Introduction
Five Hundred Years of World-Gothic

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Four decades ago, gothic literature was largely considered to be a weird footnote to the English literary canon. Today, gothic studies encompasses fiction from six continents, and, by virtue of this transregional scope, is a field increasingly engaged with urgent crises that define our turbulent global present. From the Leviathan of climate breakdown to the vital spectres of colonialism and enslavement: numerous critics have positioned the gothic as a form capable not only of figuring these and related monsters actually proliferating on a planetary scale, but also of interrogating them and even potentially subverting their power. This ascent and regional diversity of the gothic may strike some readers as surprising, not least because the symbology with which the mode is enduringly associated – crumbling castles, glowering aristocrats, damsels in distress – seems so thoroughly rooted in Europe, where traditional literary history teaches us that it first appears. According to this established origin story, gothic emerges in the late eighteenth century, just as bourgeois revolution and nascent industrialisation were sweeping away the last remnants of a feudal order. The form responds to these circumstances, and to the self-conscious culture of modernity by which they were accompanied, typically by looking back with ambivalence to the Europe of a darkly imagined medieval past: a haunted and often terrifying place of villainous overlords and oppressive traditions, rife with the superstition and magic of an ostensibly more primitive, and now bygone, age.

When scholars have relocated the gothic outside its European – and principally British – contexts of production, they have mainly done so by examining how these shadowy landscapes and characteristic monsters provide a malleable vocabulary that can be adapted to address the anxieties local to a different time and place. Hence, critics now routinely consider not only gothic, but a wide range of national and regional variations: Canadian Gothic, South African Gothic, Asian Gothic, and so on. The term 'globalgothic', coined by Glennis Byron in her 2013 collection of the

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same name, captures this general travelling tendency: in Byron's formulation, the concept identifies late-twentieth-century economic globalisation as the mechanism through which gothic forms have been disseminated around the world, where they come to be hybridised with other cultural traditions of the monstrous, producing a composite lexicon that can (supposedly) no longer be attached to any single point of origin.[1] Though not identical, both these transregional approaches rely on a similar strategy: taking the 'original' gothic as a yardstick, they track the modulations and dislocations that reconfigure this form – sometimes beyond recognition – for particular national, regional, or global settings. To speak of gothic in the international context is therefore almost always to speak of a mode invented under the socio-economic and political pressures of late-eighteenth-century Britain, and then exported elsewhere.

This collection offers a different perspective, which we will define as world-gothic across this introduction. World-gothic affirms the transregional scope of gothic production, but it does not understand this as primarily constituting a global distribution and adaptation of conventions and aesthetics. Instead of tracking the outward spread of gothic forms from their birthplace in Europe, world-gothic places a question mark over this widely accepted origin story, asking us to think critically about the world-historical picture it assumes. To do this, we situate the late-eighteenth-century literary form that has come over time to be identified as 'gothic fiction' in the context of what Immanuel Wallerstein called the capitalist world-system, a concept influentially reformulated by the environmental historian Jason W. Moore as the capitalist world-ecology, and which provides the basis for an approach to transregional cultural production named world-literature – or, more extensively, world-culture – by critics associated with the Warwick School.[2]

From this interdisciplinary field of scholarship, we draw an understanding of modernity – of the modern world in which we still live – which locates its origins in the 'long' sixteenth century. At this time, the powers of Europe invaded and colonised the Americas, and, overseeing a vast project of extermination, enslavement, and ecological theft, extracted the wealth that enabled their subsequent rise to global hegemony. In the crucible of the Atlantic world there thus emerged a transregional relationship of core to periphery – to use Wallerstein's terms – which binds the prosperity and influence of certain places to the plunder of others in a pattern that would structure the world-system for centuries to come, albeit in shifting ways. Because the central dynamic of capitalism is to exhaust its own socio-ecological conditions of possibility – to corrode the very sources of labour

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and energy on which it depends – the history of the world-system has unfolded in a recurring boom-and-bust rhythm of crisis and renewed expansion, with each new historical cycle of accumulation deepening and enlarging the extractive relations set in place by the last. Accounting for this history brings into focus the long roots of social and environmental catastrophe blooming unevenly across the globe today – and indeed, for Moore, climate breakdown, deepening inequality, and global economic turbulence suggest that we have entered the world-ecology's terminal phase. At the same time, a world-historical view of capitalism also shows us – crucially – that globalisation is by no means a twentieth-century phenomenon. Britain in the late 1700s was already global: the socio-economic revolution out of which gothic emerged is in fact the situated effect of a long-standing core-periphery relation. The capitalist modernisation that creates the local world to which gothic responds needs therefore to be understood as reliant on an aggressive regime of capitalist extraction and exploitation long active elsewhere.

Several interesting possibilities arise if we expand the established contextualising narrative of gothic's emergence to accommodate the transoceanic pre-history of European capitalist industrialisation. Most significantly, the move allows us to see that the conditions in which gothic appears in eighteenth-century Britain were already in place in the colonies, where the largescale incorporation of people into a transregional capitalist socio-ecology had begun in extremely violent forms two centuries earlier. This insight in turn destabilises conventional gothic aetiology, and raises important questions: If industrialisation produced narratives of haunting and terror in eighteenth-century Europe, then can these not be considered belated part-echoes of monstrous figures and tales that were at large much earlier, across the plantations of the New World? In a vital contribution to studies of gothic in the world-system, Stephen Shapiro provides good reasons to explore this possibility, proposing that gothic fiction cannot be fully disentangled from a wider body of 'folk' forms, which appear in Europe and its colonies to mediate the violent socio-cultural effects of a given region's induction into global networks of capitalism.[3] This volume takes cues from this and related arguments and builds out their possibilities, with major critical implications for gothic scholarship generally, and transregional studies of the mode in particular. As we will explain below, our contention is that prevailing understandings of the form called 'the gothic' may need to be strongly reconfigured – including disbanding the view in which this initially European invention now circulates rootlessly in flat globalised space.

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Instead, we will propose that 'the gothic' can better be understood as one (albeit hegemonised) name for a particular form of world-culture – 'the manifold and many-sided culture of the capitalist world-system'[4] – which arises specifically to encode and negotiate the alienating local effects of incorporation, or reincorporation, into global capitalist modernity. World-gothic forms are thus plural, culturally specific and always highly situated, but they appear within the shared historical horizon of the uneven world-system. In this conception, gothic has in fact always been world-gothic: a vernacular iteration of the monstrous cultural forms that tend invariably to follow encounters with a new regime of capital, in whatever part of the world-system this is being is implemented. Without relying on the export or hybridisation of 'original' gothic conventions, world-gothic thus allows us to discern the linkages between these and a much wider array of located figures and tales of alienation and anxiety.

Over the rest of this introduction, we put some flesh on the bones of this as-yet abstract exposition by demonstrating how a world-gothic approach helps to reconstitute the familiar origin story of gothic literature. From here, we consider the critical affordances that emerge with this revised account, specifically in respect to questions of Eurocentrism and critical imperialism that are currently resurfacing, despite the ostensible development of a deterritorialised globalgothic mode. We conclude with a selection of snapshot analyses of contemporary transregional gothic production, showing that a world-gothic reading sheds light on the close association, mentioned above, between gothic forms and unfolding planetary crises. Finally, we provide an overview of the chapters to come, each of which engages with the opportunities to revisit and rethink gothic scholarship's parameters, theoretical infrastructure, and central figures of analysis that open up once gothic is acknowledged as world-gothic.

The Literature of Alienation

The relationship between gothic and industrialisation has recently been foregrounded by Brigit M. Marshall, who, in her monograph of the same name, provides an extensive analysis of 'industrial gothic': a central strand, she argues, of transatlantic cultural production across the nineteenth century. 'As communities and individuals' lives were transformed by the Industrial Revolution', writes Marshall, 'the Gothic provided an existing framework through which writers could explore and readers could comprehend the disruptions that industrialization was causing'.[5] This point resonates with, but also significantly differs from, earlier analyses of gothic

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and industrialisation, which – as we will see – are in fact more enabling in respect to a world-gothic perspective. Writing in the last decades of the last millennium, Franco Moretti and David Punter each situated the rise of gothic in Britain amid the largescale reorganisation of the pre-existing social order represented by the arrival in this region of capitalism in its industrial form. For Moretti, the gothic appears 'in the full spate of the industrial revolution' as a means of articulating novel structures of feeling generated by this development: in the figures of Frankenstein's monster and Dracula – emblems of 'the disfigured wretch and the ruthless proprietor' – he discerns the dual spectres of proletarian revolution and total, cold-blooded monopolisation that haunt bourgeois society from its inception. 'The literature of terror is born precisely *out of the terror of a split society*',[6] Moretti concludes, the point being that the fears encoded in gothic forms are fears particular to the capitalist mode of production, in which the prosperity of the capitalist is inversely correlated to that of the worker.

Punter reiterates and nuances this claim, proposing that gothic can be considered 'a literature of alienation': a form of narrative that arises to encode the specifically estranged experience of existence under capitalism.[7] To make this argument, Punter turns to *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, where the early Marx outlines the socio-ecological and psychic ruptures that open up as capitalism divorces people from their means of subsistence outside the market, and makes survival dependent on waged work and commodity consumption. According to Marx, there are four dimensions to the form of alienation that emerges under these conditions. First, workers are alienated from the products of their labour, which – though an incarnation of their own energy – come to be weirdly animated by the market and so seem to escape their creator's control. Second, the worker is alienated from the activity of labour itself, which appears to belong not to them, but to the owner of the means of production; third, the worker is alienated from their own body, now an instrument of production, and from the natural world, which disappears as a source of subsistence; and finally, the worker is alienated from their fellow human beings, who do not exist in community, but as individuals in competitive relation within the market.[8] Since the late eighteenth century, Punter proposes, gothic fiction has registered each of these processes of estrangement. The world of the gothic is, in this view, the alienated world of capital: a place inhabited by 'arrant individualists' and 'psychotic heroes and heroines', where human energies regularly bring forth 'monsters which

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destroy their creators', and the landscape 'vanishes from sight' behind terrifying 'expressionistic substitutes'.[9]

Moretti and Punter therefore offer a different – if not entirely incompatible – analysis of gothic and industrialisation to the one made by Marshall, who understands gothic as a set of pre-existing conventions, amenable to the representation of 'workers' struggles against the powerful forces of capitalism' across the nineteenth century.[10] What the earlier critical work makes clear, however, is that this pre-existing, eighteenth-century gothic is already intertwined with capitalism as a cultural form which registers the estranged reality it creates. The point is confirmed by Shapiro, who – drawing on the later Marx's account of the commodity fetish – emphasises the nightmarishness of the situation in which our own energy confronts us as a powerful and unpredictable force that seems to act on us from outside. Under such conditions, where human creativity is externalised and reanimated by the market, the commodity mysteriously hold its own producers in weird thrall, as if it were – in Shapiro's memorable phrasing – 'an awful, supernatural alien towering before its human meat puppets'. The encounter with capitalist modernity can thus be grasped with Shapiro as an 'intrinsically gothic experience', by which we should understand not only an experience worthy of premade gothic description, but rather one that produces the narratives of alienation and anxiety that have acquired the designator 'gothic' within the Western canon.[11]

World-Gothic Origins

Conceptualising gothic as a literature of alienation allows us to expand the regional and historical parameters of gothic's established European origin story, because, as we have begun to see in the above, the process of capitalist modernisation to which early British gothic responds does not take place in a global vacuum. Rather, the industrialisation of Britan is facilitated by two preceding centuries of brutal human exploitation and ecological extraction in the colonies of the so-called New World. Eric Williams documented this economic relation in *Capitalism and Slavery*, which outlines in detail the central 'role of . . . the slave trade in providing the capital which financed the Industrial Revolution in England'.[12] Britain entered into the transoceanic traffic in enslaved African people in the mid-sixteenth century, and was, by the time gothic emerged on the literary scene, the pre-eminent actor in this trade. It is no surprise, then, that the history of enslavement exerts a shaping force on gothic fiction. Gothic vocabularies of fear and monstrosity are, from their early British iterations, fundamentally

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informed by the narratives of race invented to serve the Caribbean plantation system, as well as by pro- and anti-abolitionist discourse. A recurring preoccupation in these texts, as Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert observes, concerns the syncretic spiritual practices developed by enslaved people, such as Vodou, Obeah, and Myal. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, repeated gothic renditions of these rites translate them into a paranoiac colonial imaginary, presenting their practitioners as an 'obscene cannibalistic personification of evil … thereby mirroring political and social anxieties close to home'.[13]

As it fabricates monsters from Caribbean spiritual practice in the way Paravisini-Gebert suggests, the colonial gothic strand of British gothic production can in part be understood in relation to the real connection between these rites and rebellion. As Simon Gikandi observes of early-nineteenth-century Jamaica, '[p]lanters and government officials alike seemed to believe that the African resistance to slavery … [was] embedded in magic'[14] – and not without reason. In *The Black Jacobins*, C. L. R James accords a prominent place to Vodou in fomenting and facilitating the slave-led Haitian Revolution across the last decade of the eighteenth century, and Gikandi develops a related argument around the subversive function of the cult of Myal. What he calls the 'terror associated with magic in the official narrative of … slavery'[15] thus helps to explain the colonial construction of slave rituals in gothic's terms of heightened dread, which would seem to grasp something of the actual threat represented by these practices – especially after the successful rebellions in Haiti – to the plantation order, on which slaveholding nations' prosperity significantly rested. At the same time, however, this interconnection between subversion and the Caribbean occult also points to another, partial and imperfect connection, which takes us from a colonial- to a world-gothic reading.

In *Black Metamorphosis*, Sylvia Wynter's unpublished treatise on historical Black experience in the Americas, the Jamaican author and theorist outlines her formative argument that the syncretic rites, tales, dances, and festivals forged by enslaved people – what she calls Caribbean 'folk culture'[16] – represent 'an indigenization process':[17] a practice she describes as 'the rerooting of the uprooted, the mutation of an ancient traditional culture into a new'.[18] Wynter understands the relationship between resistance and folk culture as inseparably entangled with the operation of indigenisation, and indeed her conception of the folk is informed by Mikhail Bakhtin's strategic use of the term to suggest an opposition to the official culture of the European bourgeoisie. In Wynter's argument, indigenisation is a cultural response to the 'near total alienation' of the

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plantation,[19] which subsumes and also violently surpasses the forms of alienation unleashed across Europe two hundred years after the initiation of slavery in the New World. This analysis rests on a critical revision of the view in which industrialisation appears for the first time in Britain after the middle of the eighteenth century. As Wynter puts it, 'the alienated waged worker of the Industrial Revolution was preceded by the black slave',[20] a claim drawn in part from James' famous observation that slaves in revolutionary Haiti should be understood as 'closer to a modern proletariat than any workers in existence at the time'.[21] Sidney Mintz develops the point in his now-classic study of sugar in the Atlantic world. While conventional European historiography teaches us that '[t]he seventeenth century was preindustrial', Mintz shows that the highly disciplined organisation of labour on plantations in the 1600s made these spaces 'a synthesis of field and factory', and so 'really quite unlike anything known in mainland Europe' at the time.[22]

Building on the same insight, Wynter explains plantation labour as representing, in the first place, 'the extreme case' of estrangement within the framework described by Marx. Enslaved people were forced, under conditions of lethal duress, 'to create a product . . . alien to [their] own needs', and as they 'created this product, it produced more capital, whose power over [the slaves] was thus enforced'.[23] As Wynter emphasises, however, enslavement also profoundly exceeds the Marxist paradigm. It was predicated on the brutal physical and social rupture perpetrated by the Middle Passage, which expresses the concomitant transformation of the human body itself into capital. Writes Wynter of the enslaved person: '[h]e [*sic*] was not only alienated . . . from his means of production, from the use of his own labour for the communal purpose defined by his culture'; additionally, enslavement entailed alienation from an entire lifeworld – from the 'social fabric' within which personhood had been constituted – and so also from 'former being . . . humanity'.[24] It is in relation to this structural refusal of selfhood that Wynter understands indigenisation emerging as a process through which to generate modes of being that actively negate this imposed negation. The folk cultures within which indigenisation unfolds represent, she summarises, a 'cultural response to the dehumanizing alienation of the capitalist plantation system of the New World', one that allowed slaves to 'reroot' themselves, 'making use of the old cultural patterns . . . in order to create a new vocabulary for the new existence'.[25]

This conception of the practices and tales enframed by syncretic Caribbean cosmologies brings into view a partial, imperfect resonance

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with the cultural form that will come to cohere under the sign of the gothic in Britain, and which itself develops from an encounter with the alienating effects of industrialisation once this permutation of the capitalist mode of production reaches Europea in the eighteenth century. Important groundwork for understanding this connection has been laid by Kerstin Oloff in her study of the Caribbean zombie, a figure she locates within the deep 'socio-ecological rifts' underpinning the plantations of the early capitalist world-system.[26] Zombie lore belongs to Haitian Vodou, though related monstrous figures are visible across Caribbean spiritual systems, in all cases synthesised from reconfigured African belief systems transplanted through the Middle Passage. Unlike the zombies of contemporary horror fiction (though also connectable with these, as Oloff shows across her analysis) this zombie is not itself predatory. Instead, it is a creature whose soul has been captured or extracted by a sorcerer for nefarious, gainful ends. In its embodied iteration, the zombie is a corpse resurrected with magic, and put to work on the plantation. Encoded in such beings, Oloff discerns the experience of 'a ruptured connection to the land . . . to one's own body (and hence labour-force) and to knowledge production',[27] which bespeaks all the dimensions of alienation Wynter describes. As Oloff herself notes, the undead in African-derived Caribbean cosmologies foreshadow anxious images of fragmentary embodiment circulating in Romantic and gothic fiction – Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', Shelley's *Frankenstein* – written amid the industrialisation of Britain, leading her to conclude that the 'zombie-esque figure' is 'a monster that registers the emergence of the capitalist world-ecology on both sides of the Atlantic'.[28]

To draw these transregional and historical linkages is not, importantly, to propose that the monsters of Caribbean folk cultures are gothic fiction. As we have seen with Wynter, the figures and practices synthesised by enslaved people gain their meaning in the specific and extreme context of the plantation, where – unlike in the later factories of industrial Europe – human beings were treated as both labour and capital: brutally exploited, and wrenched from the social worlds that provided co-ordinates for selfhood. These are the conditions under which practices, narratives, dances, and magical rites are developed as a process of indigenisation, resignifying the plantation in ways that run counter to its logic dehumanisation. Quite clearly, the gothic that appears in industrialising Britain does not possess the same social meaning; this form negotiates an individualised world in which work, ecology, and the body are subject to alienation, but is not compelled to address the systemic denial of selfhood. Taken together with Punter, Moretti, and Shapiro, Wynter and Oloff's analyses should

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prompt us to look anew at gothic form, however, both in its early British iterations, and more generally. Most significantly, these interventions help us to see the gothic as the product of a located and – crucially – belated encounter with global capitalist modernity, and so as an echo of situated cultural responses to the world-system already long underway elsewhere. As we will see in the following section, one key effect of this perspective is to provincialise European gothic production, which ceases to be an aesthetic yardstick against which other monstrous cultures are measured, and becomes instead just one regional iteration of a much wider, more varied, and plural mediation of alienation and anxiety. The Caribbean zombie is not gothic fiction, but it can productively be grasped within this broader field of world-gothic production, which includes, but is not organised around or originated by, a strange and gloomy corner of the eighteenth-century British literary canon.

Beyond Eurocentrism

Significant critical opportunities open up on taking a world-gothic perspective. Perhaps most importantly, it becomes possible to generatively complicate existing assumptions about transregional gothic reading that – though increasingly fraught with difficulties – remain central to much scholarship that addresses the fiction of fear. As we saw earlier on in this introduction, the concept of globalgothic postulates the emergence of a culturally hybrid gothic mode, which appears with the late-twentieth-century global expansion of the market, and is now so complex and composite that it cannot be pinned down to any regional, local, or national origin. This deterritorialised understanding of contemporary gothic aesthetics was developed in part to facilitate gothic analyses outside 'the West', so it is significant that questions relating to gothic studies' residual Eurocentrism have recently begun to resurface.[29] As a new wave of gothic scholarship moves decisively beyond Europe and the settler nations, critics are often finding that even globalgothic sits uneasily in the context of the fiction they address (a point made by several contributors to this volume). In the face of this challenge, two apparently inconsistent strategies for validating the use of gothic hermeneutics have emerged: The first entails pointing to conscious intertextual dialogues with 'original' gothic conventions, a tactic which hinges on the assumption that gothic is, in essence, a 'Western' cultural form, and can only legitimately be deployed as a category for reading 'non-Western' fiction if this fiction self-consciously relates to the gothic canon. The second strategy relies on the seemingly

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opposing premise that the West is not alone in having developed a gothic tradition; in his view, other regions and cultures have independently produced their own kinds of gothic, and have done so away from 'Western' influence.[30]

Though not without value, neither of these responses to the problem of critical imperialism in gothic reading can fully dispel the charge of Eurocentrism. The requirement that fiction perform a deliberate relationship to the Western gothic mode risks limiting 'non-Western' gothic writing to a kind of re-writing: an albeit-creative derivative of an originally 'Western' gothic script. Though it may accurately identify transcultural resemblances, the notion that all cultures have developed their own parallel gothic traditions is not more enabling, since it provides no rationale for connecting monstrous forms emergent outside the hegemonic cultures of Britain, Europe, and the settler nations with the gothic fictions that appear within these regions. In fact, in the picture of global culture that underpins this notion, it is difficult to see how the imposition of the term gothic beyond the so-called West could be anything other than a Eurocentric act. Notably, these views seem to take opposing perspectives, on one the hand affirming gothic as a deeply and exclusively 'Western' phenomenon, and on the other proposing that gothic-like traditions exist across a much wider spectrum of cultures and regions. That both are ultimately amenable to the logic of Eurocentrism attests, however, to shared assumptions about the modern world in which the gothic is implicitly being placed.

According to the decolonial philosopher Enrique Dussel, 'Eurocentrism' refers to the perspective that takes 'intra-European phenomena as the starting point for modernity',[31] failing to acknowledge that the prosperity and development of Europe is, from the end of the fifteenth century, predicated on relationships of genocide, enslavement, and extraction in the New World. By obscuring these transregional connections, it becomes possible to lift European culture out of the crucible of world-history in which it is shaped, treating it as an 'abstract universality', rather than imbricated in the dynamics of colonialism and capitalism.[32] The culture of 'Western' modernity thus comes to appear unique and self-constituting. It can be opposed to other, 'non-Western' cultures on the basis of this exceptionalism – a move that supports colonial projects across their history – while also entrenching a view in which all cultures are in some way essential (and essentially modern or non-modern), rather than formed across the board within pressures locally exerted by the same uneven, modern/colonial world-

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system. Though Dussel does not use the term, it is this more productive, latter view that is encapsulated by the concept of world-culture.

Traces of Dussel's account of Eurocentrism are visible both in the claim that gothic is an essentially 'Western' form, and in the view that multiple gothics have co-evolved along parallel cultural tracks. Overlooked by each of these analyses is the possibility that what undergirds the various cultural forms in question is the same modernity – the same uneven modern world-system – in relation to which each takes shape in irreducibly specific and located ways. Acknowledging this shared historical horizon provides the otherwise absent rationale for drawing imperfect but enabling linkages between the European gothic mode and monstrous figures developed in other cosmological formations, as we have suggested with Oloff in the preceding discussion of the zombie. Further, though, it helps to address problems that arise when the imperative to dialogue with canonical gothic conventions becomes the criterion for entry into the globalgothic mode. Though well-meaning, the concept of cultural hybridisation on which this condition hinges appears, paradoxically, to affirm an essential distinction between gothic, a product of 'Western' modernity, and other cultural discourses of the numinous and threatening, which are thus seemingly positioned as expressions of static, autochthonous tradition.

We have already seen this view strongly contested in Wynter's analysis of Caribbean folk culture, which tracks how pre-colonial cultural formations are synthesised into new figures and concepts to deal with the experience of a reality violently shaped by alienation in the early world-system. A substantial body of scholarship on manifestations of the occult in colonial and postcolonial societies further outlines and affirms the novelty – the modernity – of narratives and practices prosaically distinguished from European culture on the basis of their indigeneity or proximity to tradition. A selective sample of this work would include Luise White's meticulous oral history of vampire (*mumiani*) tales in recently colonised East and Central Africa, which reveals these to be new stories, invented around the unprecedented figure of the colonial vampire, that appear to give shape to unfamiliar and alienating regimes of labour and extraction from the end of the nineteenth century. Similarly, Aihwa Ong's extensive analysis of the phenomenon of spirit possession afflicting women industrial workers in Malaysia's Free Trade Zones after the 1970s emphasises that, though drawn from ancient cosmology, the *hantu* (spirits) stalking these highly-technologised factory floors are not archaic, but novel apparitions, which respond creatively to the newly exploitative organisation of labour in the neoliberal world order. A related point undergirds Michael Taussig's

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influential account of devil beliefs in late-twentieth-century Latin America, which emerge, he argues, to make located sense of the bewildering experience of subordination to commodity logic. Back on the African continent also at the end of the twentieth century, Peter Geschiere, Jean and John Comaroff, and David McNally (among others) all outline how a surge in occult ritual, vampire tales, and zombie-making accompany neoliberal programmes of economic structural adjustment, which intensify unemployment, deepen exploitation and entrench old inequalities, while conspicuously enriching a mysteriously chosen elite.[33]

To extract 'the gothic' – born amid the capitalist modernisation of Europe – from this (inexhaustive) catalogue of situated monstrous responses to capitalist modernity seems, at best, misguided, and at worst to represent a kind of dogged Eurocentrism, which insists on the exceptionalism of 'Western' culture. Aiming to subvert this misapprehension, world-gothic takes cues from the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, who – broadly in line with Dussel – understands dismantling Eurocentrism as a matter not of de- but *re*territorialising Europe's intellectual and cultural bequests. What he calls 'provincialization' is a strategy for disrupting the pervasive narrative that makes 'modernity or capitalism' appear phenomena 'that became global *over time*, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it', with the effect that all other places are consigned 'to the waiting rooms of history'.[34] The counter-perspective Chakrabarty offers dethrones 'Western' culture from its self-appointed position of abstraction, by asking 'how and in what sense European ideas that were universal were also, at one and the same time, drawn from very particular intellectual and historical traditions', thus underscoring 'how thought [i]s related to place'.[35] This volume follows the provincialising imperative in the field of gothic studies. World-gothic positions the 'Western' tradition of gothic fiction within a wider world-culture of alienation, of which it represents a single example, rooted – as in the case of all world-gothic apparitions – in the socio-ecological, epistemic, and historical conditions of a particular world-systemic position.

World-Gothic Now

While world-gothic reading does not consist in enumerating intertextual relations with 'Western' gothic conventions, it does help us to look afresh at the fiction in which such dialogues are taking place. The hybridisation of canonical gothic forms is – as globalgothic analyses rightly point out – a key feature of the contemporary gothic canon, central to the work of such

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writers as Jesmyn Ward, Silvia Moreno-Garcia, Stephen Graham Jones, Siphiwe Gloria Ndlovu, Mariana Enriquez, and Clare Kohda (among many others). From a world-gothic perspective, what is interesting about the aesthetics of this fiction has less to do with the interpenetration of cultural references than with the ways in which gothic is (re)activated, alongside differently located mediations of alienation, in order to address newly hostile and estranged realities erupting at our present moment of global socio-ecological turbulence. As we have seen with Jason W. Moore in the first section of this Introduction, this situation represents the likely terminal crisis of the capitalist world-ecology. It is characterised by the cumulative biospheric consequences of five centuries of ecological extraction, and by frenzied but increasingly short-lived efforts to reinstate profitability through neoliberalisation – asset stripping, aggressive cost-cutting, financial speculation, and intensifying human and environmental exploitation. Contemporary world-gothic production can be understood as providing situated responses to this latest phase of attempted frontier expansion, not primarily because it hybridises different traditions, but because the traditions that it does draw from and integrate together are themselves often the cultural markers of (previous) encounters with colonial capitalist modernity.

Here we might think of Mariana Enriquez's two celebrated collections, *Things we Lost in the Fire* (2017 (2016)) and *The Dangers of Smoking in Bed* (2021 (2009)), where references to Mary Shelley and Stephen King interweave with the folk saints and devils of an Argentina ravaged by economic crises and neoliberal structural adjustment – for example, San La Muerte, practitioners of *brujería*, and transmogrified images of the poor, the young, and the unhoused. Similarly illuminating is a text like Clare Kohda's *Woman, Eating* (2022), a vampire story of migration and manifold inequality – racialised, gendered, generational – in millennial London. Critically recalling *Dracula* (itself a xenophobic response to economic decline at the dusk of the British empire), the novel centres on the Malay figures of the *lansuyar* and the *pontianak*: both examples of the *hantu* that carry with them to the neoliberalising English capital a history of Malaysia's induction into the late-capitalist world-system. The work of Jesmyn Ward is perhaps more instructive still, for its combination a Faulknerian gothic tradition – forged during the early-twentieth-century modernisation of the American south – with Vodou cosmology developed in defiance of the plantations at the heart of an earlier phase in the world-history of capitalism. As demonstrated with particular clarity in *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017), Ward invokes these differently situated responses to alienation to envision a contemporary Mississippi shaped by

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active and catastrophic processes of racialised and ecocidal exploitation, emblematised in the novel by the industrialised prison on the one hand, and oil rig on the other.

Each of these writers demonstrates gothic's intimate relationship – noted at the beginning of this introduction – with crises of capital and ecology underway unevenly across the planet today. At the same time, each also reveals that what underpins this relationship is a much more structural connection than is allowed by readings that identify the monsters of the gothic canon as a deterritorialised and hybridisable vocabulary, which can be reshaped to capture a wide range of anxieties. Instead, it is precisely the rootedness of gothic, both in its European and wider variations, that ties this form to present socio-ecological shifts. What makes the gothic appropriate to address situations as diverse as those explored by Enriquez, Kohda, and Ward is, in other words, its historical function as a located cultural encoding of encounters with capitalist modernity, which, over and over again, creates worlds distorted by strange, bewildering, and deeply threatening forces. World-gothic names the full scope of these always-situated and diversely mediated encounters, making visible partial connections between Africa-derived folk cultures on the industrialised plantation of the New World and the literary forms that, over a century later, register the anxieties of industrialising Britain, often in highly racialised scenarios that precisely demonise their Caribbean precursors. Following the frontiers of capitalist extraction and exploitation, world-gothic allows us to track these resonances all the way into our contemporary moment, when the much-remarked explosion of gothic across the globe attests less to a severing of regional ties, than it does to the scale and intensity of the present world-systemic, or world-ecological, crisis, which provokes renewed efforts to extract value from any and all remaining territories of relatively uncapitalised life. In this view, gothic is not a marginal niche in the Anglophone literary canon, but neither is it a generalised aesthetics of global anxiety. Rather, world-gothic offers a cultural history of the catastrophic world-systemic present.

As we noted at the outset, taking the perspective we have outlined in this Introduction has significant implications not only for the transregional study of gothic forms but also for gothic criticism generally. Proceeding from the premise that gothic is initiated with bourgeois and industrial revolutions in Europe, this field has developed a critical vocabulary, and defined a set of parameters, that are chiefly informed by a particular, regional variation of what is in fact a much broader, more variegated and historically extensive cultural form. In this collection, we redress this

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situation. The chapters assembled here examine the implications of a world-gothic approach for established understandings of the contexts in which gothic emerges, and the issues to which it responds, as well as for the theoretical frameworks through which gothic is now routinely considered – the vast majority of them rooted in, or reactive to, intellectual traditions inaugurated by Europe's Enlightenment. Contributors further reassess gothic literature's familiar cast of monstrous characters, considering how tropes of haunting, vampirism, undeath, and witchcraft are not forged in Europe and carted out to the rest of the world, but emerge in complex historical and geographic patterns that contour the empty time and space of Eurocentrism and globalisation. A final part of the volume takes up the comparative possibilities of world-gothic reading, exploring connections and regional permutations that affirm the provincial nature of European gothic production, while also augmenting the possibilities of gothic analysis on a transregional scale.

Outline of Chapters

The chapters in the volume's first part – 'Gothic in the World' – reconceptualise the gothic by offering alternative accounts of transnational relationships to those provided by the concept of globalisation. Instead, contributors foreground how European hegemony emerges through the exploitation of gendered and racialised labour in the colonies, and through biophysical extraction in these same regions. These chapters thus provide a theoretical vocabulary for addressing gothic engagements with urgent global issues, such as uneven climate emergency, and racialised and gendered inequality. Stephen Shapiro opens with 'The Undead's Capitalist World-System'. This chapter locates the undead within contemporary world-culture, identifying gothic as a form closely linked to crises of liberalism, as the political position which attempts to mediate between conservativism and radicalism. In 'Whiteness and the "Western" Gothic Tradition', Rebecca Duncan and Johan Höglund then turn to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, demonstrating how the cultural forms now habitually understood to inaugurate gothic as a 'Western' literary tradition are shaped by and reproduce historically specific and mutating categories of whiteness, which emerge to manage the located effects of capitalist modernisation, from the era of enslavement, through to the aftermath of abolition, and the new age of imperialism that emerges in the fin-de-siècle period. Esthie Hugo's chapter re-theorises the domestic gothic from a world-gothic perspective, drawing on social reproduction

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theory to suggest that gothic forms encode the interlocking violence of gendered exploitation and ecological extraction in two contemporary texts: the HBO television series *Sharp Objects* (2018) and the film *Mlungu Wam* (2022).

The second part – 'World-Monsters' – examines recognisable figures in gothic literary production, with the understanding that zombies, vampires, ghosts, and witches ought not to be reduced to a European origin, but instead have longer and more plural genealogies. The chapters address the question: How might canonical gothic creatures be meaningfully compared to other traditions of the supernatural, in ways that expose their resonance and analogous cultural functions, without occluding their difference? Krista Collier-Jarvis responds first with a discussion of the possibility of 'pre-colonial gothic', which centres on the Windigo/Wendigo/Windego. Collier-Jarvis details ongoing debates about how 'stories by and about Indigenous peoples and cultures fit' within the gothic, emphasising the need for local, culturally specific scholarship which equally acknowledges the wider horizon of coloniality. James Mellis echoes this point with a focus on haunting. In an analysis of African, Caribbean, and African American literature, Mellis finds that hauntings, both ancestral and otherwise, assume the reality of African indigenous and diasporic epistemes. Thomas Waller then develops a world-gothic account of bloodsuckers by framing Orlando Mendes's novel *Portagem* through Marx's famous vampiric characterisation of capital. With colonial coal mining in Mozambique as its setting, Waller's chapter demonstrates how mining capital survives by degrading and feeding off of lives of local workers, and how fiction in the region mediates these processes in spectral and monstrous forms. The final chapter in this part by Valeria Villegas Lindvall reconsiders the witch from a world-gothic perspective, arguing that the Mexican-Peruvian film *Huesera* (*The Bone Woman*, 2022) depicts *brujería* as an antidote to heteronormative constructions of motherhood and the feminine. The chapter situates the figure of the witch within the history of enclosure and the depoliticisation of women's labour, before illustrating the ways that the film 'remixes' the trope of the witch to critique the coloniality of gender/sexuality/knowledge.

The contributions in the third part – 'Worlding Gothic Theory' – address key theoretical concepts in gothic criticism, with the intention first of locating them in the intellectual and geopolitical heritage out of which they emerge, and second of revising them for application in a world-cultural context. These chapters thus examine the limitations and possibilities of gothic studies' established critical vocabulary. Beginning with the

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sublime, Jana Maria Giles traces a genealogy from its earliest Greek formulations to a revised account based on Jean-François Lyotard's concept of the differend. In the process, Giles exposes both the colonising and the decolonising possibilities of the sublime, providing a framework that can be taken up for world-gothic reading. Taking a similar approach to the grotesque, Rune Graulund locates this concept within a dialectic between the culture of modernity, and the transgressive ways of being that modernity attempts to regulate. From here, Graulund's chapter tracks manifestations of this grotesque dynamic across a transregional corpus, asserting in conclusion the ecological possibilities of such an analysis in the age of planetary emergency. Ryan Topper then addresses the uncanny – a cornerstone of gothic analysis – from a world-gothic vantage, illustrating his argument with reference to the work of Amos Tutuola. As Topper shows, Tutuola shifts the coordinates of the real beyond the European rationalism on which the uncanny rests, to include Yoruba conceptions of the real where physical and spiritual spheres are mutually constitutive. The final chapter in this part revises the interrelated concepts of the abject and abhuman. In her contribution, Rebekah Cumpsty critiques the primitivist underpinnings of European constructions of the category 'human' upon which both the abject and abhuman rest. Cumpsty then demonstrates the world-gothic potential of other-than-human modes of being through readings of African and African diasporic fiction.

Key to the concept of world-gothic theorised across this collection is the insight that analogous experiences of alienation within the world-system provide a basis for comparisons between fictions produced in different cultural contexts and/or different historical moments. The chapters in the volume's fourth part – 'World-Gothic: Transregional Comparisons' – demonstrate this possibility. Rather than examining how pre-existing gothic conventions are locally adapted for a particular national context, these contributions consider how traditions of the monstrous and the supernatural emerge across different regions to mediate, critique and/or obscure the repatterning of an established local socio-ecological order. In 'Gothic Inheritances in Oceania' Caitlin Vandertop examines Albert Wendt's 'Inside us the Dead' and Robert Barclay's *Melal* as examples of world-gothic, identifying a preoccupation across the two texts with genealogical disruptions perpetrated by colonial extractivism and toxification. Karl Emil Rosenbæk Reetz then uses gothic forms as a comparative frame for oil encounters in the Niger Delta and the Nordic region, identifying a visceral vocabulary in Niger Delta writing, and an uncanny vocabulary in the Nordics. Rosenbæk Reetz shows that imminent and abstracted aesthetics

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register the regionally differentiated experiences of oil across the two areas, with the Niger Delta forging a path the Nordics are likely to follow. Finally, Roxanne Douglas looks back to eighteenth-century chapbook publishing, which used virtually identical illustrations for 'Bluebeard' and *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights*. These stories, Douglas argues, demonstrate the transregional origins of certain female gothic tropes that are taken up in contemporary Arab women's writing back to the 'bloody chamber'.

The collection closes with a Coda that returns to the imperfect nature of the resonances between differently located world-gothic manifestations, which – as this introduction has emphasised – share a relationship to the alienating effects of capitalist modernity, but in each instance possess irreducible social meanings, cosmological inheritances, and regional significance. The Coda reflects on the notion of catachresis as a valuable concept for clarifying these tensions between relationality and specificity, developing key interventions around the term made previously by world-literary and postcolonial thinkers. World-gothic, we propose, offers one catachrestic – imperfect, non-exhaustive, extemporaneous – term that inadequately but generatively addresses the heterogeneity of monstrous production, as this unfolds within the common cultural horizon of the world-system.

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