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Theorising globalgothic

‘Die, die you witch. We can’t get work because of you’: in September 1998 a crowd returning from a march in Pretoria throw three migrant workers to their deaths (Comaroff, 2002: 788). Jean and John Comaroff cite this example as one in many of the recent reports that document a rise in cases connecting witches and zombies to class, inter-ethnic and economic tensions in southern Africa. Contemporary figures of dread are, they suggest, conjured out of the economic upheavals and shifts in immigration motivated by new labour practices. Witchcraft and zombification, then, are linked to African ‘immigrants from elsewhere on the continent, whose demonization is an equally prominent feature of the postcolonial scene. Together these proletarian pariahs make visible a phantom history, a local chapter in a global story of changing relations of labor to capital, of production and consumption’ (Comaroff, 2002: 783). Indeed, like so many postcolonies, post-apartheid South Africa has been dramatically changed by the social, cultural and economic impacts of globalisation. The rush of new commodities, consumption, products and money is tied to an increasingly illusive economic system that has been, at times, aligned with the sorcery of witches, zombies and disembodied, dispirited phantasms. Hence seemingly archaic figures for postmodern times – witches, zombies, monsters, ghosts and vampires – spring up in numerous and diverse locations, crossing geographic, cultural and medial divides. But these figures also adopt various guises: they are markers of otherness, articulations of the threatening changes of economic and imperial power, signifiers of techno-scientific innovations, as well as representations of personal

and communal losses and traumas. By enunciating these changes through creatures of collective dread, this fixation with the living dead signals more than a figurative or symbolic response to the impacts of globalisation. It constitutes a tangible reaction to the distress and anxiety of a globalised system that erupts within or from public cultures across the world. Globalisation, then, has led to a new way of thinking about gothic production: *globalgothic*.

But what is *globalgothic*? And how might it be theorised? One starting point for addressing these questions is to acknowledge that, despite huge variations in cultural-historical factors, spatial and temporal modes and the significances tied to locality and specificity, there are certain continuities and commonalities between imaginary supernatural, spectral and monstrous forms in fiction, film, fashion, media, music and culture. But even this recognition raises further queries. What do these forms represent, if they represent anything? What do they do? What are their effects? And what might they have in common? These are tricky questions, particularly when we consider that figures from the gothic genre are imaginary and metaphorical, revenants, often vague in form, shifting of shape, and have for centuries screened and screened out otherness and fear. Yet a shared sense, itself dark, uncertain, of the world can be located through the diverse uses of gothic tropes disseminated widely in media networks: in print, on screens, online, over airwaves and satellite systems. Exported Western images move across the world, manifesting a global market in which cultures produce, consume, appropriate, and transform stories, images and characters. Dance forms in Japan mesh local customs and concerns regarding death with traditional and imported aesthetic and cultural theories, hybrid challenges to form and sense that raise political anxieties about imperialism; mergings of myth and media in New Zealand acknowledge the permeability of borders while the interfections of media forms embody the clashing and inmixing of social realities and cultural crossings. Global events, the collapse of blocs and borders, the emergence of transnational and economic unions, spectres of superstates, transform the West from within, such events, moreover, having large-scale political effects as well as small-scale subcultural ramifications. The traffic in images and tropes is not unidirectional given the scale and audiences for media and cinematic production across the world. The varieties of Asian cinema offer abundant examples of different forms and figures of haunting and spectrality, different axes of media, tradition, embodiment and anxiety that are exported, appropriated, remade.

The multidirectional traffic exposes the limitation to ideas of Western cultural hegemony in the face of competing and globally dispersed patterns of consumption. Here, always mobile, travelling with migrations and through the flows of global media, boundaries between life and death, real and unreal, self and other, normality and deviance become defamiliarised as they are shifted across geographical, virtual and cultural planes, global and local at the same time.

The global market of signs, images and commodities energises globalgothic interactions. As a result globalgothic operates as a locus, frequently an obscure locus, of world exchanges, and also points to the context in which messages, meanings, responses and reactions take shape. For the rapidly changing and highly mobile network called globalisation presses upon the security and stability of all cultural, political, national systems and structures. This new market is, in our thinking, a new world order that can no longer be simply aligned with the consumerist and homogenising pressures of modern – Western or US – capitalism. Transnational capitalism, for so long associated with Western or US imperialism, respects no national border in its pursuit of profits and markets. Changing patterns of ownership, investment and corporate structure over the last forty years – and now the growth of new economic superpowers and new global financial crises – situate the nation in a subordinate, even subaltern, position, at the mercy, rather than at the centre, of fluctuations of capital. As a decentred and deterritorialising apparatus of governance, capitalism progressively transforms, reshapes and incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xii). Such decentring turns modern ways of thinking, believing, being, and narrating inside-out and upside-down, generating a new sense of anxiety about borders, identities and futures. This anxiety is, perhaps, one of the bases for the reappearance of gothic and supernatural motifs and tropes. But it is an anxiety that selects its metaphors, reading figures of disturbance, haunting and liminality, ephemeral figures of strangeness, as well as violence and death, in a range of cultural productions, from contemporary Japanese dance to American zombie narratives, music and online bloodsucking. Global manifestations of the gothic, we suggest, touch on the sense of the unnerving, unpredictable and uncontrollable scale of world changes that impinge diversely and relentlessly on different locales and peoples. The darkness of real and imagined ecological disasters, overproduction, pollution, climate change, is rendered both sublimely unthinkable and culturally and emotionally specific in its devastations. In attempting to

broach the scale of change, the globalgothic mode registers an ill-formed grasp of the consequences attendant on the dissolution of old securities, clear-cut jurisdictions, stable structures and comforting boundaries, be they national, social, cultural, scientific or subjective.

The rise of recent reports of zombies and witchcraft in southern Africa is connected to the 'implosion of neoliberal capitalism' and a 'global crisis' that engenders anxieties about immigration and unemployment (Comaroff, 2002: 779). Violence between citizens of neighbouring postcolonial nations, then, is not merely the byproduct of local tension. It also stems from the 'structural adjustments' that have imposed global market forces on developing nations and enforced a dependency on economic fluctuations (prices, investments) and the resulting shifts in employment and migration. Following the Comaroffs, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri cite a growing number of reports of ritual murder, occult practices, witchcraft, monsters and zombies from Africa to Indonesia, Russia to South America. From a European perspective these events may be dismissed as a resurgence of primitive premodern practices. Hardt and Negri, however, caution against such a response, arguing that these reports are manifestations of contemporary forces and effects, postmodern more than premodern or primitive. They seem to share a common element: supernatural sightings often appear when 'new dreams of wealth in the global capitalist economy have for the first time been plunged into the icy realities of imperial hierarchies' (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 126). Such reports offer, for Hardt and Negri, a way of understanding how 'each of these contexts' shares a 'contradictory social situation': singularity at a local level finds 'global commonality' in the fluxes and flows of a new Empire (126). Pushing at the constraints of a residually Enlightenment ontology that reproduces a master logic and places Europe at the centre of thought, history and being, Hardt and Negri importantly try to articulate the effects of what they call the new world order at economic, political and cultural levels. They identify a changing global habitus, a transnational digitally enhanced network which transforms spaces, times and, significantly, ways of thinking, demanding a greater and more effective understanding of globalisation's complex and fluid relationships. Articulating these phenomena with numerous reiterations of gothic figures, they observe the interpenetration of the local and global, self and other, while avoiding the static models of binary opposition and hierarchical difference that have been challenged so effectively in postcolonial reversals of Western subalternisation. It is here, among and across the liminal spaces of a

new world order, that gothic figures are articulated as immaterial presences with physical effects and the globalgothic grasps and connects antitheses by engaging with doubles, ambivalences and multiplicities.

In *Specters of Marx* Jacques Derrida envisions this new economic order as monstrous, techno-scientific, quasi-messianic: it is seen to be introducing a 'new disturbance' and an 'unprecedented form of hegemony' to which older modern categories no longer apply except in spectral misrecognitions (1994: 50). Fredric Jameson's more measured – economically speaking – Marxist account plots a similar trajectory towards something systemically inhuman. For him finance capitalism's general and cannibalistic tendency to exploit crises enables it to move from failing economic practices (such as industrial production) to absorb 'ever greater zones of social life (including individual subjectivity)' (Jameson, 2000: 264). Abandoning the national industrial competition of an imperial stage, capital discovers profit beyond material goods in financial transactions alone to become 'free-floating', separated 'from the concrete context of its productive geography' (259). Its dematerialisation parallels the operations of virtuality, informatics and posthumanism and transforms the globe in the light of its digital abstractions. Objects and things are rendered secondary to flows of information, signs and services. Here globalisation is envisaged as 'a kind of cyberspace in which money capital has reached its ultimate dematerialization, as messages that pass instantaneously from one nodal point to another across the former globe, the former material world' (268). The other side of such abstracted yet immanent connectedness is perhaps a very different sense of hauntedness. New ghosts, separated from material contexts and monetary realities, appear to redefine financial exchanges. Speculation becomes a spectral force: 'specters of value' vie 'against each other in a vast, world-wide, disembodied phantasmagoria'. A different, dark and dominating shape orchestrates the flows and movements of global capital: 'a play of monetary entities', abstracted, immaterial, that 'can live on their own internal metabolism and accrete without any reference to an older type of content' (273). In its ghostly form, capital moves outside of what we once might have considered a real world. Its disembodied and spectral presence now signals something other than an invisible hand conferring or withholding wealth. The new monster operates autonomously, in an inhuman way, disconnected from any relation that might once have benefited humanity.

Fredric Jameson's description of an indomitable capitalist monster

machine revives the Marxist nightmare of a vampiric capitalism feeding off the living labour of the world's workers. Jameson's capitalist monster is, like the vampire-capital of Hardt and Negri's Empire, less reliant on the material life and vital bodies of Marx's metanarrative. Still, Jameson's writing is haunted by the revenant of modern oppositions – particularly class conflict – and thus romanticises resistance in terms of heroic collectives, indigenous cultures or individuals struggling against a callous and dominating system. But this assumes that modernity is stable and successful in always maintaining its divisions and hierarchies. Such a vision fails to acknowledge that modernity's enlightened, progressive, rational, scientific and productive forces were always double and haunted by the past, strangeness and otherness. For modernity has always been dependent on the antitheses it invoked and suppressed, on the subjects it constructed and excluded through the demonisations of class, gender and racial difference.

Modernity's formation works on the basis of doublets: empirical and transcendental, liberty and discipline, spirit and spectre, self and other, norm and monster, consciousness and unconscious, progress and regression, mind and body, light and dark, surface and depth, sameness and difference. It was, as such, formed on the basis of an originary division-elision, a hybrid-uncanny structuring, which Homi Bhabha relates to the hegemonies of European imperialisms. For Bhabha it is the very ambivalence and undecidability within modernity that reveals its plurality, its interstitial, transnational and translational shiftings, its doubleness and strangeness. A 'contentious internal liminality', he writes, can be located in the 'antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the "rationalizations" of modernity' (1994: 171). Thus, if modern culture is *heimlich* in its disciplinary generalisations, its mimetic narratives, its homologous empty time, its seriality, its progress, its customs and its apparent coherence, then it is also *unheimlich* in its encounters with heterogeneities, otherness, discontinuities and differences that are, for all its occlusions, its own. For in order for modernity to distinguish itself and to signify, it must be translated, disseminated, differentiated, and hence it must become 'interdisciplinary, intertextual, international, inter-racial' (136). By extension 'cultural globality is', for Bhabha, 'figured in the *in-between* spaces of double-frames: its historical originality marked by a cognitive obscurity; its "decentred subject" signified in the nervous temporality of the transitional, or the emergent provisionality of the "present"' (216). Gone are the fixed meanings of binary structures, clear borders, cultural

coherence or causes and effects. In their place we find flows and disjunctions in the 'stubborn chunks' of cultural identification, as well as a reiteration of migrations, displacements, translations, deterritorialisations and reterritorialisations. Unsurprisingly, it is in modernity that gothic is invented, signs of Western culture's 'internal liminality' and its increasingly futile attempts at holding otherness at a distance.

In recognition of modernity's failed suppressions, haunting has been used throughout postcolonial theory to bring an awareness of colonial history to the present while also revising the conceptions of contemporary regional, national and cultural relations. Spectral coloniality often figures the relation of otherness, of occlusions, of limitations, and of desires to acknowledge, see and hear others, the marginalised, the silenced. Indeed haunting is persistent within the postcolonial consciousness precisely because of its affective feature, a feature that conjures a sense of looming importance that is both present and unsettling. And a spectre is also conjured in the imagined origins of a 'pure' tradition killed off in the incursion of colonial forces. Though haunting can signal the return in spectral forms of cultures and pasts that have been pushed aside, those revenant pasts return often as sites of loss, nostalgia, guilt or betrayal. More importantly, postcolonial hauntings reveal powerlessness when faced with the possibility of resistance. Memories are not always mobilised and insurgencies are often written over by an ever increasing transnational condition that denies or obfuscates situated or positioned resistance. And this is where globalgothic is significant. For the use of haunting in postcolonial theory also signals a placeless yet always present mode of resistance that betrays an underlying fear about how disputes and encounters are diffused within the often elusive character of new transnational realities and postcolonial forms of oppression. Seen from a globalgothic perspective, then, the use of haunting in postcolonial theory reflects a suspended condition, in-between because it is indicative of an era hovering between the traces of a defeated colonial history and vague transnational structures of hierarchy and subjugation. With the rise of new forms of empire and transnational capital, the active imperialisms witnessed in tangible and positioned structures of conflict related to nation states have declined, and it is not always easy to locate tangible forms of empire, particularly given their transnational nature.

In *Spectral Nationality*, for instance, Pheng Cheah explores postcolonial anxieties about the possibility of mapping or situating resistance under conditions of transnational empire and globalised incarnations

of imperialism. Drawing on Derridean hauntology and Benedict Anderson's work on imagined communities, Cheah examines how contemporary theories of freedom, including postcolonial nationalisms, are underwritten by a metaphor of the organic body. While this metaphor is essential to modern theories of freedom, it is also inherently unstable and prone to perform its own unravelling. The actualisation of freedom, a concept that is politically and philosophically anchored in modernity, is always incomplete, and the nation signified within this 'organismatic metaphor' figures a pledge of freedom that remains spectral, neither simply living nor simply dead (Cheah, 2003: 19). Put simply, nationalism is part of a body politic that cannot simply be killed off by a new globalism or a utopian cosmopolitanism. It is too deeply embedded in modern thought. Rather, the nation state becomes involved in a series of hauntings: 'the state is an uncontrollable specter that the national organism must welcome within itself, and direct, at once for itself and against itself', and the nation, too, 'must be seen as a specter', haunted by and haunting the state (390, 395). In this the only nation that can be conjured is spectral: assertions of nationalism have failed to reappropriate the body of the neocolonial state from the grasp of contemporary forms of empire, confirming that 'the metaphor that has replaced the living organism as the most appropriate organism for freedom today is that of the ghost' (383).

Globalgothic, however, registers something different, something that is harder to define and yet to be formed. It reflects the dark and shadowy contours of a new world order that is mediated, networked, militarised and corporatised but offers no clear-cut image of itself, flickering between a series of dissolutions and displacements. The speeds of cultural change, new technologies, media exchanges and financial fluidity augment liminal and uncanny zones, making ephemeral spaces pervasive and generalised. The in-between moves outside. Hence the structures that once held modernity's doublets in place are dissolved. Fixed boundaries become fluid as unstable networks, mobile assemblages, complex clusters and nodal singularities engender rapid movements across a viral and transversal diffusion of borders and fields. Globalgothic registers the effects after the interpenetration of global and local has rendered the separation of both poles redundant, thus exploding the myth of a pure globality and shredding the nostalgic fantasy of a return to an untainted local culture. An early example of this arises in reports of Malay *hantu* possessing the bodies of women workers in the established free-trade zones of Malaysia. Here haunting

and possession insist on the power to ‘attack the real’, exploding the polarities of local and global, as the shop floor is reterritorialised by the threatening spirits of traditional, regional narratives. ‘In the 1970s’, writes Mary Keller,

hundreds of incidents were recorded in the free-trade zones of Malaysia in which women who worked in the technically sophisticated manufacturing plants were possessed by *hantu*, spirits, often harmful to human beings, associated with a place, animal, or deceased person. Fifteen women, possessed by *datuk*, an ancestral male spirit associated with a sacred place, closed down an American-owned microelectronics factory . . . The possessed women were so volatile that the male supervisors could not control one woman. (2002: 1)

In this context, where the spirits of a folkloric tradition take possession of the factory, an altered reality arises out of heterogeneous experiences and the means of production becomes, if only momentarily, unmanageable. By taking possession of the workplace, these women transform the physical and temporal dimensions within a sphere of activity that has been established through Kuala Lumpur’s investment in global capitalism.

Of all the forces evident in the transformation of the world, consumerism (or ‘Western consumerism’) is perhaps most vividly identifiable as having powerfully imposed economic and cultural practices as a global norm and dominant expectation or aspiration. To consume is to be able to play one’s part in the contemporary world. It is also most obviously – and most often condemned – as part of the homogenising imperative of new imperial, corporate culture, a ‘McDonaldisation’ of cultural differences. At the same time, cultural differences are repeatedly consumed and transformed, to be sold at the delicatessen counter, in ‘World Music’ or ‘World Cinema’ racks or in tourist brochures. Consumerism, coming to the fore in the West in the twentieth century, overturns practices and morality in which work and prudence are privileged over luxury and indulgence. It transforms Western cultures as well as those of the developing world. A marker of what is called a shift to ‘post-industrial’ practices, it is a move away from an emphasis on production and towards economies based on the circulation of goods and services. In many ways, and in its function as the double of bourgeois modernity, consumption has been figured in gothic terms, its darker and more destructive features visible in the contagious bite of the vampire. For Marx capitalism itself was voraciously undead, feeding ‘vampire-like’ on living labour (1976: 342). Anne Rice’s vampire, Lestat, notes how the pattern changes as the twentieth century draws to

a close. Awakening near the end of that century after going into hibernation at the end of the nineteenth, when consumption was linked to sexuality and decadence (see Dijkstra, 1986), Rice's eponymous hero praises the way US consumer culture exudes an 'Oriental loveliness' and manifests a society in which all people have a 'right to luxury' (Rice, 1995: 14). These rights of consumption, though registered in residually nineteenth-century terms, are very much part of a new world order in which consuming imperatives have become the norm (Goux, 1990). No longer is the fat cigar-smoking capitalist the one who stands behind vampire capitalism, with its repulsive aspect in respect of the living, human workers of the world. Enjoying the freedoms of consumerism, every member of Western culture is enjoined to feed on the rest of the world, expropriating the resources and labour of other countries, presiding, unaware perhaps, over those stripping forests or slaving all day in sweatshops to deliver the outsourced objects of consumer desire. In Western youth culture, moreover, the vampire signals these new and seductive norms of economic individualism and consumption; all assume the shape of 'consuming mall-rats' (Latham, 1997: 131). As with the figure of Lestat, however, the enjoyment of this new world of consumer plenitude comes at a price: not only others' slavery to global forces of production and unequal distribution but also a subjection and transvaluation of the idea of humanity. In consumer culture all life gives itself and its dignities up, willing or not, to vampiric corporate powers for whom humans are victims of exploitation comparable to the very burgers they consume (Zanger, 1997).

The effects of modernity's movement beyond itself are not just virtual. For the acceleration of economics, science and technology have *real* consequences for *real* bodies, cities, nations, cultures, spaces and histories. 'In the context of the flexibility demanded by contemporary capitalism', writes Arjun Appadurai, 'there has been a great compression of time and space, and the body comes to be seen as a chaotic, hyperflexible site, ridden with contradictions and warfare' (1996: 44). Hypermodernity, then, cannot simply be conflated with the homogenising processes that transform specific economic, martial or technological elements and effects. Rather, it is better understood as a radical destabilisation and unanchoring of interrelationships as part of fluid and shifting networks of powers (Harvey, 1996). Thus 'national security' shifts fluidly into 'global security' as the call for a universal peace is calibrated against a 'global civil war' and local resistance is redefined as international terrorism. Furthermore the same modalities

and technologies that produce economic forms of globalisation also support global terrorism, not just in the fluid transfer of funds for acts of resistance but also in the communication technologies that enable networks to develop across distance, time and space.

Globalgothic asks vital questions about the decentring of power. For while it can be packaged, marketed and sold, globalgothic can also reveal the terrors of global terrorism or how oppositional movements might challenge the powerful hegemonic discourses of free market, neo-liberal ideologies. Gothic conventions situate terror as happening 'out there'; its position is elsewhere, outside the self, something that takes place away from the security of the homely. But the proximity of terror does not always remain at a distance, for terror refuses to be contained within the borders of a particular jurisdiction. Indeed, in a globalised world, the terror of terrorism brings the reminder that borders are permeable, exploding binary models of terror and proximity. 'If the displaced become instruments of terror', writes Tabish Khair, 'it is as much because we, who have decided to stay home or who have the privileged option of making the entire globe our home, have for too long averted our eyes from those who are "elsewhere" or who come from "elsewhere"' (2009: 109). Put simply, terrorism forces us to recognise that 'elsewhere' is 'here', not only because the formulation of the distinction was always located in the privileged site of power but also because we can no longer refuse to see the shadows we have cast. Bombs on the London Underground, exploding trains in Madrid, the crash of the World Trade Center – all of these acts spawn terror in developed nations, prompting a reallocation of resources in the name of security.

Chasing ghosts is, for Paul Virilio, a by-product of transpolitical militarisation that moves beyond nation states. In this new world order 'peace' and 'security' are privileged over 'defence' and, as a result, the 'enemy' disappears, 'making way for the indeterminacy of constantly redefined threats' to life and ways of life. 'The enemy of the constitution is', he continues, 'thenceforth less an "internal enemy" of the national state than a "threat" to the civil peace, a danger to the *constitution of internal pacification*' (2005: 160–1). Hence the enemy is no longer a specific nation or threat, but 'banalized (reduced to an object of continued police repression) and absolutized (as the Enemy, an absolute threat to the ethical order)' (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 13).

Globalisation has produced major social divisions through the 'overvalorization of corporate capital and devalorization of disadvantaged

workers' (Sassen, 1999: 88). Class distinctions, though, are not ahistorical, and the asymmetrical relations in globalisation involve 'new movements and new instabilities, from "transmigration" of capital and people to new contexts that are "fragile" in being centred on an economy of high productivity, advanced technologies and intensified exchanges' (Sassen, 1999: 102). From this perspective globalisation is 'multiscalar': it occupies places and non-places and denationalises state institutions. Here a global proletariat exists, but in 'dispersed' and 'mobile forms' (Harvey, 1996: 423). As frontiers and borders shift to form internal boundaries and virtual non-spaces, the distinctions between global and local interpenetrate and transform each other in a fluid and dynamic relation. As global forces and media – capital, advertising, commodification – are absorbed into the local, a new interior is hollowed out (Appadurai, 1996: 42). For US geopolitical strategy identifies globality with the 'interior' of a finite world, while local issues are exteriorised, pushed to the periphery. This process signifies 'a great globalitarian transformation which extraverts localness – all localness' and deports 'living spaces' and spaces of economic subsistence. It also engenders 'a global de-localisation, which affects the very nature not merely of "natural", but of "social" identity, throwing into question not so much the nation-state, but the city, the geopolitics of nature' (Virilio, 2000: 10).

Globalisation is, as Appadurai notes, a cannibalising force: sameness and difference, East and West, begin to consume each other in a 'cultural flux' which destabilises identities, disturbing migrant communities from within (1996: 43–4). In turn, transnational settings challenge traditional expectations and identifications. This can, in some cases, generate a sense of 'rage' and 'betrayal' in translocal ethnic contexts due to misunderstandings about the relationship between appearance and reality, particularly when it is revealed that one's neighbours are not necessarily identified with the same communal, ethnic or political values. 'This sense of betrayal is', Appadurai writes,

about mistaken identity in a world where the stakes associated with these identities have become enormously high. The rage such betrayal seems to inspire can of course be extended to masses of persons who may not have been intimates . . . [but] it remains animated by a perceived violation of the sense of knowing who the Other was and of rage about who they really turn out to be. This sense of treachery, of betrayal, and thus of violated trust, rage, and hatred has everything to do with a world in which large-scale identities forcibly enter the local imagination and become dominant voice-over in the traffic of ordinary life. (1996: 154)

Identity and otherness between members of what appeared to be the same community not only blurs but also motivates rage and violence. This is an effect of (mis)perception and unreal expectations, but also an effect of translocation in which traditional values are pressed by the tensions and desires of a different culture. David Harvey explains this as part of 'the new imperialism' in which cohesive components of the body politic are left to die in the name of profit. 'Communities', he argues,

built to service now defunct manufacturing industries have been left high and dry, wracked with long-term structural unemployment. Disenchantment, dropping out, and quasi-legal means to make ends meet follows. Those in power rush to blame the victims . . . If those marginalized happen to be an ethnic or racially marked minority, as is all-too often the case, then the stigmatization amounts to barely concealed racial bigotry. (1996: 404)

Responses include urban violence, rage, frustration, depression and disillusion. But as geophysical boundaries dissolve, as historical structures are torn down or realigned, and as the cultural contours of modernity collapse, the proximity of otherness gets closer and closer. Economically rich and poor regions of the world were never very far apart. But in globalisation the insecurities between self and other are heightened as once stable spaces undergo radical shifts and reversals. The assumptions propping up the notion of separate regional and economic spheres have been jettisoned by the migrations, unemployment and homelessness arising out of contemporary transformations of financial markets. Our post-industrial regions, then, mirror the old colonial world (Virilio, 2000: 55) and the 'Third World does not really disappear in the process of unification of the World market but enters into the First, establishes itself at the heart as ghetto, shantytown, favela, always again produced and reproduced. In turn, the First World is transformed into the Third in times of stock exchanges and banks, transnational corporations and icy skyscrapers of money and command' (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 253–4).

If, as we suggest, globalisation engenders a context of unbelonging through the rupture of communities, then what function does globalgothic perform? The answer is twofold and enfolded: first, it registers the anxieties that arise from national, social and subjective dissolution, including an endless media-critical interrogation of identities, genders, races and classes; second, it constructs an otherness that screens out the excesses of anxiety while turning the mirror back on itself . . . globally, darkly, monstrosly.

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