Chapter 4
Shadows in the Stream:
Turkish Horror, Gothic Storytelling, and Digital Narrative

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the convergence of Turkish horror cinema with Gothic storytelling and the transformative impact of new media. It examines how digital platforms have reshaped the production, distribution, and reception of horror narratives in Turkey, focusing on adapting Gothic elements for contemporary audiences. Key themes, such as the supernatural and the uncanny, are analysed within a Turkish cultural context, alongside the influence of Islamic motifs like the concept of jinn. The role of streaming platforms in shaping viewing habits and promoting active audience engagement is also highlighted. Additionally, the portrayal of women in Turkish horror films is scrutinised, linking societal anxieties to gender representation. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the future of Turkish horror in the digital landscape, emphasising innovative narrative experiences and the genre's adaptation challenges. It integrates scholarly and cinematic sources to address significant themes related to this evolving genre.

ECHOES OF TERROR: AN EXAMINATION OF TURKISH HORROR AND GOTHIC NARRATIVES IN THE DIGITAL ERA/AUTEURISM

The horror genre has been a vital element of global cinematic history, continually captivating audiences by delving into anxieties and the unknown. In Turkish cinema, although there has been a longstanding involvement with several genres, a notable surge in the production of specialised horror films became apparent in the post-millennium period, attempting "to overcome Eurocentrism and to bring into modernity the voices, experiences and cultural legacies of others" (Dirlik, 2003, p. 276). Initial occurrences of horror in Turkish cinema can be identified in films like *Çığlık* (Scream, 1949) and *Drakula İstanbul'da* (Dracula in Istanbul, 1953). The 2000s were a crucial period for Turkish horror, distinguished by the recurrent integration of Islamic motifs, Anatolian folklore, and a pronounced emphasis on local cultural surroundings (Gjinali & Tunca, 2020; Kazaz & Kartal, 2013). The transition to culturally unique themes, especially the notable portrayal of jinn as supernatural beings, profoundly connected with Turkish audiences, thereby setting a new direction for the genre. It suggested Gothic as "a process, not an essence; a rhetoric rather than a store of universal symbols" (Mighall, 1999, p. xxv).

Turkish horror, while influenced by Western film traditions, has effectively established a unique niche by addressing profound cultural and religious issues. The Gothic narrative, fundamental to the overarching horror genre, perpetuates its impact through the supernatural, the weird, and the examination of fear—components that seamlessly correspond with cinematic portrayal. Emerging from the shadows of nineteenth-century literary traditions, this genre has historically transformed Gothic fiction into early cinema. Throughout the years, Gothic aspects have infiltrated other film genres, such as horror, science fiction, and thrillers. The principal characteristics of Gothic narratives—such as apparitions, supernatural occurrences, psychological turmoil, and the disconcerting fusion of reality and fiction—offer a robust foundation for eliciting fear and suspense in film horror (Kaye, 2012). The motifs of the uncanny and the return of the repressed, frequently pivotal in Gothic storytelling, easily thrive in horror cinema's examination of concealed anxieties and cultural taboos.

Digital auteurism offers a robust theoretical framework for evaluating Turkish horror cinema and its narrative techniques in modern media. This method facilitates an examination of how directors, as auteurs, manoeuvre through the opportunities and limitations presented by digital platforms to express their unique artistic ideas within the Turkish horror genre. The advent of digital platforms in Turkey, like BluTV (established in 2015) and GAIN (launched in 2020), with international competitors such as Netflix, offers alternative distribution avenues that differ from

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