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An introduction

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Berlin, Germany

ISBN 978-3-658-40720-9 ISBN 978-3-658-40721-6 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-40721-6

This Palgrave imprint is published by the registered company Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH, part of Springer Nature.
The registered company address is: Abraham-Lincoln-Str. 46, 65189 Wiesbaden, Germany

Genrediscourses

Series published by
Marcus Stiglegger, University of Mainz, Mainz, Germany

From today's perspective, the ideal conception of the film genre as a phenomenon that can be clearly defined in terms of motif and aesthetics belongs to the past of the American studio system. What has always borne cross-border traits in an international context must today be regarded as hybridity. Only a few film productions can still be assigned to classical genre models. Instead, current productions are dominated by the overlapping and constantly changing recombination of these established elements. The same applies to television series, which for a long time still functioned according to classical patterns, but which in recent years have also become genre hybrids.

Consequently, today it must be about discourse if genres are to be discussed in a new and fruitful way. The series Discourses of Genres in Film and Television Series is therefore not about volumes on individual genre models, but about broader discourse reflections such as: "fantasy", "crime" or "melodrama", but also aspects such as "music" and "gender". This opens the field for multimodal approaches, transmedial hybridity models and intercultural perspectives. In this way, the series edited by the Berlin film scholar Prof. Dr. Marcus Stiglegger will close a gaping hole in German-language film research, complementing the *Filmgenres* handbook that is being produced in parallel.

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About the Author

Katharina Rein Dr. Katharina Rein currently works as a researcher and lecturer at the University of Potsdam, Germany. She was previously a guest professor at the University of Vienna, Austria and a researcher at the Bauhaus-University Weimar, Germany. She received her PhD in Cultural History and Theory from the Humboldt University of Berlin. Her dissertation on the cultural and media history of stage magic in the late nineteenth century was awarded the Anniversary Prize for Young Researchers by Büchner Verlag. Her academic work has been published in four languages.

Part I

Introduction

Black wheels swirl up a deep puddle before the camera pans up to bring a row of carriages into view, driving through the darkness in the rain. The narrow dirt road leads past a dark lake and toward a castle perched on a hill in the distance. Moonlight struggles to emerge from between the dense clouds. A small street lamp on a black and white striped pole that also serves as a signpost sparsely illuminates the scene. A raven sits on it, its call joining the eerie, polyphonic children's choir singing on the soundtrack. This sequence of only 14 seconds duration contains various canonical elements that create an atmosphere specific to the Gothic. Those who think of horror film when they hear "Gothic" may be surprised to learn that the sequence in question is from the film *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (00:23), which is cleared by the FSK from age 12 in Germany and by the Austrian JMK from age 6.[1] So what is Gothic cinema?

This volume attempts to answer this question. In the German-speaking world, it has not yet been established as a film genre, and even in Anglophone cultures, which in addition to a long tradition of the Gothic have also established the academic discipline of Gothic Studies, the cinematic form of the Gothic has received comparatively little academic attention until recently. In order to provide conceptual, historical, and contemporary insight, this volume is divided into three parts, the first of which sets a general genre-theoretical focus, while the second provides an overview of the history of Gothic cinema and the third examines individual examples from the past years. First, the term "Gothic" is delineated, including its

[1] FSK is the abbreviation of Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft, i.e. the Self-Regulatory Body of the Movie Industry, a German organisation that rates and approves films, trailers, commercials etc. in Germany. The JMK, Jugendmedienkommission [Youth Media Commission] establishes the suitabilitiy of films and trailers for young people in Austria.

distinction from Dark Romanticism and horror film, before the second chapter of the introduction narrows down Gothic cinema's defining motifs, themes, and topoi.

In three chapters divided in accordance with film-historical caesurae or periods of time, the second part highlights significant points of the history of Gothic cinema. Closer examinations of individual examples supplement the overview. Chapter 3 ranges from early fantastic films beginning in 1896 through German Expressionism and the horror films of the Universal Studios to the Female Gothic of the 1940s. This is followed by a chapter on Gothic cinema from about 1960 onward, which looks at the films of the British Hammer Film Productions and Roger Corman's "Poe-Cycle," among others. In the 1960s, Gothic also migrated to another medium, television, to which a subchapter is devoted. Moreover, Gothic cinema increasingly diversified and internationalized during this period, which is why further subchapters illuminate inter- and transnational variations, including Italian Gothic and Asian Gothic, the Edgar Wallace films as a German variation, and American and Southern Gothic as specifically U.S.-American subtypes. Chapter 5 concludes the historical section by looking at Gothic cinema from around 1990, when it became more differentiated and at the same time gained a clearer foothold in the mainstream, thanks in no small part to the works of Tim Burton, to whom the final subchapter is devoted. In this part of the book, special attention is paid to tracing interconnections and interactions as well as to illustrating caesuras and innovations resulting from developments in film and production technology. For example, Gothic cinema changes significantly with the arrival of film in the studios, with the advent of sound and later color film, with the abolition of the Hays Code, and finally with the appearance of digital special effects and the proliferation of online streaming services.

This historical overview is followed by the third section, which focuses on contemporary Gothic cinema since 2015. It begins by discussing how the series *Penny Dreadful* (2014–2016) illustrates a central dilemma of twenty-first century Gothic cinema, which must reconcile outdated values and norms of canonical works with the views and interests of contemporary audiences. The following three chapters examine in detail one post-2015 case study each. On the one hand, these close readings exemplify the characteristics of Gothic cinema identified in the first part as well as its references back to its own history outlined in the second part. On the other hand, they allow for a deeper understanding than could be offered by an overview of films in which variations of typical motifs, characters, or plots can be found. The fact that, with the popularity of online streaming service providers such as Netflix or Amazon Prime Video, the Gothic has also conquered this media area is reflected here in such a way that series distributed via these services are examined along with feature films.

The term "Gothic cinema" is thus applied in a way that goes beyond the motion picture. While "Gothic film" mostly refers to the audiovisual artifacts themselves, "Gothic cinema" also includes the contexts and paratexts of cinematographic production and performance practices. Due to the importance of television series and streaming services in the twenty-first century, neither can be limited to the reception of audiovisual products in the screening context of the movie theater. To avoid neologisms of conceptual monsters, "Gothic cinema" in this volume therefore refers to audiovisual artifacts across media.

The analyses in the third part focus on reflections on media theory: Chap. 7 examines *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018), the first season of an anthology series created by Mike Flanagan, who adapted Shirley Jackson's seminal haunted house novel for the streaming service Netflix. If the haunted house is a paradigmatic site of the Gothic, here it is interpreted as a place that idiosyncratically stores and replays events and characters, thereby disrupting the continuum of time – a recording medium gone wild. Chapter 8 is devoted to a recent adaptation of the paradigmatic vampire novel, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1896), in the form of a miniseries produced for BBC One and Netflix by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat in 2020. In addition to some of the central themes of the vampire film, blood comes into particular focus here, presented in the series as a unviersal medium that conveys the nature and knowledge of humans. The final chapter analyzes Guillermo del Toro's feature film *Crimson Peak* (2015), a colorful representative of the neo-Victorian Gothic that proves to be a catalog of Gothic motifs, characters, and topoi, as well as quotations from canonical films. However, del Toro manages not to place these unconnectedly next to each other, but to skillfully merge them into a harmonious whole, while at the same time developing a striking aesthetic of his own. Because of this film's referential character, this chapter can stand in place of a summary.

Definition of the Term

1

Genre definitions are as helpful as they are problematic. Historically, genres go back to the Hollywood studio system and the film production of the Weimar Republic, but established themselves especially since 1930, together with sound film (see Stiglegger 2020, p. 4). Assigning films to individual genres comes with the risk of slipping into debates about inclusion and exclusion of single works. These are often tautological, as the defining elements of a genre are distilled from a group of works assigned to it. This classification, in turn, is based on characteristics that have been set as defining for the genre because they occur in works that belong to it. When one gets bogged down in such debates, it often seems tempting to quote United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, who, in the context of a case concerning obscenity in film, sidestepped a concrete genre definition of the hardcore pornographic film by saying, "I know it when I see it" (378 U.S. 184 1963, p. 197). Particularly in postmodernism, unambiguous assignments to just one genre are the exception rather than the rule, for "[s]ince the 1980s at the latest […]," writes Marcus Stiglegger (2020, p. 4), "the fragile boundaries of genre cinema began to visibly dissolve." Instead of arguing for the abolition of genres, however, it is necessary to adapt conceptions, for the concept of genre is not only firmly anchored in discourse, but also remains fruitful. Genre assignments not only help to classify works and render them discursive – whether in academia, film journalism, or leisure. They also enable comparison with more or less similar works and thus also the identification of individual peculiarities (see Grant 2007, p. 2).

This volume does not so much attempt to provide a dogmatic definition as to give an idea of what can be understood as Gothic cinema. As others have often noted, the Gothic is notoriously difficult to define, but we do know it when we see it. Gothic cinema is usually not regarded as a distinct film genre analogous to

K. Rein, *Gothic Cinema*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-40721-6_1

horror, western, or musical. Rather, researchers speak of the idea (Neibaur 2020, p. 13) or the gesture of the Gothic (Bronfen 2014, p. 112), of its indexicality (Aldana Reyes 2020b, p. 77), of Gothic as an (aesthetic) mode (Aldana Reyes 2020a, pp. 16–17; Hutchings 1996, p. 89) or as a visual sign system (Kavka 2002, p. 210). It is thus an umbrella term for a specific aesthetic, atmosphere, and repertoire of motifs and characters.

"It may come as a surprise, in view of the generic force of the term *Gothic,*" writes Misha Kavka (2002, p. 209) "that there is no established genre called *Gothic cinema* or *Gothic film.* There are Gothic images and Gothic plots and Gothic characters and even Gothic styles within film, […], but there is no delimited or demonstrable genre specific to film called the Gothic." This is surprising because, as I also tried to illustrate by the scene at the beginning of this chapter, there is such a thing as the "Gothic" in film, identified by audiences, critics, and scholars.

The distinctive aesthetic of the Gothic, a genre that emerged in literature in the second half of the eighteenth century, is predestined for a translation into the audiovisual. "[O]nly with the advent of cinema," writes Christopher Frayling (2013, p. 5), "did 'the Gothic' come into its own. Before that, as a literary form it was waiting in the wings: not quite respectable, reviled by the Victorian academic establishment". But in film of all places, where the Gothic unfolds its full potential, it has hardly been concretely formulated as a genre – unlike in architecture and literature. And "if there has to date not been a genre called Gothic film," Kavka (2002, p. 209) therefore concludes, "then we must strive to invent it". Gothic film, she argues, should then be understood as the recognizable visual language of the historically variable Gothic, which has coagulated into a visual code especially in the course of the twentieth century (Kavka 2002, p. 210).

The elements and visuality of the Gothic have long since arrived in mainstream film and television. Beginning with *The Munsters* (1964–1966) and *The Addams Family* (1964–1966), they have become especially prevalent through the work of Tim Burton, but also through the films of Guillermo del Toro, the *Harry Potter* films (2001–2011), and most recently in series such as *True Blood* (2008–2014), *Penny Dreadful* (2014–2016), *True Detective* (2014–2019), or *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–2020) as so-called Quality TV permeated popular visual culture. The Gothic not only spread from literature into audiovisual media, but also into youth culture in the 1980s, when Goth developed as a new subculture from Punk and New Wave. It in turn split into several subcultures, each with specific styles of dress and dance, forms of music, spaces, and in some cases political and religious beliefs (see, e.g., Hodkinson 2007; on Goth and Gothic fashion, see Spooner 2004, 2017, pp. 67–82; on Goth as a lifestyle, see Spooner 2013). In the twenty-first

century, the Gothic aesthetic has become part of mass culture. "Like a malevolent virus," writes Catherine Spooner (2006, p. 8),

> Gothic narratives have escaped the confines of literature and spread across disciplinary boundaries to infect all kinds of media, from fashion and advertising to the way contemporary events are constructed in mass culture. Gothic musicians such as Nick Cave and Robert Smith of The Cure have become critically acclaimed broadsheet staples, exemplars of middle-class taste, while teenage Goths continue to preoccupy the media and even appear as regular characters in *Coronation Street*.

Commercialized under the conditions of the twenty-first century, the Gothic has permeated the mainstream as well as niche markets, exerting its influence on fiction, film, television, fashion, design, video games, youth culture, and advertising (Spooner 2006, p. 23). In particular its striking visuality came into effect as it unfolded, established itself, and spread primarily in film (and previously in art) over the course of the last century. In the 21 years since Misha Kavka's statement that there is no "Gothic film" genre, the research literature has grown in volume, but the detailed examination of Gothic in film has just begun. Whereas for a long time, only individual essays were available, Justin D. Edwards' and Johan A. Höglund's 2019 examination of the Gothic in B-movies was followed in 2020 by a single-author monograph, *Gothic Cinema*, by Xavier Aldana Reyes, and a few months later by the anthology *Gothic Film,* edited by Richard J. Hand and Jay McRoy.

1.1 Gothic vs. Dark Romancism

Although the tradition of the Gothic in literature and film can be identified at points in Germany – from the horror story [*Schauergeschichte*] to the Expressionist fantastic films to the Edgar Wallace films – Gothic is not an established cinematic genre (on genre cinema in Germany see Alexius and Beicht 2018).[1] Even beyond German film production, "Gothic" is not widely used in the German-speaking world as a designation of a film genre. While the German *Schauergeschichte* and Dark Romanticism [*Schwarze Romantik*] are related to Gothic fiction, respectively Gothic art, they denote different movements. The English term "Gothic" is associated in German primarily with the music and fashion style of the subculture referred to in English as "Goth."

[1] There is a focus on the German-language discourse and a possible German term for "Gothic" here because this book originally appeared in German.

A direct translation is difficult, since "Gotik" in German refers to the period of architecture and art between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries and is not applied in the same sense to literature or film, as "Gothic" has been in English since the eighteenth century. A related genre in art and literature is Dark Romanticism, of which E. T. A. Hoffmann is considered the most prominent literary representative. In his standard literary work *The Romantic Agony,* which was first published in 1963 in a German translation (*Liebe Tod und Teufel. Die schwarze Romantik*) of the 1930 Italian original (*La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letterature romantica*), Mario Praz defines the dark side of Romanticism with reference to the Gothic novel. The term "Dark Romanticism," writes Felix Krämer (2012b, p. 15), also "cannot be reduced to a specific historical period, but can only be understood through its characteristics". These are quite similar to those of the Gothic: Dark Romanticism interlinks love, eroticism, and death. It revolves around the indistinguishability of imagination and reality, inexplicable events and hidden realities, dark forces, isolation, and the Uncanny. We often encounter religious motifs, characters, and places, such as monks, nuns, (ruinous) convents, and cemeteries. "The late Romantic artists of the late nineteenth century," writes Marcus Stiglegger (2018, p. 42), "lived in awareness of a decaying culture, which they reflected in their art in a nightmarish way: degeneration, deformation, illness, death, erotic extravagance, vampirism […]. And also the contemporary cinema celebrates a return of the *Gothic fiction,* the irrationality of Dark Romanticism."

Upon closer inspection, however, the terms "Gothic" and "Dark Romanticism" [*Schwarze Romantik*] are not translations of one another. If Romanticism defined itself as a countermovement to the Enlightenment, and therefore especially through a reference to dreams and fantasy as the flip side of reason, such a focus is found in Gothic fiction at most implicitly, but not programmatically. In terms of literature, the British Gothic novel is also distinguished in academic discourse from the German *Schauerroman* – although similarities can be found internationally, including with French literature (for example, the works of Charles Baudelaire or Victor Hugo), differences are also clear.[2]

In the visual arts, Dark Romanticism primarily refers to a gloomy movement oriented toward physicality, loneliness, melancholy, and nightmares in the roughly 60 years around 1800. It is represented by artists such as Henry Fuseli, Caspar David Friedrich, Eugène Delacroix and Francisco Goya. It, too, refers to the irrational, to imagination, fantasy and nightmares or dreams and is therefore often regarded as a predecessor of Surrealism. In the book accompanying the exhibition

[2] The Gothic novel is also not to be confused is the French *roman noir*, a subcategory of the detective novel that emerged as an analogy to Film Noir in the 1940s.

Dark Romanticism at the Städel Museum Frankfurt from 2013, Felix Krämer (2012a) argues for expanding the concept of Dark Romanticism in art beyond this epoch, including works of the Decadent movement around 1900 and Surrealism. Although these two periods coincide with the traditional Gothic novel, respectively with that of the Gothic Revival in Great Britain, the art movement that the German term "Schwarze Romantik" denotes is called "Dark Romanticism" in the English-speaking world. "Gothic" as an art movement, in turn, refers to what in German is called "Gotik", i.e., the art of the Middle Ages that flourished at the same time as Gothic architecture. Thus, even with regard to periods of art history, the terms are not directly transferable.

The visual world of Dark Romanticism may have entered the aesthetics of Gothic cinema via the detour of German Expressionist film, but "Dark Romanticism" denotes a genre of the past. Even the extended time frame of the above-mentioned volume reaches only to the middle of the twentieth century. Accordingly, the contribution on film by Claudia Dillmann contained therein treats the Expressionist fantastic films of the 1910s and 1920s as a cinematic form of expression of Dark Romanticism. Nor is the term applied to contemporary works in visual art or literature. Hardly anyone would describe James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), Terence Fisher's *Dracula* (1958), Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) or Jim Jarmush's *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013) as works of Dark Romanticism. But they all belong to Gothic cinema, which is very much a contemporary phenomenon – in film as well as in art, literature, and popular culture.

1.2 Gothic vs. Gothic

If definitions of Dark Romanticism often remain vague (see e.g. Krämer 2012b, p. 15), the English term "Gothic" is also multi-layered. The chaos surrounding it is revealed, for example, by the entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary,* which lists six different meanings, some of which are completed by up to four sub-entries, as well as two additions. Most refer to the Goths or Gothic architecture as: "Of, pertaining to, or concerned with the Goths or their language" and "[f]ormerly used in extended sense, now expressed by Teutonic *adj. and n.* or Germanic *adj. and n*." Only the most recent 2007 addition denotes "a genre of fiction characterized by suspenseful, sensational plots involving supernatural or macabre elements and often (esp. in early use) having a medieval theme or setting." ("Gothic," OED 2020). Further definitions take the probably most common meaning into account: "the style of architecture prevalent in Western Europe from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, of which the chief characteristic is the pointed arch. Applied also to

buildings, architectural details, and ornamentation" as well as its return in the nineteenth century as "Gothic Revival *n.* the reintroduction of a Gothic style of architecture towards the middle of the nineteenth century" (ibid.).

This already shows the bewildering breadth of the various facets of the word "Gothic," which have little in common, if they are not incompatible. The Goths never built a Gothic cathedral nor wrote a Gothic novel, and although Gothic pointed arches and ornamentation are part of the visual repertoire of the traditional Gothic film aesthetic, the architectural concept is not directly indicative of the literary or cinematic one, and vice versa. If we refer to an architectural style as Gothic that flourished between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, in literature, the Gothic refers to works created several centuries later in a different medium (see Baldick 2009, p. xi). And while in architectural history there may be as many as six centuries between the medieval and historicist styles of the Gothic Revival, in literary historical terms traditional Gothic fiction and the literature of the Gothic Revival are separated by 20–80 years.

In terms of literature, traditional Gothic fiction refers to a body of literary works produced in Britain between the 1760s and the 1820s that share a number of characteristics. These include, according to David Punter's pioneering work *The Literature of Terror* (1996, vol. 1, p. 14)*:* the desire to portray something frightening, the prominence of archaic settings, supernatural elements as well as stereotypical characters, and the attempt to develop and perfect techniques of literary suspense. "'Gothic' fiction," he writes, "is the fiction of the haunted castle, of heroines preyed upon by unspeakable terrors, of the blackly lowering villain, of ghosts, vampires, monsters and werewolves" (ibid., p. 1). Suspense, the central narratological tool of the Gothic novel, was later translated masterfully into the medium of film by Alfred Hitchcock. Among the most influential Gothic novels of the traditional period are Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818).

Catherine Spooner (2006, p. 10) has repeatedly pointed out that the Gothic continues to redefine itself throughout its history, reviving and reinterpreting traditions. If the above-mentioned works positioned the central elements of the Gothic, a little under a century later[3] they were taken up and significantly expanded. This literature of the Gothic Revival of the late nineteenth century, in particular, continues to shape the repertoire of Gothic themes and aesthetics to this day. The influence of the characters, themes, and motifs it introduced can be explained not least

[3] Some authors identify an earlier beginning of the Gothic Revival, for instance in the 1840s, according to Alexandra Warwick (2007, p. 30).

by the fact that they became inscribed into the cultural imaginary in the form of countless (more or less loose) cinematic adaptations, which consolidated and canonized themselves therein. Since Gothic cinema (especially before the 1970s) drew to a large extent on works of the Gothic Revival, its aesthetics were more strongly associated with the Victorian era than with the traditional period of the Gothic novel from the second half of the eighteenth century onward. Therefore, mansions, dandies, and lantern-lit urban landscapes with cobblestone streets are as much a part of Gothic film's aesthetic repertoire as medieval castles and ruins.

Like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* ostensibly examined the potential consequences of the dizzying scientific advances of the time in the hands of ethically questionable characters. The transformation of the gentleman Dr. Jekyll into the cruel and anti-social Mr. Hyde epitomizes the conflict between individual desire and societal respectability – a theme also addressed by another Gothic Revival classic: Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Seven years after this milestone of Decadent literature appeared the paradigmatic vampire novel, Bram Stoker's *Dracula.* This metaphorizes the colonial fear of the invasion of one's own culture by the Other, which appears here in the form of the vampire. The latter's status as a count also articulates the bourgeoisie's fear of the return of the aristocracy, which, before losing large parts of its power through peasant liberations and land reforms in the nineteenth century, metaphorically sucked out the blood of the people dependent on them. Not least, the vampire here also becomes a symbol of a sexual licentiousness which was frowned upon in Victorian England.

Like the traditional Gothic novels, the literary works of the Gothic Revival revolve around taboo subjects such as intoxication, madness, violence, sexual assault, incest, and other transgressions. Suspense and shock merge here with spectacular aesthetics to create an atmosphere of terror and the Uncanny. Even looking back to the Victorian era, it is clear that Gothic as a genre is difficult to narrow down – it was gaining complexity, becoming more and more differentiated, and producing offshoots and crossovers. These include, for example, H. G. Wells' scientific romances, which also mark the beginning of the science fiction genre, or the detective story. The latter began as a genre in Edgar Allen Poe's short stories about C. Auguste Dupin and thus came directly from the pen of one of the most important authors of the American Gothic. The central works of the Gothic Revival are among Britain's most important contributions to the world literature of their time. Their motifs and characters are an integral part of the popular culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Frayling 2013, p. 6).

In the twentieth century, the differentiation of the Gothic accelerated in literature and especially in film, where the central motifs of the genre found their iconic

visualization. A film-historical caesura is usually identified in the 1960s: if the aesthetic and motivic elements of Gothic cinema were established, canonized, and formalized in the preceding decades, they were now broken with. Although what is often referred to as the dissolution or decomposition of the Gothic does not become tangible until the 1980s, the first representatives of what is retrospectively referred to as postclassical horror film already manifested themselves in the 1960s, in particular *Psycho, Peeping Tom* (both 1960) and *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). Since the 1960s, the aesthetic of Gothic film has also increasingly been diffusing into other genres and media, especially television and later online streaming services. A number of works emerged that contain elements and traces of the Gothic – such as the example of the *Harry Potter* series cited at the beginning of this introduction – without belonging to it in the same sense as, for example, the Universal or Hammer horror films do.

Especially since the 1980s, the episodes, events, characters, as well as the iconography of the Gothic have been less central as characteristics. Rather, they are used across genres in film as tools to evoke the horrors from within. Traditional Gothic and the works of the Gothic Revival have become reference points for the Gothic of the late twentieth century, Catherine Spooner (2007, p. 40) writes: "Gothic, we might say, haunts them". For example, the conflict between social respectability and deviant desire that in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* takes the form of doppelgangers with socially unacceptable behavior, is expressed in twentieth century Gothic in the form of oppressive atmospheres, unconventional aesthetics, or drastic depictions of violence. While the Victorian age entered into open opposition to a pre-Enlightenment past, in modernity it is the internalized mechanisms of the Enlightenment itself that subordinate us to power (Spooner 2007, p. 44). Contemporary Gothic, writes Catherine Spooner (2006, p. 23), is defined by three factors, the first of which is a heightened awareness of its own nature. Secondly, under the conditions of global consumer culture, the Gothic has reached a new level of mass production and distribution, in the context of which, thirdly, disciplinary boundaries are transcended and diverse media are permeated.

1.3 Gothic vs. Horror Film

In the German-speaking discourse, Gothic film – if it is perceived as such at all – is usually considered a subgenre of horror film. This is due to the fact that horror has been a recognized film genre for much longer and is also cited as such in film studies (e.g. Bordwell and Thompson 2001, pp. 102–105; Grant 2007; Langford 2005,