

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Lincoln		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 27 – English Language and Literature		
<b>Title of case study:</b> A Climate of Fear: Gothic and our (Social) Landscape		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2014 - ongoing		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
ARMITT Lucie	Professor	1 Sep 13 to date
BREWSTER Scott	Associate Professor	1 Sep 14 to date
JONES Kelly	Senior Lecturer	24 Sep 07 to date
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014 - ongoing		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)          Research by Armitt, Brewster and Jones on Gothic storytelling and performance has had a significant impact on members of the public and new student audiences, fostering an improved understanding of the role Gothic continues to play in shaping our sense of place, community and the environment, including in the tourism and leisure industries. The research, whose impact has regional and national and generational reach, has increased cultural participation, improved awareness and changed the way in which the general public, older readers (60+), GCSE and A-Level students understand the resonance and relevance of Gothic in the twenty-first century.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)          Armitt, Brewster and Jones's research demonstrates that society's ongoing fascination with Gothic narratives and ghost stories in literature, film and theatre, the tourist and leisure industries and in scientific discourse derives from their unique potential to provide narrative shape to otherwise formless but preoccupying fears/anxieties surrounding our shifting relationships to geography, community and belonging.</p> <p>Armitt was the twentieth-century specialist in a national six-member team of academic researchers working with the British Library on its major exhibition 'Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination' (October 2014 - January 2015). Armitt wrote a 10,000-word essay, 'Twentieth-Century Gothic', for the accompanying catalogue [3.1], in which she explores how, 'in the active pursuit of what most frightens us, we continually reshape our Gothic monsters to fit society's changing fears' (150). This work prompted the wider research question of this Case Study: to what extent does the Gothic continue to play a role in the wider management of cultural anxiety and remain <i>the</i> literature of terror?</p> <p>Armitt's recent work on M.R. James's ghost stories and coastal erosion [3.2] breaks new critical ground by exploring the preponderance of Gothic metaphors used to 'manage' prevailing socio-cultural anxieties relating to storm surges and climate change. Her research on ghost stories of the North Sea coastline uncovers inter-disciplinary connections between folklore narratives of uncanny coastal predators, the historic findings of a Royal Commission and research by climate change scientists on storm surges and coastal erosion. She demonstrates that storytelling inhabits a role of equal shaping significance to those scientific narratives which measure, quantify and analyze shifting coastal and tidal patterns in these specified locales. In the process, the regionally-based ghost story is re-framed as a foundational discourse working alongside scientific methods, demonstrating how Gothic storytelling provides new ways of understanding the relationship between cultural anxiety and place.</p> <p>Brewster's research presents the Gothic, and the ghost story, as exploiting <i>and</i> managing concerns about place and cultural identity. He reveals how these concerns are confronted</p>		

through the blending of literary and popular narratives about community and locale, as in the work of James Hogg [3.3]. Brewster has also provided new insights into the cultural importance of the ghost story, and the central role it plays in shaping relationships to place and history within different regional, national and international contexts. His co-edited essay collection, *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story* (to which Armit and Jones also contribute essays), is the first comprehensive study of the different conceptions of the supernatural tale, and the social and cultural roles played by ghosts, across the world and significantly extends understanding of the ghost story tradition in the British Isles, continental Europe, the Americas, South Africa, India, South-East Asia and Australasia [3.4]. Brewster's individual contribution is a 5,000-word chapter on 'Ghost Walks', which establishes a novel appreciation of the links between literary ghost narratives and contemporary tourism.

Jones's work on contemporary Gothic drama, particularly the co-edited collection *Contemporary Gothic Drama: Attraction, Consummation and Consumption on the Modern British Stage* [3.5] and her essay on Frankenstein, adaptation and live theatre [3.6] has brought new critical attention to the continuing theatrical currency of the Gothic, highlighting the ambivalent appeal of the public performance, and embodiment, of fear among diverse audiences. Jones's individual contribution to her essay collection, a 9600-word chapter on Gothic Children and Contemporary Theatrical Performance, identifies new ways of presenting young protagonists in recent stage productions.

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

All of the research outputs listed here were subject to rigorous peer review by the subject community. Academic reviews have endorsed the rigour, significance and originality of the research. Armit's chapter in *Terror and Wonder* was praised by *Romantic Textualities* for doing 'an admirable job of contextualising and expanding' upon its stage of the British Library exhibition. Reviewing Brewster's *Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story* for the Supernatural Studies Association, Aran Ruth commented that the book was 'a welcome collection of interpretive and theoretical explorations on the topic' and an 'excellent' introduction to the field. Brewster's chapter on James Hogg was described by the *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* as a 'vigorous' case study, while *The Bottle Imp* viewed it as a 'valuable, and necessary' contribution to scholarship. In *Gothic Studies*, Carly Hunter calls Jones's *Contemporary Gothic Drama* a 'fascinating collection', recommending it 'to anyone seeking to learn about the Gothic's potential on and off stage'.

- 3.1 Lucie Armit, 'The Twentieth Century' in Dale Townshend (ed.) *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination* (London: The British Library, 2014). Available on request.
- 3.2 Lucie Armit, 'Ghost-al Erosion: Beaches and the Uncanny in the Work of M.R. James', in Lisa Fletcher (ed.) *Popular Fiction and Spatiality: Reading Genre Settings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016): 95-108. Available on request.
- 3.3 Scott Brewster, *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*. Ed. with Luke Thurston (New York and London: Routledge, 2017). [Individual contribution is 5000-word chapter and co-authored 10,000-word Introduction; all chapters jointly edited.] Available on request.
- 3.4 Scott Brewster, 'Gothic Hogg' in Carol Margaret Davison and Monica Germanà (eds.) *Scottish Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017): 115-128. Available on request.
- 3.5 Kelly Jones, *Contemporary Gothic Drama: Attraction, Consummation and Consumption on the Modern British Stage*. Ed. with Robert Dean and Benjamin Poore (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018). [Individual contribution is chapter and co-authored introduction.]

<https://doi.org/10.1057%2F978-1-349-95359-2>

- 3.6 Kelly Jones, Adaptations of 'liveness' in theatrical representations of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. In Dennis Cutchins and Dennis R. Perry (eds.) *Adapting Frankenstein: The Monster's Eternal Lives in Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018). Available on request.

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

Armitt, Brewster and Jones's research has led to wider public understanding of Gothic's role in charting and navigating contemporary climates of fear. Since January 2014, this research has changed understanding in audiences, including (a) schoolchildren and (b) older readers and the general public, and brought economic and reputational benefit to organizations and businesses nationally and regionally.

##### Improved understanding and awareness of Gothic for schoolchildren.

- a. **The researchers designed and delivered events and learning materials for schoolchildren, enriching their understanding of the role and importance of Gothic today.** In April 2019 Armitt was invited to write and record for the platform Massolit six online 'mini-lectures' on Sarah Waters's *The Little Stranger* for sixth-form students (<https://www.massolit.io/subjects/english-literature/contemporary-literature>). Massolit's founder, Chris Tudor, commented (June 2020) that 'more than 3,000 schools from around the world have used our site on a free trial basis'. He confirmed that Armitt's course 'has had 5,667 views since it was added to the site', and within a month of being uploaded on 10 December 2019, her viewing numbers were 'in the top 20 per cent of all videos on the site' [5.1]

Armitt, Brewster and Jones ran several events, with storytelling and the confrontation of fear at their heart, that engaged schoolchildren with Lincoln's Gothic research. Armitt and Jones (with PGR student Bryan) organized a public conference, 'Frankenstein at 200', at the Lincoln Drill Hall on 31 October 2018, featuring public-facing papers, a roundtable discussion with audience participation and a student-led performance derived from Jones's research. 50+ people attended, including a school group from Kesteven and Sleaford High School. Unsolicited comments in The School's Newsletter reported that the event 'really enhanced our understanding of some of the themes and characters in Shelley's text', 'was incredibly informative' and 'helped us broaden our knowledge contextually' [5.2].

Brewster engaged schoolchildren at the Lincoln Book Festival 2017 with a Gothic Fiction masterclass on *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights* for 30 GCSE and A-Level students and a Gothic-themed Flash Fiction competition (organized by Cherrell, PGR), attracting 300+ entries, many from primary and secondary schoolchildren. Festival Chair, Phil Hamlyn Williams, commented that the competition achieved 'the objective of engaging a wider cross section of people in the festival...with excellent entries from Primary School and Secondary School students' [5.3].

- b. **Engaging new audiences with, and changing understanding of, the Gothic.** In December 2014, Armitt and Brewster gave an invited public lecture on 'Gothic Travel and Tourism' as part of a BL Gothic Public Study Day, linked to the 'Terror and Wonder' exhibition, attended by 150 people. The 'Open Graves, Open Minds' website said of it that '[t]heir research project on Gothic tourism struck a chord and was very topical'. The exhibition brought economic benefit to the BL, attracting 64,460 visitors during its four-month run, which BL noted 'was considered a success...because we attracted a younger demographic and many first-time visitors on that occasion' [5.4]. The accompanying essay collection containing Armitt's chapter on twentieth-century Gothic sold 4,000 copies. Reviewing the collection, *London Visitors*, the official blog for Visiting London Guide.com, commented that Armitt's chapter 'offers the clearest explanation of [Gothic's] appeal' [5.4].

Complementing the engagement with schoolchildren, Brewster's research into the ghost story's enduring, cross-generational appeal underpinned a session of the Lincoln Older Readers' Twenty-First-Century Literature Book Group (with PGR student, Bevan, June 2017) discussing Susan Hill's *The Travelling Bag*. Participants reflected that '*this was the first collection of ghost stories I have read for many years*' and '*I haven't read ghost stories since my teens*'. They observed that the session '*opened my eyes to the modern relevance of ghost stories*', '*made me think about revisiting the genre*' and '*made me interested in finding out more about contemporary versions of ghost stories*' [5.5].

Brewster's invitation to advise on the 'Go Gothic' Lincoln Book Festival in September 2017 further developed audiences' understanding of the contemporary importance of Gothic storytelling. Beforehand, Brewster was interviewed by Siren Radio about Gothic's popularity and continuing power (17 August 2017, 70 downloads). During the Festival, his interview with novelist Diane Setterfield, held at The Collection, attracted 60 people. The Festival Chair acknowledged the importance of Brewster's research to the success of the event: 'Diane is an acclaimed Gothic author and it deepened the audience experience to have you interviewing her with the benefit of your research' [5.3].

As a result of his research on popular ghost narratives, Brewster hosted 'A Lincoln Ghost Story' at the White Hart Hotel on 27 November 2017, broadening appreciation of why ghost stories still matter in the twenty-first century. The evening included talks by Brewster and the Lincoln Ghost Walk guide, and readings by Jones. It attracted a sell-out audience of 120, resulted in extra sales of £500 for the venue and brought new customers to the alternative Lincoln Ghost Walk. One audience member observed: 'It's certainly made me want to learn more about ghost stories and made me question the moral teachings and reasonings behind them'. Others acknowledged new understanding of the ghost story's connection with Christmas (highlighted in Brewster's contribution): 'I never considered the relation to Christmas to stretch as far back as Shakespeare' [5.6]

In November 2019, Brewster and Jones hosted two evenings of 'Haunted', featuring a talk by Brewster and performances of ghost stories, some directed by Jones, as part of the AHRC/ BA Being Human Festival hub at University of Lincoln. These events, at St Mary's Guildhall and Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, incorporated audience participation and attracted capacity audiences (90 in total). Responses included: 'It was interesting to think about how the ways in which we tell stories impacts upon our perception of them. I hadn't thought about that before'. Other respondents learned from 'seeing research in a theatrical setting', reported 'renewed interest in Gothic literature', expressing a changed understanding and appreciation of Lincolnshire ghost tales, encouraging them to 'look out for more'. Cate Waby, Manager/ Secretary of St Mary's Guildhall, observed that the event 'enabled us to open up the building to the general public and the wider community' and helped with 'new bookings and events' [5.7]

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

- 5.1 MASSOLIT [www.massolit.io](http://www.massolit.io); emails confirming viewing figures.
- 5.2 Frankenstein at 200 - audience numbers, School Newsletter report, Twitter (@FrankAt200).
- 5.3 Lincoln Book Festival: testimonial from Book Festival organizer; spreadsheet of ticket sales for Diane Setterfield event at The Collection 28.9.2017: <https://www.thecollectionmuseum.com/exhibitions-and-events/view/lincoln-book-festival2> Flash Fiction competition; 'Inspired on Air' interview on the Gothic, Siren FM, 17.8.17 (including download figures): <https://www.sirenonline.co.uk/archives/date/2017/08/17>
- 5.4 British Library Gothic Study Day (6.12.14): attendance figures on spreadsheet and box office email; review of Terror and Wonder catalogue, London Visitors blog: <https://londonvisitors.wordpress.com/2014/11/24/book-review-terror-and-wonder-the->

[gothic-imagination-british-library-publishing/](https://opengravesopenminds.wordpress.com/2015/01/08/review-of-british-library-gothic-study-day/) review posted on January 8 2015 on 'Open Graves, Open Minds' blog, linked to Open Graves, Open Minds: Vampires and the Undead in Modern Culture research project:

<https://opengravesopenminds.wordpress.com/2015/01/08/review-of-british-library-gothic-study-day/>

- 5.5 Lincoln Older Readers' Twenty-First-Century Literature Book Group in June 2017: comment cards.
- 5.6 A Lincoln Ghost Story – ticket sales figures (University shop); Twitter (@Lincoln\_Ghosts); comment cards/ electronic feedback; emails from White Hart Hotel and leader of Lincoln Ghost Walk.
- 5.7 Haunted, Being Human Festival, November 2019 – audience numbers, questionnaires, testimonial from St Mary's Guildhall.