edwards co-edited <i>Tropical Gothic in Literature and Culture</i> (2016) (R3), which was developed out of papers presented at the International Gothic Conference (2013), and examines how Gothic adapts to different geographical locations by thriving upon local popular culture through transculturation and tropicalisation. The findings of this research documented the transnational interventions of the Gothic by mapping the flows of Gothic</p>		

forms across borders and geographical regions to tease out the complexities of Gothic cultural production within cultural and linguistic translations. The research underpinning the impact evidenced the ubiquity of Gothic forms, modes and aesthetics across nations and continents.

The British Library exhibition 'Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination' drew directly on the research of Byron, Townshend and Edwards, and thus in itself provided a new research model for how humanities can inform public engagement with large-scale exhibitions. As described in section 4 below, Townshend acted as a research advisor for every aspect of the 'Terror and Wonder' BL exhibition. This project also generated new findings, including the book publication of *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination* (2014) (R4) edited by Townshend. Edwards builds on Townshend's work by revealing how the Gothic aesthetic is perceived across regional, linguistic and national borders. Edwards recounted the research findings of this process of translating cultural research into public engagement in an article published on the open access Gothic Imagination website.

3. References to the research

R1. Glennis Byron (ed) *Globalgothic* (Manchester UP, 2013); includes chapters by Glennis Byron and Justin D Edwards. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18mbfxg>

R2. Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend (eds) *The Gothic World* (Routledge, 2014); includes chapters by Byron, Townshend and Edwards. DOI: [10.4324/9780203490013](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203490013)

R3. Justin D Edwards and Sandra Vasconcelos (eds) *Tropical Gothic in Literature and Culture* (Routledge, 2016); includes a co-authored introduction by the co-editors and a chapter (included in REF2) by Edwards. DOI: [10.4324/9781315689999](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315689999)

R4. Dale Townshend (ed) *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination* (British Library, 2014); includes a 10,000-word introduction by Townshend

Research Grants

International Research Network, 'Global Gothic', funded by the AHRC (AH/F012519/1) 2008-09 (21 months): GBP59,969.40. Edwards and Townshend were on the Advisory Board for the management of this grant.

Research Grant, 'Writing Britain's Ruins, 1700—1850', funded by the AHRC (AH/F17704/1) 2014-17: GBP147,975. In addition to research toward academic publications, this grant included the appointment of Dr Peter Lindfield as a postdoctoral fellow and research assistant (12 months); a major international conference, 'Reading Architecture Across the Arts and Humanities'; 6 videocasts on 'The Gothic Revival: Interdisciplinary Perspectives'; and the organization of a series of public lectures at Strawberry Hill House.

4. Details of the impact

The British Library (BL) benefited from the cultural and financial impact of the largest and most comprehensive Gothic exhibition, 'Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination', to take place in a public institution worldwide. This impact on visitor experience at the BL was based on University of Stirling research that was funded by two AHRC grants that ran during two periods (2008-09 and 2014-15).

The link between the research and the BL had two aims: to apply cultural research to inform an exciting new interpretation of Gothic history through a major exhibit at the BL, and to strengthen the connections and consensus between public understanding of the history of Gothic aesthetics

and the academic community. In achieving these aims, the collaboration offered a pioneering model for the application of humanities research – literary, historical and cultural – to an exhibit that improved the BL's financial position and its engagement with the public. 'Terror and Wonder' included visual and textual media, displayed many rare manuscripts and editions, presented unique film and video footage, exhibited original visual art, photographs and clothing, so that visitors engaged with and understood the many aspects of the history of Gothic aesthetics from the 18th century to the present (see BL description and promotional video: <https://www.bl.uk/events/terror-and-wonder--the-gothic-imagination>).



Figure 1. 'Terror and Wonder' BL Exhibit Promotional Image

This new visitor experience immersed members of the public in the many facets of Gothic aesthetics (literary, cinematic, artistic, photographic, architectural) drawn directly from the models explored in Byron's work and furthered by Townshend's and Edwards's research.

In the course of this project, Edwards contributed as a consultant, while Townshend wrote text for various media, advised on the design and layout of the exhibition, selected works for inclusion, and briefed staff on research findings. Townshend conducted original cultural research to inform the new aesthetic history of Gothic, and also translated his research into text for exhibition placards, the exhibit's website and promotional material, as well as editing the exhibition catalogue *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination* (R4). His findings about the history of Gothic aesthetics enabled the first large-scale presentation of Gothic production across a range of media and periods that immersed visitors in various forms of representation and key debates. He also delivered historical briefings for exhibition guides and promoted the exhibit through the opening reception and radio appearances (S1).

The launch of the 'Terror and Wonder' exhibit in October 2014 and the accompanying media and promotional activities helped the BL to achieve its goal of stabilising income streams for its exhibition space through increased visitors. The BL exceeded target ticket sales by 18.3% and decided to add 24 extra slots in the final two weeks of the exhibition to satisfy visitor demand. During the period of the exhibition (3 Oct 2014 to 20 Jan 2015), the target number of visitors and tickets sales was 50,036; the actual number of visitors and tickets taken was 59,198 (S2).

In addition to attracting new audiences, the unique exhibit enhanced public awareness of the history of Gothic and informed public opinion about the meanings of Gothic aesthetics. *Time Out* named 'Terror and Wonder' as one of its top 10 things to do for Halloween 2014 and, according to *The Guardian*, it 'teems with arresting exhibits', offering an original perspective that conveys an 'epic journey through a literary genre and its endless cultural transformations' (S3(a) & (b)). A visitor commented that it 'transformed my understanding of gothic', while another said 'I saw stuff I didn't know existed in the history of gothic' (S4). The level of awareness in approaching Gothic from this new perspective was increased by the daily Learning Workshops for pre-HE students. Over 8,000 post-secondary students participated in workshops led by exhibition staff who were informed and advised by the research underpinning the exhibit (S2). The high number of visitors translated into other new public exhibitions and public lectures involving researchers at Stirling on Gothic, specifically at Strawberry Hill House and The Old Operating Theatre (see below). This public response indicates the importance of quality, research-based interpretation for increasing visitor numbers in public exhibition spaces, and it is evidence that academic research into Gothic can enhance and transform public understanding of the history of Gothic cultural production.

The second aim of the collaboration with the BL was achieved by ensuring provision was made

so that groups of museum and exhibition curators could attend the exhibition in special groups and learn about how academic research can inform a large-scale public exhibit. Over 200 curators participated in these small-group sessions, which was part of implementing a strategy to build links between academic research and public exhibitions. This has engendered a cultural change wherein Stirling researchers have advised other Gothic exhibits and integrated public lectures into the exhibitions (**S2**).

Among the events that have taken place as a result of this new positioning of Gothic research and public exhibitions are the highly successful 'Medical Horrors' exhibit at The Old Operating Theatre, London (Oct-Nov 2015; coordinated and delivered by Edwards) and 'Writing Britain's Ruins, 1700-1850' at Strawberry Hill House (May-June 2016; a public lecture series coordinated and partly delivered by Townshend and Lindfield). In the former, Edwards advised The Old Operating Theatre curators on the history of dissections and terrifying medical procedures in Gothic literary and cultural history. He also presented a public lecture, 'Gothic Dissections: Medical Dissections in Literature and Popular Culture', to launch the exhibit on Halloween 2015 (attended by 65). In the latter, Townshend and Linfield advised Strawberry Hill House curators on the history of Gothic design for exhibitions on Gothic furniture and architecture. They also coordinated and participated in a series of six public lectures by leading scholars in the field about, among other things, Horace Walpole's Gothic architecture, the ruins of Tintern Abbey and Gothic-inspired interiors (attended by 35 per lecture) (**S5**).

In a retrospective looking at the success of 'Terror and Wonder' exhibition, Greg Buzwell, Curator of Contemporary Literary and Creative Archives at BL, highlighted its strong legacy in inspiring interest in the Gothic, including a range of books, learning courses, and the depositing of further Gothic material in the BL itself. 'Terror and Wonder' also firmly placed Gothic on the agenda of the BL, as it has 'become something of a tradition to hold a Gothic-themed event around the time of Halloween' (**S6**).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1. Dale Townshend (ed), *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination*. British Library Publishing, 2014 (exhibition catalogue).

S2. British Library Data Report: Visitor Numbers for 'Terror and Wonder' Exhibit.

S3. (a) Jonathan Jones 'Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination – An Epic Tour Through the Dark Corners of Desire' *The Guardian* 3 October 2014. Available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/oct/03/terror-and-wonder-the-gothic-imagination-british-library>.

S3. (b) 'Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination' *Time Out* 28 October 2014. Available online at: <https://www.timeout.com/london/things-to-do/terror-and-wonder-the-gothic-imagination>.

S4. Visitor Testimonials: Terror and Wonder Exhibit.

S5. Writing the Ruins Public Lecture Series Program and Promotional Information.

S6. Greg Buzwell, Curator of Contemporary Literary and Creative Archives (BL), 'Tales of Terror and Wonder – A Gothic Legacy' *English and Drama blog* 24 June 2020. Available online at: <https://blogs.bl.uk/english-and-drama/2020/06/tales-of-terror-and-wonder-a-gothic-legacy.html>.