

## Undead Tropes - New Directions in Gothic Studies

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

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The Gothic is never dead – it is not even the Gothic. Less polemically stated and setting aside Faulknerian language, it has significantly evolved since its beginnings in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Having emerged in Britain as a literary mode with soon-to-be stock tropes such as haunted castles and supernatural occurrences, it has migrated into different cultures, genres, and media. Its tropes have stayed, but have been adapted according to their different spatiotemporal and medial contexts. Each era and each region appropriate Gothic themes, metaphors, and monsters accordingly – a compelling example is the figure of the vampire, beginning with Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872) and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) over to the 2010s’ vampire craze and openly queer vampires of Netflix’s *First Kill* in 2022. Every age seems to produce its own vampire (cf. Auerbach 1995), as well as its distinct interpretation of the Gothic mode at large. The Gothic can thus be called a transcultural and “transhistorical” (Hurley 2002) mode, which “endlessly reinvents itself” (McEvoy 2007). Its “negative aesthetics” (Botting 2013) seem to be a mirror of and cathartic relief for the anxieties of its age. The Gothic and its monsters stay – but they are made of a different fabric depending on what is the “negative” to their context. They are dependent on text(ure) – be it literature, film, video games or physical artefacts. It may be this flexibility that makes it “without doubt the longest lasting popular genre in world literature” (Bloom 2020).

This workshop follows the evolution of Gothic elements in diverse genres and contexts, and explores how the mode takes on distinct forms in various media and artefacts. As recent scholarship has shown, long-established sub-forms such as Southern Gothic now exceed their spatial boundaries as its metaphors have migrated and formed a global Southern Gothic (cf. Borwein 2020) - an intriguing development considering Southern (Gothic) literature’s rootedness in concepts of space and place. Other sub-forms such as Queer Gothic have become an important part of the field. By being continually remediated, the Gothic also undergoes continual transformations due to new technological and aesthetic inventions.

The workshop invites papers that pursue the question of current developments of the Gothic and Gothic Studies: Which aesthetics, media, and tropes have gained importance? Which current cultural fears and issues does the Gothic address? Which functions does the Gothic have today? Are there new theories to be added to the canon? How do elements of the (American) Gothic manifest internationally? What are the limitations of such renditions?

Confirmed Keynote Speaker: Catherine Spooner (Lancaster University, author of *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (2004), *Contemporary Gothic* (2006), and *Post-Millennial Gothic: Comedy, Romance and the Rise of the Happy Gothic* (2017))

Topics of papers could be, but are not limited to:

- The Gothic as a transhistorical and transgeneric mode
- The Gothic and media: video games, social media, film and TV
- The state and future of Gothic (Studies)
- The Gothic and intersectional positions
- New Gothic aesthetics: form, tropes and themes
- The Gothic as a critical mode; its potentials and limitations
- The Gothic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: reactionary politics, pandemic, war, inflation
- New concepts of the past, present and future in the Gothic
- The Gothic and its spatial manifestations
- The material turn and the Gothic (e.g. Gothic objects and instruments)
- The Gothic and other genres
- New renditions of Gothic archetypes

The workshop is primarily directed at early career researchers at Ph.D. or postdoctoral level, but papers from scholars of all levels are welcome. Please send abstracts of around 300 words along with your biographical information to workshop organizers Greta Kaisen and Evangelia Kindinger to [greta.kaisen@hu-berlin.de](mailto:greta.kaisen@hu-berlin.de) until October 1, 2023.