

Institution: University of Stirling
Unit of Assessment: D29 English Language and Literature
Title of case study: The Global Gothic: improving public understanding of the Gothic aesthetic
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Glennis Byron's and Dale Townshend's research on the Gothic, including that undertaken through Stirling's 'Global Gothic' project, has had a significant impact on new student audiences, media professionals and curators, broadening and challenging their understanding of the Gothic as a mode of cultural production. The underpinning research focused on expanding and modifying the category of the Gothic as a critical descriptor. During the REF period this work improved the ways in which media professionals, curators and members of the general public have understood and interpreted Gothic forms, and enhanced A-Level students' learning experiences in the UK. The impact has significant reach locally, nationally and globally, with, for example, Stirling's Gothic Imagination website receiving c. 7000 visitors per month, and 290 A-level students across the UK attending Townshend's online seminar.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The work of Byron (retired for health reasons 2013) and Townshend covers Gothic cultural production across a variety of forms, from the eighteenth century to the present day. From the broad base of Gothic research at Stirling two trends in particular underpin the impact outlined in section 4. First, Byron and Townshend have developed the emerging research area of 'Global Gothic', a neologism coined by Byron originally to name an AHRC research network funded from 2008-09. Over the 18 months of the project, Stirling hosted two academic symposia for the members of the network, a postgraduate conference on the theme of 'Global Gothic', and subsequently published two volumes of essays, <i>Globalgothic</i> and <i>The Gothic World</i> (see references 6 and 7).</p> <p>Townshend worked closely with Byron on this network, the aim of which was to interrogate the extent to which seemingly 'Gothic' modes of cultural production from nations beyond the Anglo-American frame could ever be designated as 'Gothic', and if so, under what conditions. Byron argues in her essay for David Punter's <i>A New Companion to the Gothic</i>, that there is much evidence to suggest that 'Gothic' is a term which is increasingly being claimed rather than imposed. A related aim of the AHRC network was to consider the Gothic aesthetic as a recognisable and marketable 'brand' that, in accordance with the dynamics of globalisation, has been both exported into, and substantially enriched and been altered by, encounters with non-Western cultures. Byron's and Townshend's research constituted the conceptual framework for this network, and set its agenda. Comprising twenty-seven scholars from the UK, USA, Germany, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Canada and Thailand, the research project initiated critical dialogue concerning a broad range of interdisciplinary forms (films; dance; theatre; literature; music) from across the globe. Guided by a theoretical interest in globalisation, the network mapped and accounted for the interactions between local and national Gothic forms and more recognisably 'Western' modes of Gothic expression. In <i>The Gothic World</i>, Byron and Townshend extend these interests in the global dimensions of the Gothic, arguing that time, space and action, the three co-ordinates implied in the notion of a 'world', are crucial to understanding the particular forms that Gothic has assumed. Theorising this through the Bakhtinian notion of the chronotope that is expounded in a 10,000-word introduction, the collection comprises five theme-based divisions: Gothic histories; Gothic spaces; Gothic readers and writers; Gothic spectacle; and contemporary impulses.</p> <p>In addition to the particular transnational themes of 'Global Gothic', a second and over-arching strand of Byron's and Townshend's research concerns the limits and possibilities of the term 'Gothic' as a critical and aesthetic category. Thus Townshend works on the relationship between Gothic architecture and fiction, and Byron on the multifarious fictive forms of vampires. Although</p>

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the architectural implications of the term 'Gothic' were prominent in the eighteenth century, these have rather fallen out of currency in contemporary critical accounts of the Gothic aesthetic; Townshend's work thus aims to resituate the study of early Gothic writing within the broader, interdisciplinary context in which it first emerged. In both her New Casebook on *Dracula* and in her critical edition, Byron argues for the need to work with a broad set of cultural references for a full appraisal of the novel, from tourism to degeneration and capitalism. Byron's research on global manifestations of the Gothic is equally ambitious, interrogating in her work on the Spanish writer Carlos Ruiz Zafón, for instance, the extent to which 'Gothic' features as a marketing device. By interrogating the boundaries of the category 'Gothic' along a range of dimensions, Byron's and Townshend's research has underpinned a broadening of the understanding of the Gothic among media professionals, curators and A-Level students.

3. References to the research

- 1) Byron, Glennis, ed. *Dracula*. By Bram Stoker. Broadview Literary texts. Broadview, Ontario: Broadview, 1998.
- 2) Byron, Glennis, ed. *Dracula: Contemporary Critical Essays*. New Casebooks. London: Macmillan, 1999.
- 3) Townshend, Dale. *The Orders of Gothic: Foucault, Lacan, and the Subject of Gothic Writing, 1764-1820*. New York: AMS press, 2007.
- 4) Townshend, Dale. "Improvement and Repair: Architecture, Romance and the Politics of Gothic, 1790-1817." *Literature Compass* 8/10 (2011), 712–38.
- 5) Byron, Glennis. 'Global Gothic', in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter. Oxford: Blackwell, 2012, pp. 368-78.
- 6) Byron, Glennis, ed. *Globalgothic*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.
- 7) Byron, Glennis, and Dale Townshend, eds, *The Gothic World*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Quality: All the research listed here was subject to rigorous peer review by subject leaders. Byron's edition of *Dracula* was endorsed by academics for its rigour: 'No other edition so carefully assembles a wealth of contextual material, nor succeeds so admirably in drawing the reader into Stoker's cultural milieu' (David Glover, Southampton). Reviewing *The Orders of Gothic*, Robert Miles writes, 'No critical book in the field, of which I am aware, approaches Townshend's for its encyclopedic and exact knowledge of the field'. Byron's and Townshend's *The Gothic World* has been viewed by scholars as a rigorous, original and significant contribution to the field: 'an essential text for anyone interested not only in the Gothic but in cultural history' (Andrew Smith Sheffield). Discussing the defining rationale for the collection Monika Elbert (Professor of English, Montclair State University) concludes 'the editors and contributors to this volume are able to address changing meanings of the global Gothic across three centuries. The sense of Gothic boundarylessness is liberating and compelling'.

4. Details of the impact

The research has had specific impact on three main groups: (a) A-level students, (b) media professionals and curators, and (c) members of the public interested in the Gothic aesthetic.

In February 2012, Townshend organised and ran, with Dr Angela Wright of Sheffield University, an online seminar on the Gothic for A-level students across the country via the *Peripeteia* website – a forum designed to 'build confidence, creativity, and individual analytical style'. 250 A-level students from across the UK participated in this lively one-and-a-half-hour seminar, and subsequently, the online discussion has received over 1500 unique hits. Townshend ran a similar event on the topic of '*Frankenstein* as Romantic Text' in May 2013. This hour-long online seminar received a total of

290 posts from A-level students across the UK, with one user describing it as an ‘illuminating and perceptive seminar’. In both cases, the research that Townshend has published in *The Orders of Gothic* and *The Gothic World* was translated into educational contexts beyond Stirling. As the worksheets uploaded onto the website indicate, the extended account of the political myth of Gothic origins discussed at large in Townshend’s 10,000-word introduction to *The Gothic World* formed the background for the online discussion on ‘What is Gothic?’ in the first seminar, while in the second, the discussion drew specifically on the historical readings of *Frankenstein* advanced in *The Orders of Gothic*.

For groups (b) and (c), Byron’s and Townshend’s research has broadened the ways in which Gothic forms are understood, interpreted and used. A principal vehicle for this impact is the Stirling-based website, www.gothic.stir.ac.uk, which is run by Townshend and directly supported by Byron’s and Townshend’s research into modern and contemporary Gothic. Google analytics reveal that this website receives in excess of 7000 unique visitors per month; its content is shared further through social media sites (1700 followers on Twitter, and 678 ‘likes’ on Facebook). The website includes reviews of monographs; articles on relevant topics, guest blogs, the latest ‘news’ for the Gothic enthusiast, calls for papers; and published interviews with contemporary Gothic writers. Through the website, their work on Gothic as both a critical concept and an aesthetic with global reach has influenced publishers as well members of the public. The website’s standing – as the primary online resource dedicated to expanding, enhancing and disseminating Gothic scholarship among a broad base of readers beyond the academy – is attested to by the considerable interest it has attracted from publishers worldwide. Thus Orion books asked Byron and Townshend to publicise Justin Cronin’s video blog tour discussing his apocalyptic vampire novel, *The Passage* (2011), and similarly to publicise Michelle Paver’s *Dark Matter* (2011), with an exclusive interview with Paver published on the website. At the same time Faber publicised the reissue of two Gothic novels by Emma Tennant (originally published 1989 and 1992), and the website was asked to publish the preface to the book as a ‘sneak preview’. In 2011, Byron and Townshend worked with Faber to publicise Richard Kelly’s *The Possessions of Doctor Forest*, with Kelly interviewed on the website. These and the wide range of Gothic novelists interviewed for the website have broadened publishers’ conception of Gothic as a category, and created critical debate and reflection on contemporary Gothic cultural production among enthusiasts beyond the academy worldwide.

As well as aiding the reach of publishers through a diverse, global conception of the Gothic, Byron’s and Townshend’s work has also had an impact on UK media practitioners and curators. Byron was interviewed on the topic of Vampires by Heather Stott for BBC Radio Manchester in September 2009. Townshend, similarly, was interviewed about his work on Horace Walpole, Gothic architecture and early Gothic writing on “A Guided Tour to *The Castle of Otranto*”, a programme broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in March 2010, which was subsequently featured on BBC Radio 4’s “Pick of the Week” digest. In both these cases, the specialised research topics of Byron and Townshend improved the quality of debate about Gothic forms, thereby enhancing the understanding of the terms within the media and its regional and national audiences. Townshend’s research has also been picked up by curators at the British Library to assist their exhibition development and design. In November 2012 the Library’s Board of Governors approved an exhibition based on Townshend’s research, ‘Dark Horror! hear my call: 250 Years of the Gothic Imagination’ (the British Library normally hold three exhibitions per year), and Townshend is the sole academic advisor for the project. A team of three British Library curators, Tim Pye, Tanya Kirk and Philip Hatfield, have been working with Townshend since November 2012 and Greg Buzwell, an independent researcher, was appointed in January 2013 to work full-time on the development of the exhibition until the opening in 2014. A substantial section of the exhibition concerns Townshend’s specific field of current research, namely the connection between architecture and the Gothic in the period 1760-1840. Although the process of developing an exhibition is often invisible to the public, for the understanding of impact it is important to note the significant period of time that has already been invested, and the benefit that Townshend’s research has already brought to the British Library as an organisation and the current activities of its staff.

In the area of arts development, Byron’s and Townshend’s research underpinned a festival of international Gothic horror films held in 2008 at the MacRobert Centre, a public cinema and arts

centre situated on the University of Stirling campus. Entitled 'Hallowe'en Gothic', this festival of international horror film was a planned impact activity aimed specifically at benefiting the general cinema-going public in and around Stirling. The programme was informed by, and drew directly on, the research undertaken in the Global Gothic network symposia, and Byron's thesis about the contemporary proliferation of gothic art-forms. The festival – with 21 films from Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Chile, New Zealand, Germany and Japan, including shorts and full length features – exposed new cinema audiences to an unusually broad range of contemporary Gothic films from around the globe. In addition to the public-ticketed film screenings, attended on average by 60 people per screening, Byron and Townshend organized several events which engaged the cinema-viewing public to consider contemporary Gothic production within the context of globalization, and interrogated the applicability of the term 'Gothic' itself. In discussions, audience members commented that they were seeing many films for the first time and, aided by an accompanying series of public talks, workshops and lectures, they communicated their new-found sense of the diversity of 'the Gothic', and its non-Anglo-American contexts. Byron's and Townshend's research on the limits of the 'Gothic' descriptor were the driver behind these events; it led audiences to reconsider the 'Gothic' concept, and to reflect on its global reach. The Film Festival was reported positively in the *Sunday Times* as an important awareness-raising event, and was described in the headline as 'Raising Gothic Horrors from the Dead'.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. www.gothic.stir.ac.uk. The principal website run by Byron (until 2013) and Townshend.
2. <http://www.globalgothic.stir.ac.uk/>. The website of the AHRC network, an archive of the activities that took place under the auspices of the Global Gothic grant.
3. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00rb29b>: link to archived version of BBC Radio 4 programme, 'A Guided Tour to *The Castle of Otranto*'
4. <http://peripeteia.webs.com/apps/forums/topics/show/7276345> Townshend's co-hosted Gothic seminar on 26 February 2012 can be accessed here.
5. <http://peripeteia.webs.com/apps/forums/topics/show/8917858-frankenstein-and-the-romantic-imagination-?page=last>. Townshend's seminar on 'Frankenstein as a Romantic Text' on Thursday 2 May 2013 can be accessed here.
6. *Sunday Times*, 'Raising Gothic Horrors from the Dead'.
http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/culture/arts/Visual_Arts/article127503.ece
7. <http://forums.thedigitalfix.com/forums/showthread.php?t=525011>: link to a post by member of public on The Digital Fix Forums, 26 October 2010.
8. http://www.globalgothic.stir.ac.uk/show_event.php?id=6&content=25: link to the schedule and report on the festival of international Gothic horror films at the Macrobert Arts Centre, Stirling 2008.