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Gothic in the Capitalocene

World-Ecological Crisis, Decolonial Horror, and the South African Postcolony

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Gothic Geology

In "The Parlemo," a short story published in her collection *Intruders* (2018), Mohale Mashigo maps the relation between past and present in her native South Africa. Drawing on a recognizably gothic symbology of buried remains, the author imaginatively excavates Johannesburg's built environment and focuses on a district in the grip of dynamic gentrification. A configuration of "grey paint, new bricks, repurposed school desks [and] copper fittings,"[1] this area is emerging as the domain of the hipster youth, belonging—in South Africa—to the so-called born-free generation that has come of age after the 1994 fall of the apartheid state. These urban renewals are, in fact, a specific effect of the conditions under which this political transition played out. To the extent that they register the rise of commercial development in the previously low-income inner city, they invoke the turn to macroeconomic neoliberalism that characterizes the dawn of democracy in the country. As elsewhere across the postcolonial world, the neoliberal agenda—which prioritizes privatization over redistribution, financialization over industry, individual responsibility over state support—has not worked in South Africa to redress long-entrenched economic inequalities cultivated along racial lines under formal white minority rule. Mashigo refers the reader to this reactivation of systemic violence via what appears initially to be an act of imaginative archaeology: "Beneath the buildings, stuck in the concrete, was the blood and sweat of those who had built the city. Beneath their sweat lay

the limbs . . . of those who were digging the core of the earth on the promise of a better life."[2]

Johannesburg began its existence as a goldfield during South Africa's fin de siècle mineral revolution, thus named because it kick-started industrialization in the country. The rapid ascendance of diamonds and subsequently gold also provided the crucible in which a blueprint was developed by colonial administrators and mining capitalists for the racist organization that would shape the country over the following century. Briefly outlined, the mines satisfied their demand for cheap labor by implementing categories of race to identify a laboring class that could be remunerated at as low a wage as possible. A migrant system undergirded this strategy: African people were forcibly confined to reserve territories in the late nineteenth century, and taxes were levied by the colonial state on these enclosures to deliberately compel men into the mineral economy. This complex of geographical segregation, coercion, and racialized remuneration would then be refined and expanded after 1948 under the National Party government's policy of apartheid, which can thus be viewed, as John S. Saul and Patrick Bond note, as itself a system of racial capitalism organized around the coercive production of cheap labor.[3] It is, importantly, over the structures and effects of this system—a South Africa in which access to land, skilled work, education, and infrastructure was officially distributed in racist terms—that the postapartheid regime has rolled out the deindustrializations, privatizations, and welfare retractions characteristic of the neoliberal state, with the result that those bearing the brunt of apartheid's violence are faced with a postcolonial present in which that violence is not alleviated but reiterated in new and compound states of precarity.

When Mashigo writes of blood and bones in the foundations of a rapidly gentrifying Johannesburg, it is to these circumstances that her narrative points. Loren Kruger warns against a fetishization of the city's current dynamism because this risks a "foreshortened view of the . . . past":[4] a convenient amnesia that, "since the days of gold," has been summoned periodically to facilitate Johannesburg's strategic "reinvention"[5] for the ends of capital. This last is specifically significant in relation to Mashigo's tale. The violence embedded in her material cityscape is connected explicitly to a mysterious condition of memory loss, which in turn enables a

hipster generation to embrace neoliberal gentrification. "Humankind was prone to forgetting big things," the narrative voice relates: "this neglect changes the way history is shaped, so the soil, bricks and cement turn themselves into a vault."[6] If there are bodies in Johannesburg's built environment, the text implies, this is because the history of gold and race—of capital in South Africa—has not been adequately remembered in the democratic age.

Especially important to the argument that follows here is the sense in which Mashigo's amnesiac scenario signals an ontological shift, one that has taken place "all around the world"[7] and is thus global in scope. The human remains lodged in South African soil and concrete are in this way connected to a modulation that bears not only on a particular social organization but on the conditions under which (human) life has previously unfolded on a planetary scale. In this sense, the tale's quasi-gothic vision of Johannesburg is legible as a geological—and not only an archaeological—image, and it is here that we might turn to the Anthropocene: the age in which human activity precisely enters the geological record. However, if Mashigo's excavations can be read in this way, then her rendition of the record does not register the actions of a collective humanity. Rather, etched into it are the violent and racialized regimes of capital that have configured the South African locality since the country's rise to imperial priority after the discovery of gold.

This is not strictly an Anthropocene record, in other words, but one that bears traces of what Jason W. Moore has called the Capitalocene: the age in which capital is the dominant force shaping the earth's systems.[8] It is significant that it is with recourse to a gothic lexicon—of buried bodies, of violent pasts secreted under bright veneers—that Mashigo constructs this vision from contemporary South Africa. Gothic is summoned here as the vocabulary in which to articulate a particular perspective on the current planetary condition, a viewpoint that looks out from a history of racialized power and systemic violence, and from which *Anthropocene* appears an inadequate term. Later in this essay, I will elaborate more fully on this mobilization of gothic forms, analyzing Henrietta Rose-Innes's *Green Lion* (2016) and another of Mashigo's tales, titled "Ghost Strain N." To situate these fictions, and the connections they draw between capital, colonialism, and extrahuman nature in South Africa, I turn now, however, to Moore's world-ecological

conception of the Capitalocene and to the imperial principle that has structured this planetary formation from its inauguration into the crisis-ridden present.

Crisis, World-Ecology, and the Coloniality of Power

The postmillennial period is a time of accelerating transformations in the earth's systems. And yet, the causes and effects of these emergencies are not evenly distributed on a planetary scale. It is the global poor, concentrated largely across the postcolonial states of the Global South, who disproportionately suffer both the "slow" and "spectacular" violences of unfolding crises, as Rob Nixon, for example, has influentially noted.[9] Vishwas Satgar points out that the twenty nations most vulnerable to the effects of global heating—the so-called V20—are located across "Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific" and are already experiencing catastrophic shifts in temperature, sea level, weather patterns, and—concomitantly—mortality.[10] At the same time, responsibility for these changes—the weight of "climate debt"—lies overwhelmingly with "the rich industrialised countries of the global North [many of which] have been polluting since the advent of the Industrial Revolution . . . in the context of imperial international relations."[11] To account for these variegations and their roots, a sharper and more systemically attuned historical vocabulary is required than the one offered by Anthropocene thinking. The broad category of human activity cannot bring into focus the principle that organizes patterns of violence and security over time and that is clearly bound up with geopolitical distributions of wealth and power, with legacies of empire and colonial settlement, and with race. "There is a calculus that allows us to map where the bodies most affected by past climate change are buried," write Moore and Raj Patel, "and where future casualties are likely to be."[12]

To delineate this "calculus," Moore shifts the historical point of departure away from the Industrial Revolution prioritized by Anthropocene thought and turns instead to the long sixteenth century, drawing in part from Immanuel Wallerstein's assessment of the modern world-economy as the capitalist world-system. Capital, for Wallerstein, is defined by a principle of "endless accumulation,"[13] which concurrently requires endless economic expansion. Over capital's history, this has played out through cyclical boom

and bust rhythms, in which the limits to expansion are reached within a certain formation, prompting stagnation, unrest, and eventually crisis. This then demands a reorganization of the (global) mode of production so that the conditions of crisis can be reinvented as new conditions for growth.[14] It is because of this in-built expansionist drive that, ultimately, capital cannot exist as anything but a world-economy, and this takes shape, Wallerstein shows, as an uneven planetary formation of economically strong core states and peripheral regions, all structurally interconnected by a geographical division of labor, which is in turn organized by an exploitative relation of power.[15] Historically, he writes, capital has solved its innate contradictions in crucial part "by expanding the pool of . . . workers elsewhere in the world, who . . . work at a lower level of wages"[16]—or, indeed, for no wage at all.

This exploitative strategy is starkly evidenced across the period of European colonialism that formally ended in the mid-twentieth century. But it is important that the modern world-system is *birthed* with the European colonial endeavor. It emerges after 1450 in the Atlantic world, as thinkers affiliated with the "decolonial option"[17] have emphasized. Aníbal Quijano identifies a "coloniality of power"[18] that has shaped geopolitical formations over the last five centuries, arguing that this emerges from the codevelopment of racial categories with the inaugural transoceanic division of labor.[19] On this account, racist discourse is produced in early imperial centers as a means of justifying the distribution of unpaid work among colonized peoples, which in turn facilitated the rapid economic development and global empowerment of Western Europe.[20] Moore reiterates this thought, and expands on it.[21] For him, however, the unpaid sphere encompasses not only colonized peoples but also the potential energy—the "capacity to do work"—of extrahuman nature.[22]

"Appropriation" is the term Moore gives to the process for harnessing this cheap work/energy.[23] He shows that this unfolds in tandem with an "epistemic rift" emergent in Enlightenment thinking[24] and which—via Cartesian dualism and Bacon's formative philosophy of science—defined relations between human and extrahuman in binary terms. "Capital's governing conceit is that it may do with Nature as it pleases," Moore writes. "Nature is external [to Society] and may be coded, quantified and rationalised to serve economic growth."[25] As Quijano also notes,[26] this account of

Nature is epistemically entangled with the production of geohistorical racial identities: along with the extrahuman components of the biosphere, Moore reiterates, "Nature . . . encompassed virtually all peoples of color,"[27] who—as in the case of the South African gold mine and the policy of apartheid—are deemed less fully Human than colonizing Europeans under the auspices of Eurocentric knowledge. The world-economy is thus, Moore argues, a world-ecology, and the story of this planetary configuration is one in which capital, empire, and Enlightenment epistemology have worked together over the last five centuries to cyclically remake historical Natures in their own image and to plunder these for certain humans' gain. On this account, apartheid and its precursors should be seen as "ecological regimes":[28] institutionalized ways of organizing the biosphere via permutations of the epistemic rift, oriented toward the production of Nature as Cheap Labor.[29]

But "Cheap Nature"[30] is epistemically inexhaustive in its scope. It is a material fiction that is only made violently concrete through the historical operation of geopolitical power. In reality, Natures are produced within a wider context, which Moore names the *oikeios* or "web of life."[31] This designates—with a lowercase *n*—"nature as a whole":[32] the condition within which life-making processes unfold and which is characterized not by binary separations but by a real relationality.[33] Viewed with *oikeios,* human and extrahuman, Society and Nature—and capitalism itself—are coproduced through rhizomatic connections that "interweave[e] symbolic and biophysical natures at every scale"[34] and in a way that bears on those crisis periods that cyclically recur across the history of capital. "While the manifold projects of empire, capital and science are busy making Nature with a capital N . . . the web of life is busy shuffling about the biological and geological conditions of capitalism's process."[35] The effect of these "shufflings" is to hamper the operation of Nature-making, to the point where a given construction is no longer available "on the cheap."[36] While this resistance to cheapening strategies has recurred across the history of capitalism, prompting the phases of systemic reorganization Wallerstein describes, for Moore, the proliferation of crises that characterizes our neoliberal present suggests the terminal failure of capital's pivotal Nature-making strategy, which seems unable durably to reinstate the conditions for expansion by identifying

new frontiers for appropriation.[37] We are thus living in the twilight of the Capitalocene, and from this perspective the unprecedentedly totalizing commodifications of the neoliberal agenda signal the violent and frantic last gasp of a dying system.

And yet, the failing efficacy of capital's Cheap Nature strategy has not dismantled the coloniality of power. Across the history of the modern world and into the present, successive regimes of capital, working in conjunction with new permutations of the Enlightenment's epistemic rift, have reinvented the world's (post)colonies as the sites of new Natures, from the plantation to the mine, the cash crop, and the sweatshop—and others. Viewed in this way, the postcolonial present is characterized by "sedimentations" of histories, to borrow Ann Laura Stoler's vocabulary:[38] it is the site at which the structures and effects of formal capitalist colonialisms have been strategically reactivated—or strategically overlooked—for the benefit of a power that remains innately colonial in Quijano's sense. As it works cumulatively in this way through successive repurposings of violent pasts, coloniality emerges for Stoler as force of *ruin*—or "ruination"[39]—in the verbal sense.[40] From this vantage of active "imperial debris,"[41] the emergencies of the present are both frequently immediately experienced as radical states of lived precarity and—clearly bound up with compounded legacies of empire, exploitation, and settlement—emphatically not the effect of collective human activity.

World-Ecological Revolution and Gothic at the Periphery

There is a sense in which gothic, as a literary mode given over to scenes of threat, horror, and exaggerated violence, might be considered broadly appropriate to the circumstances of heightened vulnerability in which lives are currently lived across the postcolonial Global South. But it is also possible to chart a more direct and tangible relationship between the mobilization of gothic forms in contemporary fiction from the peripheries of the world-system and the end phase of the Capitalocene as Moore has described it. Here we might return momentarily to Mashigo's Johannesburg, which, in figuring historical regimes of racial violence as literally sedimented, notably offers a vision of ongoing ruination that corresponds closely with Stoler's own. To the extent that this image

is interpretable, too, as a Capitalocene record, presenting the overlaying of colonial by neoliberal formations in a way that imbues both with geological force, it also provides a vision of the terminal present, which—as Moore has noted—is a signal moment of capitalist crisis shaped precisely by the accumulating effects of successive Cheap Nature strategies. In his analysis of "gothic periodicity," Stephen Shapiro has argued that, since its inception, gothic has tended to proliferate at just such cyclically recurring periods of world-economic transition.[42] On this account, gothic's figures of violence and excess encode and make concrete the disorientating local experience of world-systemic shifts, which—planetary in scope—are not fully graspable from the ground of any single locality. Michael Niblett makes a related argument around fantastical fictional forms and moments of crisis but routes this through Moore.[43] If literature registers world-economic shifts, then—because the world-economy is a world-ecology—it will also bear the imprint of rising and falling Cheap Nature strategies, "since," Niblett notes, "these organize in fundamental ways the material conditions, social modalities and areas of experience upon which literary form works."[44]

It is important that these assessments invest gothic with a protocritical potential: in registering the violent experience of incorporation into a rising regime of capital, in other words, gothic forms enable an exposure of that system's caustic effects. Noting this, the Warwick Research Collective (WReC), of which Shapiro is part,[45] suggests that contemporary gothic fictions produced in peripheral zones self-consciously capitalize on these interrogative possibilities. In this millennial corpus, gothic not only *registers* the violent disorientation of world-ecological shifts from the perspective of those geopolitical spaces they most deeply affect but is also a species of what the WReC follows Michael Löwy in calling "critical irrealism":[46] a mode of fiction-making in which fantastic forms are *mobilized* precisely to critique regimes of capital and their strategies of Cheap Nature. This is the case in the narratives I will go on to address across the rest of this chapter. Gothic is not written, here, in a world shaped by human activity. Rather, it is a local response to and interrogation of a world made (and remade) in the image of empire, power, and capital, at a moment when the established technics of Nature-making are collapsing—unevenly—under the cumulative weight of their own effects.

Capitalocene Uncanny

In Henrietta Rose-Innes's *Green Lion,* set in a near-future Cape Town, these biospheric transformations appear chiefly as massive species loss: indeed, it seems that wild animal life has, at the moment of the narrative's taking place, been almost entirely extinguished. And yet, the text is also full of animal figures—if not animal *life* as such—and these are frequently presented in the gothic language of the uncanny. Protagonist Con, who works in a facility for the rebreeding of extinct lions, makes his way early in the novel through a house that is strangely crowded with hunting trophies. These are rendered uncanny by a relentless sense that they are not *not* alive: "The smell . . . death and chemicals. The passage was . . . dim, lined with the shadowy forms of animals on plinths; mounted heads . . . birds frozen in flight."[47] Leaving the house, Con feels he has been in a "place of danger": "perhaps even now [the creatures] were stirring from their pedestals, cracking their glass domes and inching towards the stairs."[48] Uncanniness emerges, to paraphrase the Freudian perspective,[49] from the disturbing coincidence of the familiar and the strange, which, as it implies the internality of what appears to be outside the self, unsettles the presumed coherence of the subject.

Amitav Ghosh has influentially argued that currently unfolding climate change produces experiences of the "environmental uncanny": "the freakish weather events of today, despite their radically nonhuman nature, are . . . animated by cumulative human actions."[50] In this sense, they prompt "an awareness that humans were never alone": that humanity exists within "the presence and proximity of nonhuman interlocutors."[51] Rose-Innes's uncanny animal figures appear to provoke a similar realization through the staging of a gothic scene. Their creeping liveliness emblematizes a Nature that, though it seems to exist in object form, possesses a vitality akin to Humanity's own.

And yet, situated in the wider context of the novel, the preserved animals also resist interpretation in Ghosh's terms. Where the environmental uncanny describes the unruly consequences of collective human action, the uncanniness of Rose-Innes's figures turns on the process of their production. As *Green Lion*'s animal effigies invoke an apparently external Nature, they simultaneously emphasize that this has been constructed through taxidermic

reification. If an uncanny effect is derived from their embalmed bodies, then this has less to do with the recognition of shared vibrancy between humans and the rest of nature than it does with a sense that what has been transformed into object may yet be alive with some unpredictable agency. Rose-Innes maps this dynamic in wider terms over the course of the narrative, tracing processes of Nature-making across South African history. At the same time, the text suggests that these productions are not inert; instead they are shown to live—actively and catastrophically—within an encompassing web of life. In these ways, the narrative develops around the structure of what might be called a *Capitalocene uncanny,* imagining the systemic production of external Natures, and their threatening reanimations. Ultimately, it mobilizes an uncanny gothic to interrogate "green" thought that is undergirded by Anthropocene logic, to point toward the covert violence of this conceptual scaffolding and to its unevenly allocated material effects.

To begin with, however, and in a maneuver symbolically reiterated by the taxidermic process, the novel dramatizes the production of Nature under the neoliberal state in postapartheid South Africa. At a point in the recent past, a fence is built around Table Mountain, with the intention of keeping the dwindling animal population in and humans out. The government oversees this project, but jointly with corporate enterprise, so that the fence reflects the privatization of the environmental commons that characterizes the neoliberal agenda in South Africa and elsewhere. To the extent that it literally demarcates territories of Society and Nature, it also offers a vision of this current capitalist formation as, in Moore's words, "a way of organizing nature," and one that turns on the epistemic rift. This is historicized in the text in much the way that Mashigo historicizes the neoliberal present: as shaped by the cumulative effect of previous regimes. To build the fence, an informal settlement of shacks is cleared, explicitly recalling earlier forced removals under the apartheid state, and its perimeter describes an estate once owned by the notorious colonial-era mining magnate Cecil John Rhodes. As it links together these three formations of capital—neoliberal, apartheid, and colonial—*Green Lion*'s fence between Society and Nature presents them in world-ecological terms: as dispensations that have hinged on permutations of the socioecological binary. At the same time, this narrative trajectory figures the local history of capital's Cheap Nature strat-

egy in a way that underscores its relationship to the ongoing coloniality of power: across the histories the mountain enclosure invokes, the exploitability or disposability of human life—the vulnerability of life to appropriation—is determined according to historical categories of race.

At the same time as the production of these Natures is emblematized by the embalmed bodies of the animals, *Green Lion*'s uncanny taxidermy also signals a symmetry between capital's Nature-making logic and the narrative's delineation of "green" responses to accelerating species loss. Shortly after he has negotiated the trophy-lined passage, Con meets the "green lion" of the novel's title:

> It gazed on him . . . with its mismatched eyes, one . . . stitched on like a monstrous teddy bear's. But more damage had been done. . . . The fur was streaked with bilious green. . . . The creature's jaws were forced open around . . . a bald old tennis ball. Con . . . did not want to inhale this madness.[52]

These grotesque modifications are related to a cultish group of animal enthusiasts who call themselves "Green Lion" and who, with the disappearance of animal life, have come to view animals as invested with a kind of mystical power. It becomes clear as the narrative goes on, however, that much as this community seeks to resacralize the animal in a world that is destroying it, they also retain the logic of the epistemic rift. In their view, extrahuman nature is explicitly presented as "something outside . . . human lives," and this gives way to an appropriative agenda: "There's . . . *energy* we get from wild animals," one member explains.[53]

A more conventional version of the same dualist rhetoric is replicated by Con's manager—Amina—who describes herself as "a conservationist" and also—in the same breath—"a human being": "I want to find ways to do what we can with what we have left."[54] Both these perspectives on biospheric change—esoteric and mainstream—admit conspicuously of a conceptual schism between Humanity and Nature, this last becoming an external domain on which humanity impacts in either sensitive or deleterious ways. This logic, Moore argues, undergirds Anthropocene thinking, which—interpreting climate emergency as the effect of collective human actions *on* nature—admits of a "*consequentialist bias*"[55]

and remains "captive to the very thought structures that created the present crisis."[56] In fact, the narrative itself gestures to this point, signaling the possibility, raised by T. J. Demos, that Anthropocene rhetoric might *facilitate* capital's Cheap Nature strategy.[57] To generate money for the rebreeding project, Amina (the "conservationist") considers running a canned hunting program—"people would pay a lot . . . to be the person to kill the last . . . lion"[58]—but it turns out this is already under way behind the fence, overseen by South Africa's corporate–state alliance. Any sense that commercial hunting will help to arrest the unfolding extinction is, from here, clearly debunked. The enclosure is now empty, as Con notes: "It was dead. . . . This mountain was finished . . . used up, shot out." Analogous to the taxidermic animals, he concludes, "It is a relic in a museum case."[59]

The gothic figure of the green lion thus incarnates not only the vision of Nature underpinning "green" endeavors in the narrative but more specifically the extent to which this Nature segues into that conception mobilized by the regimes of racial capital the novel has traced across South African history and which—more widely implemented—has produced the emergencies of the text's present. It is not insignificant, in this sense, that the lion appears in a setting that metaphorically invokes a heating earth: Con discovers it at the center of "a room [that] heaved with unhappy life. The vapours on this planet were hot and moist and thronging."[60] There is a sense, in fact, in which the taxidermy's uncanniness—its strange familiarity—is deployed in part to symbolize this coincidence of environmental thought and the very processes against which it is oriented: the green lion, on this perspective, makes visible an uneasy relation between "green" rhetoric and the logic of systematized violence.[61]

But there is also another uncanny dimension to the text's preserved animal bodies, which has to do with that incipient sense that these are about to creak into life and break out of their glass cases. The scenario is not far from the truth: a lion does escape the confines of its artificial enclosure, but this is the living animal with which Con works at the breeding facility. She disappears and, in doing so, becomes less a real creature than a peripheral presence that haunts the narrative's final stages and—importantly—signifies an alternative to taxidermic Nature: "For Con, the lioness is everywhere . . . her form slipping around every corner . . . her

growl behind the traffic rumble. . . . At other times, it's as if he himself is looking through her eyes."[62] All-encompassing, and interweaving human and extrahuman, Society and Nature, this spectral lion—more an existential state than a figure—invokes a relational sense of nature as a whole, its fugitive haunting quality signaling the failure of the language of the epistemic rift, which (like cage bars or glass cases) cannot capture its real complexity.

If this seems to return us to Ghosh's environmental uncanny—to an imbrication of collective humanity and extrahuman nature exposed by contemporary climate events—then Rose-Innes's narrative counters that possibility. As the monstrous lion-body in its planetary hothouse affirms, the novel imagines biospheric change in terms that symbolically suggest a view close to Moore's own. It envisions the emergencies of the heating present not as spiraling outward from a human collective but as the *oikeios*-effects of the Cheap Nature strategy. This is a perspective that locates capital and colonialism themselves within the web of life: Natures unfold within and transform nature as a whole, and these violent modulations—to return—are currently distributed throughout the world-system via the coloniality of power. *Green Lion* has already invoked the entanglement of racial oppression and capitalist ecology in its treatment of the fenced-in mountain. Toward its end, this is revisited in the motif of the haunting lion, which—especially when it is refracted through an anxious gothic lens—realizes the monstrous potential of those incipiently living taxidermic effigies. In part, the lioness's transition from actual lion to emblem of nature takes place as she becomes inseparable from Con's adolescent encounter with another, unseen and—the text suggests—supernatural predator in the mountain reserve: "cold swept over his skin. . . . There was a sensation that a large creature was moving alongside him . . . but the shadow lay frictionless on his face. And cold, colder than a terrestrial shadow should be."[63]

Shortly afterward, a child mysteriously disappears from the enclosure, and the scene is replayed in the novel's present when a young girl is killed, ostensibly by the escaped lion, on the Cape Flats. This is Cape Town's suburban periphery, invented by the apartheid state, where the effects of postdemocracy neoliberalization continue to be experienced as poverty and—in the face of this—high rates of violent crime. If, on one hand, the youthful victims of the spectral lion imply a generational distribution of

vulnerability to the transforming *oikeios*—a sense that the planetary future is curtailed for the youth—then the site at which the second attack takes place also suggests that gradations of threat continue to be governed by a history of systemic racialized violence and by the successive renewal of coloniality into the present.

Decolonial Horror

Ultimately in Rose-Innes's narrative, gothic threats stalk those South African localities where the effects of successive Cheap Nature strategies accumulate with particularly destructive density. This approach is taken up and developed more fully by Mashigo, who throughout *Intruders* deploys figures of horror to encode experiences of ongoing ruination in South Africa's millennial present. The world that emerges across this collection is one shaped by sedimented regimes of racial capitalism, and, as "The Parlemo" demonstrates, these are presented not only as social organizations. Rather they produce ontological shifts that transform the way life unfolds within the biosphere. It is these transformations in turn that form the basis for the text's speculative imaginary. In this sense, stories in *Intruders* implicitly situate themselves in something like a Capitalocene reality: they figure histories of racialized violence as an accretive geological force. A tale titled "Ghost Strain N" is noteworthy in this respect specifically as a narrative that interrogates the cumulative effects of Cheap Nature in South Africa through a located gothic vocabulary. Here South Africa's youth are transforming into what the text calls "Ghosts," zombie figures who survive by "breaking into homes, tearing hearts out of peoples' chests and eating them."[64]

The scenario mapped out in "Ghost Strain N" is connected to epidemics of substance abuse among impoverished South African communities ("N" stands for *nyaope,* a heroin cocktail), but it also reflects a wider generational anxiety that emerges in the wake of the country's neoliberal turn. As the effects of privatization, financialization, and restricted state support overlay the unevenness cultivated under apartheid, young South Africans raised in the new democracy nonetheless "face the same, if not greater, levels of unemployment, poverty, inequality and hopelessness than their parents."[65] The text imagines existence under these conditions as a state of undeath incarnated in the bodies of the Ghosts. Fre-

quently presented as unnaturally static—"suspended in time"[66]—these encode an arrested futurity, which relates to a generation stripped of opportunity but also to a sense of the present as a moment of terminal crisis. The plague of Ghosts, which spreads rapidly, dramatizes this failure as it inaugurates planetary breakdown: "In just a few months, things had fallen apart over the whole world."[67] At the same time as the Ghosts register the dying spasms of the Capitalocene from the local vantage of contemporary South Africa, the tale locates the roots of this end time in the systemic violence that has configured the country's colonized pasts. The Ghosts embody histories of ruination, a function clearly apparent in another "strain" of the zombie virus ("W") afflicting the wine-making regions of South Africa, where—in a peculiarly grotesque permutation of apartheid's Cheap Labor regime—vineyard workers have historically been paid in alcohol: "Strain W made Ghosts rip out the oesophagus from people because they had wine poured down their throats instead of being compensated by . . . those who profited from their labour."[68]

In this way, Mashigo's narrative underscores the relation between unfolding planetary crisis and the coloniality of power. This is shown both to drive current states of emergency and to govern the distribution of vulnerability to their effects among formerly colonized peoples and places. Any meaningful challenge to the transforming biosphere must, the text implies, engage with these historical realities. In the Capitalocene, in other words, resistance must be *decolonial*: it must seek to remake the world as this has been produced, via diverse permutations of Eurocentric modernity's epistemic rift. If the coloniality of power works to epistemically peripheralize and render materially exploitable or disproportionately vulnerable those it locates beyond what Walter Mignolo calls "the colonial difference,"[69] then decolonial thinking centralizes this condition, beginning from "the biographical sensing of the . . . body in the Third World." To think decolonially is thus, on Mignolo's account, to think both "geo- and body-politically."[70] It is a response to modernity that emerges from a lived experience of modernity's violence and situates that experience as historically and systemically produced within an uneven global geography. Viewed through the critical irrealist lens the WReC provides, Mashigo's vocabulary of horror can be understood as giving shape to just such a geo- and body-political perspective on Capitalocene

realities. As it mobilizes images of living death to imagine disproportionate exposure to current crises, and as it locates this condition as the effect of colonial capitalist pasts, the narrative draws on gothic to critically figure and situate a lived experience of violence.

Though horrifying, Mashigo's Ghosts can thus be read as envisioning the site at which a decolonial sensibility emerges. They provide a vantage that, because it makes visible the systems through which bodies and environments are rendered vulnerable, is also a point from which to reimagine the strategies that have made the world—and to do so such that it is not violently experienced. This, importantly, is the function Mashigo ascribes to speculative fiction in the millennial South African context. "There needs to exist a place in our imaginations," she writes in the preface to *Intruders,* "that is the opposite of our present reality where a small minority owns most of the land and lives better than the rest."[71] The final passages of "Ghost Strain N" gesture toward this space. The tale closes in the aftermath of the plague, which—apocalyptic in proportion—has precisely destroyed the inequalities to which Mashigo refers. The reader is left with protagonist Koketso carrying Steven—his best friend, now a zombie—about the country in a coffin to protect him from incineration. This is warranted, it turns out: Steven begins to recover sentience, and Koketso, who has been attacked by the undead, nonetheless remains alive and is undergoing a strange biophysical transformation: "the places where Steven had bitten him . . . glowed a little in the dark, and Koketso liked it."[72] The text's icon of horror is here refigured, albeit tentatively, into something different—and more hopeful. And Capitalocene gothic from millennial South Africa (and perhaps from across the Global South more widely) might be understood as oriented generally toward similar transformations. As they map the systemic roots and uneven experiences of current crises—causes and distributions that are uniquely visible from the vantage of postcoloniality—gothic forms in these narratives also point implicitly, uneasily, toward the possibility of a future that is not configured by those processes that shape the past, and the present.

NOTES

1. Mohale Mashigo, *Intruders* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2018), 50.
2. Mashigo, 49.
3. John S. Saul and Patrick Bond, *South Africa: The History as Present:*

From Mrs Ples to Mandela and Marikana (Woodbridge, U.K.: James Currey, 2014), 36.
4. Loren Kruger, *Imagining the Edgy City: Writing, Performing and Building Johannesburg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.
5. Kruger, 2.
6. Mashigo, *Intruders,* 55.
7. Mashigo, 55.
8. Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015), 77.
9. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2–4.
10. Vishwas Satgar, "The Climate Crisis and Systemic Alternatives," in *The Climate Crisis: South African and Global Democratic Eco-Socialist Alternatives,* ed. Vishwas Satgar (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2018), 4–5.
11. Satgar, 5.
12. Jason W. Moore and Raj Patel, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 35.
13. Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.
14. Wallerstein, 30–31.
15. Wallerstein, 24–25.
16. Wallerstein, 31.
17. Walter Mignolo, "Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (De)coloniality, Border Thinking, and Epistemic Disobedience," *Confero* 1, no. 1 (2013): 130.
18. Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 533.
19. Quijano, 534–37.
20. Quijano, 537.
21. Jason W. Moore, "The Rise of Cheap Nature," in *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism,* ed. Jason W. Moore (Oakland, Calif.: PM Press, 2016), 91.
22. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life,* 14.
23. Moore, 70.
24. Moore, 76.
25. Moore, 2.
26. Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (2007): 172–73.
27. Moore, "Cheap Nature," 91.
28. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life,* 158.
29. Rebecca Duncan, "From Cheap Labour to Surplus Humanity: World-Ecology and the Post-apartheid Speculative in Neill Blomkamp's *District 9*," *Science Fiction Film and Television* 11, no. 1 (2018): 49–53.

30. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life,* 15.
31. Moore, 8–10.
32. Moore, 3.
33. Moore's perspective "unif[ies] humanity and nature not only epistemically, but ontologically" (25). He argues that across mainstream, twentieth-century environmental criticism, conversations around human-nature relationality have taken place largely at the level of "philosophy and meta-theory" (24). World-ecology, however, addresses the issue "on the terrain of modern world-history" (25). The *oikeios*, in other words, is not only a concept for thinking beyond the dualism of Society and Nature; it is part of a "historical method" for understanding how—in real and material ways—"human and extra-human natures [have] co-produce[d] historical change" (25).
34. Moore, 9.
35. Moore, 2–3.
36. Moore, 1.
37. Moore, 1.
38. Ann Laura Stoler, "'The Rot Remains': From Ruins to Ruination," in *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination,* ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), 2.
39. Stoler, 2.
40. Stoler, 11.
41. Stoler, 2.
42. Stephen Shapiro, "Transvaal, Transylvania: *Dracula*'s World-System and Gothic Periodicity," *Gothic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2008): 31.
43. Michael Niblett, "World-Economy, World-Ecology, World-Literature," *Green Letters* 16, no. 1 (2012): 21.
44. Niblett, 20. See also Kerstin Oloff, "Greening the Zombie: Caribbean Gothic, World-Ecology and Socio-ecological Degradation," *Green Letters* 16, no. 1 (2012): 31–45; Sharae Deckard, "Uncanny States: Global Ecogothic and the World-Ecology in Rana Dasgupta's *Tokyo Cancelled,*" in *EcoGothic,* ed. Andrew Smith and Bill Hughes, 177–93 (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2013); and Rebecca Duncan, "Writing Ecological Revolution from Millennial South Africa: History, Nature and the Post-apartheid Present," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 54, no. 4 (2020): 65–97.
45. Sharae Deckard, Nicholas Lawrence, Neil Lazarus, Graeme Macdonald, Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, Benita Parry, and Stephen Shapiro, as the Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).
46. Deckard et al., 96–97.
47. Henrietta Rose-Innes, *Green Lion* (Cape Town: Umuzi, 2016), 39.
48. Rose-Innes, 41.

49. Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" 1919, in *The Uncanny,* trans. David Mclintock (London: Penguin, 2003), 124.
50. Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 32.
51. Ghosh, 30.
52. Rose-Innes, *Green Lion,* 40.
53. Rose-Innes, 168–69.
54. Rose-Innes, 95.
55. Moore, "Cheap Nature," 82, emphasis in original.
56. Moore, 84. This critique of Anthropocene thinking is one element in Moore's wider assessment of "Green Thought" (5), by which he intends environmental scholarship and activism, chiefly from the latter half of the twentieth century. It is worth pointing out that Moore is not suggesting that ecocriticism directly promulgates an anthropo-ecological binary. Even a cursory reading of major work in this and cognate fields—scholarship from Donna Haraway, Stacy Alaimo, Bruno Latour, or Timothy Morton—reveals a "broad agreement that humans are part of nature" (5). What existing criticism has resisted, however, is the possibility that "human *organizations*—families, empires, corporations, markets—are natural forces" (5, emphasis added). Writes Moore, "For critical scholars . . . the consensus is clear: capitalism acts upon a nature that operates independently. . . . It makes a 'footprint' on the earth, which must be reduced" (5). It is in this sense, on Moore's account, that Green Thought (Anthropocene thinking included) reverts to the dualism of Humanity and Nature. The intervention of world-ecology is to provide a different historical picture, in which "the stories of human organization are co-produced by . . . human and extra-human nature" (7).
57. T. J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), 19.
58. Rose-Innes, *Green Lion,* 119.
59. Rose-Innes, 238.
60. Rose-Innes, 40.
61. As it suggests this coincidence of racialized capitalist violence and environmentalist praxis, the narrative should also be understood as critiquing the wider entanglement of "green" agendas with colonial politics. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin point out that environmentalism has frequently "had catastrophic results for people violently co-opted into western systems." Huggan and Tiffan, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2010), 186. *Green Lion*'s engagement with conservation is specifically noteworthy in this sense, since conservation practice is broadly motivated by a "pressure to preserve non-human animal and plant species" (186) and, as Huggan and Tiffin note in line with Moore, it thus reiterates

the Society–Nature dualism that also "provide[s] justification for . . . colonisation" (187). Farieda Khan affirms this point in her historical analysis of conservationist environmentalism in colonial and apartheid South Africa. Not only were African people excluded from conservation organizations that emerged under colonial administration in the late nineteenth century but the conservationist understanding "of the ideal protected natural area as . . . uninhabited" was also mobilized within the framework of segregation politics across the twentieth century and used to dispossess communities of their land. Khan, "The Roots of Environmental Racism and the Rise of Environmental Justice in the 1990s," in *Environmental Justice in South Africa,* ed. David A. MacDonald, 15–48 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 18. These histories are subliminally invoked in Rose-Innes's narrative and linked with the socioecological binary, when it emerges that the preservative enclosure of the mountain entails the destruction of an informal settlement and the displacement of its occupants.

62. Rose-Innes, *Green Lion,* 261.
63. Rose-Innes, 202.
64. Mashigo, *Intruders,* 37.
65. Robert Mattes, "The 'Born Frees': The Prospects for Generational Change in Post-apartheid South Africa," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 1 (2012): 140.
66. Mashigo, *Intruders,* 31.
67. Mashigo, 39.
68. Mashigo, 40.
69. Walter Mignolo, "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 1 (2002): 60–62.
70. Mignolo, "Geopolitics of Sensing," 132.
71. Mashigo, *Intruders,* xi.
72. Mashigo, 46.