



# Gothic in Asian Animation and Sequential Art

Call for Papers

Abstracts due: 31 AUG 2024

Article proposals are invited for a special journal issue of *Gothic Studies* (expected publication date November 2026) on **Gothic in Asian Animation and Sequential Art** edited by Katarzyna Ancuta (Chulalongkorn University) and Joseph Crawford (University of Exeter).

Gothic horror has always been an important genre in Asian sequential art. In post-war Japan, the mingling of imported Western horror media with indigenous traditions of *kaidan* ('strange stories') and *ukio-e* prints depicting ghosts and monsters gave rise to a vigorous tradition of horror manga, which subsequently flourished in publications such as *Gekkan Halloween* magazine (1985-95) and the works of Junji Ito (1986-present). With the rise of Japanese anime to global popularity over the last thirty years, Japanese animated series based on horror manga have acquired worldwide audiences and fanbases, making popular horror anime such as *Death Note* (2006-7), *Black Butler* (2008-14), and *Tokyo Ghoul* (2014-18) some of the most internationally influential works of Gothic fiction of the twenty-first century. The Gothic horror genre has been similarly important in Korean *manhwa*, with influential Gothic *manhwa* titles such as *Priest* (1998-2007) attracting a large international readership: *Priest* even had a 2011 American film adaptation. In the 2010s Korean *manhwa* increasingly moved online, shifting to the smartphone-friendly webtoon format that now dominates sequential art in South Korea, and Korean webtoon horror *manhwa* is now widely read worldwide, with works such as *Bongcheon-Dong Ghost* (2011) acting as touchstones of a new globalized culture of viral online horror media.

Although the Japanese and Korean traditions of sequential art have long been better-known in the West than those of other Asian nations, in recent years this has started to shift. Chinese

*manhua* is growing swiftly in international popularity, especially in webtoon format: dedicated online fan communities now produce fan translations of the latest horror *manhua* for Western audiences, allowing them to access everything from Chinese zombie stories to Chinese vampire romances in *manhua* form. The Filipino horror *komik* tradition was brought to the attention of international audiences by the horror anime series *Trese* (2023), which was adapted from Filipino *komiks* in collaboration with Netflix. Thailand's infamously gory horror comics have long been popular with domestic audiences, and some are now starting to find international readers online. In India, meanwhile, Hindi-language horror comics have flourished for decades, although their stories of bloodthirsty *rakshasas* and *pishachas* currently remain little-known outside the Indian diaspora.

The sheer numbers involved in the Asian sequential art market are staggering. Bestselling works of horror-themed manga can sell in excess of a hundred million volumes worldwide, a scale of popularity which should push us to rethink our assumptions about what the words 'Gothic novel' mean in the 2020s: today, if someone reads a fictional book about ghosts or demons, it is just as likely to be drawn rather than written, electronic rather than physical, and to make use of the horror traditions of Asia rather than the familiar Gothic folklore of the West. Yet despite their importance for modern Gothic media worldwide, which today is just as likely to take inspiration from *Death Note* or *Uzumaki* as from Sheridan Le Fanu or M.R. James, these Asian traditions of horror animation and sequential art have been very little studied in Anglophone scholarship.

A few scholars, such as Pandey (2001, 2008), Bolton (2005), Dollase (2010), Davis (2022), and Taylor (2023) have written on Gothic themes in Japanese manga and anime, and articles on key titles such as *Black Butler* and *Tokyo Ghoul* have recently appeared in the *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies*. More recently, we have also seen some publication on Indian horror comics and graphic novels (Sarma 2018, Ciemniowski 2019, Sen 2021), but the horror genre remains highly marginalized within the field. Scholarship on Asian Gothic outside Japan and India has generally ignored sequential art entirely: studies of Korean or Thai horror media, for example, have tended to focus heavily on film and television rather than *manhwa*. Our proposed special issue would address this gap, providing an opportunity for scholars to explore this increasingly influential but critically neglected field of Gothic media.

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

- Gothic horror in manga and anime (e.g. *Death Note*, *Tokyo Ghoul*, and the different forms it takes in different manga and anime subgenres (e.g. *shōnen*, *shōjo*, *seinen*, *josei*).
- The role of Gothic aesthetics in manga art (e.g. *Hellsing*, *Black Butler*, 'Gothic Lolita' fashion styles).
- Manga adaptations of Western Gothic literature (e.g. Junji Ito's *Frankenstein*, Shin-ichi Sakamoto's *DRCL*).
- Gothic in other Asian sequential art traditions, e.g. Korean *manhwa*, Chinese *manhua*, Filipino *komiks*, Thai and Indian horror comics.
- Asian horror webtoons and digital Gothic.
- Gothic romance in Asian animation and sequential art, especially queer 'girl's love' and 'boy's love' romance media.

- Depictions and interpretations of Asian supernatural beings in Asian animation and sequential art (e.g. Chinese *jiāngshī*, Indian *rakshasa*, Malay *penanggalan*, Filipino *Tikbalang*).
- The localisation of western Gothic monsters – vampires, werewolves, zombies etc. in Asian animation and sequential art.
- Ghosts and hauntings in Asian animation and sequential art.
- The role of Asian folklore and religious beliefs in Gothic Asian animation and sequential art.
- Monsters and monstrous humans in Asian animation and sequential art.
- Haunted geographies and Anthropocene eco-gothics in Asian animation and sequential art.
- Gothic cyberpunk and the post-human in Asian animation and sequential art.
- Post-colonial Gothic and the legacies of empire in animation and sequential art from India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Korea, and/or the Philippines.
- Gothic and the articulation of historical trauma in Asian animation and sequential art.
- Gothic vs. Horror in Asian animation and sequential art.

Please send abstracts of 300 words to the journal editors at [kancuta@gmail.com](mailto:kancuta@gmail.com) and [J.Crawford@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:J.Crawford@exeter.ac.uk) by **31 August 2024**. We will notify the authors about the results in early September.

The first drafts of the complete papers should be submitted by **31 May 2025**. Please note that the articles will need to undergo peer review and the submission of the first draft does not immediately guarantee the publication. We should, however, have enough time for potential revisions as we need to submit the complete issue to the journal in early 2026.

#### **Note on Editors:**

**Katarzyna Ancuta** is a lecturer at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. Her research interests oscillate around the interdisciplinary contexts of contemporary Gothic/Horror, currently with a strong Asian focus. Her recent publications include contributions to *The Edinburgh Companion to Globalgothic* (2023), *Folk Horror: New Global Pathways* (2023) and *The Transmedia Vampire* (2021), *The New Urban Gothic* (2020) and *B-Movie Gothic* (2018). She also co-edited several journal issues on Asian Gothic/horror and two book collections – *Thai Cinema: The Complete Guide* (2016) and *South Asian Gothic: Haunted Cultures, Histories and Media* (2022).

**Joseph Crawford** has published widely on topics relating to Gothic literature and popular culture. He has extensive knowledge of horror comics, manga, and webtoons: he has published on horror webtoons as part of his work on digital Gothic media, and he is currently writing a single-author monograph on feminism in American comics and manga, which is under contract with Routledge University Press. He is a member of the editorial board for the *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, and has acted as a peer reviewer for ten scholarly journals and three academic publishers (see CV for details). He also acted as one of the academic reviewers for *Supernatural Literature* from Thomas Riggs (2017).