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Introduction: neoliberal gothic

Over the course of the past twenty-five years, as neoliberal economics has transformed the geopolitical landscape, monsters have overrun popular culture. Film and literature, graphic novels, fashion and music, computer and online gaming have all appropriated the gothic's ghosts and witches; vampires and werewolves; ancient castles, curses, questing heroes and secrets from the dark past. And in the last five years, the transnational zombie horde has become ubiquitous.¹

This collection of essays engages with the geopolitical context of the gothic's migration from the periphery to the fast-beating heart of popular culture – specifically the rise to economic and cultural predominance of global neoliberalism. It is no coincidence, we contend, that the characters and plots of the historic gothic have come to dominate popular culture over the course of the past thirty years. For as neoliberalism has come to dominate the ways we live, work, think, interact and introspect, harnessing the epistemological incertitude of the post-modern project in service of its aims,² the gothic's ability to give voice to the occluded truths of our age has resulted in a global proliferation of gothic, and gothic-inflected, cultural artefacts. This collection engages with the ideological dimensions of such texts: specifically, the ways in which they articulate the social and existential consequences of thirty years of globalised laissez-faire capitalism. We contend, in other words, that the gothic texts of the neoliberal age can be seen to undertake the same kind of cultural work that was carried out by the gothic mode in earlier periods of socio-economic turbulence. And, as in earlier periods, we can see a variety of ideological allegiances at play in gothic texts of

the neoliberal age – ranging from the revolutionary to the radical to the downright reactionary.

For all its wild improbability, the gothic has always engaged with the context of its own production, whether that be the regicidal upheavals of the age of revolutions, the squalid emergence of the industrial metropolis or, in the United States, the creation of the world's first post-colonial democracy. The first wave of gothic novels has frequently been read, for example, as a philosophical and psychological response to the Enlightenment's rationality, its will to overturn the social hierarchies of old and to bring forth a new discourse of human rights.³ Thus, blending chivalric and contemporary romance, novels such as Horace Walpole's foundational *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) would establish the mode's lexicon of medieval castles and monasteries, lascivious clergy, disinherited aristocrats, Faustian pacts and secrets from the dark past that would enable successive generations to question the contemporary world, its power-relations, values and objects of terror.

The Victorian gothic refashioned the eighteenth century's preoccupations to produce a range of monsters, mutants and lunatics more fitted to an increasingly urban and industrialised world, a whole new gothic lexicon emerging as the British Empire stretched across the globe and new scientific theories, such as Darwinian evolution, reshaped the ways in which people thought about what it was to be human. Broadly realist writers, such as Charles Dickens and Robert Louis Stevenson, established the city as a new kind of gothic landscape whilst romantics, like the Brontës, capitalised on the wild spaces beyond the city to pioneer a new kind of domestic gothic in which the home itself became a site of horror. By the end of the century, the Victorian cult of death had transmuted into a pervasive sense of decay, as libertines such as Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* and ancient evils such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*⁴ embodied the fears of a generation, for whom the foreign horde threatened to overrun the imperial capital whilst the Englishman himself became a corrupt shadow of his former heroic self.

In the United States, meanwhile, a range of writers had drawn on the symbolic machinery of the eighteenth-century English Gothic to illuminate their own concerns. Washington Irving had looked back to the nation's bloody foundation, exploring in his tales the traumatic legacy of revolt against colonial rule, his characters Ichabod Crane and Rip Van Winkle becoming, in turn, canonical literary figures.⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne, himself the descendant of a judge at the Salem Witch Trials, would return repeatedly to the nation's prehistory to conjure up a

world of cursed families and haunted New England villages surrounded by dark woods that later writers such as Stephen King would make their own. Edgar Allan Poe's poems and tales would challenge the nineteenth century's optimistic and democratic *Zeitgeist* with wild and hallucinatory visions of etiolated families, deranged con-men, aristocratic killers, and strange supernatural happenings. Thus American gothic came into being, steeped in the troubles of its colonial past and discomfited profoundly by the demands of a rapidly unfolding and unstable market economy (a series of economic recessions prevented Poe from starting a literary journal and kept him on the edge of poverty for most of his adult life). This pattern of gothic writing interrogating the contemporary *Zeitgeist* would spread across the world, moreover, as successive nations adopted the mode's lexicon to explore their own most troubling times.⁶ It is to this tradition of social engagement and analysis that the gothic of the neoliberal age discussed in this collection contributes.

This is not to argue that there is necessarily a radical intent to gothic texts – whether those texts be drawn from the historic past or the mass cultural present. The gothic is no stranger to regressive attitudes to gender, ethnicity and class, after all.⁷ And gothic texts can reveal the hidden tensions of the societies that produced them without proffering any attempt at formulating a solution.⁸ The same can be said of gothic texts of the neoliberal age. An important distinction needs to be drawn, in other words, between those contemporary texts that adopt the characters, plots, settings and thematic machinery of the gothic to lend a frisson of historic romance or transgressive sexuality to tales that range from the politically disengaged to the downright reactionary,⁹ and those texts that deploy gothic conventions specifically to expose and critique the material actualities of the present.¹⁰ This collection focuses on the latter category. We explore literary, televisual, filmic and dramatic works from countries as geographically distant and culturally diverse as Britain and Mexico, the United States and Ireland, Germany, Korea, and Japan. Like neoliberalism itself, we argue, such works have both a nationally specific context and a global awareness. They articulate distinct national histories, identity paradigms and divergent modes of socio-cultural organisation. But they are unified by a will to interrogate the ways in which neoliberal economics has impacted the modern world, has pervaded our very consciousness and, in so doing, has refashioned the very subjectivities we inhabit.

What, then, is neoliberalism as we conceive of it?

Based on the economic theories of Friedrich von Hayek, the 1980s neoliberalism pioneered by Ronald Reagan in the USA and Margaret Thatcher in the UK rested on a radical individualism that eschewed those principles of state welfare, social progress and equality of opportunity on which the postwar consensus in the UK and the Great Society in the US had rested.¹¹ Economic planning was decried in favour of an ostensible deregulation of the markets, whilst cuts to public spending, the suppression of trade unions, lower taxes and a transfer of public services to the private sector were enacted wholesale. The results were manifold. The neoliberal subject was recast as agent of his or her individual destiny, repeatedly refashioning him- or herself in whatever image the market demanded whilst being held fully responsible for any failure to prosper. As politicians pledged their allegiance not to the welfare of the electorate but to the financial freedoms of the market, a widening gulf of inequality became all too apparent. In developed nations, this manifested itself in the form of bankruptcies, unemployment lines, homelessness and public health crises.¹² Globally, organisations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank exported this ideology in the form of loans extended to developing countries in exchange for a wholesale dismantling of state welfare programmes and the suppression of collectivist organisations such as trade unions.¹³ At the heart of all this was an insistent avowal that markets could regulate themselves, that they could generate phenomenal wealth and that this wealth would, somehow, trickle down to each and every stratum of society.¹⁴

As the Latin American debt crisis of 1982 and later the global financial crisis of 2008 illustrated, however, neoliberalism failed to deliver either economic stability or widespread prosperity – this because its core tenets were at best an illusion and at worst a deliberate deception. Far from being the most democratic model of economic organisation, as was claimed in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, neoliberalism's hostility to collectivism has strongly militated against participatory democracy, depriving the working class of any say in government, curtailing union power and placing the business of politics in the hands of outsourced organisations such as think tanks and non-governmental organisations. In the neoliberal world, as Richard Seymour has argued, policies are no longer 'democratically deliberated and decided upon', as it is now for 'a technocratic layer of experts' to supply 'the policy

ideas, the ideological thematics, the dense intellectual justifications' of government (Seymour, 2014: 27). Echoing this, of course, is the fact that the ideological privatisation of the public sector has resulted in an exponential growth in corporate profitability along with a concomitant polarisation of society's 'haves' and 'have nots' into those reliant on residual state services and those able to resource their own healthcare, housing and education – the provision of which was once deemed a cornerstone of a developed society.

Clearly, the role of the State has shifted under neoliberalism from the provision of social welfare to the facilitation of global trade, this including the handover of billions of dollars of public funds in bank bailouts whenever the system that was 'too big to fail' teetered on the abyss (Seymour, 2014: 13). Such bailouts were coupled with a programme of so-called 'austerity' measures that effectively forced the public to pay for the mistakes of the banking sector. A kind of 'voluntary deflation', austerity seeks to 'restore competitiveness' by 'cutting the state's budget, debts and deficits', this manifesting as a reduction in 'both wages and public spending', measures that targeted the poorest and most vulnerable members of society (Blyth, 2013: 2). And in economic terms, as several of the chapters in this collection explore, such measures have resulted in a spiralling of national debt coupled with never-ending cuts to public expenditure. So, as the plight of Ireland and Greece attests, austerity measures have proved a recipe for social disaster that has nonetheless reinscribed neoliberal economic models at the very heart of the State.¹⁵ If one's goal is growth, in other words, neoliberal austerity programmes are entirely ineffective. If one's aim is to advance the neoliberal agenda, however, austerity is a startling success. Accordingly, many of the chapters in this collection explore this disjunction between the professed aims of neoliberal economics and the personal and social cost to the most disadvantaged members of society.

As David Harvey has argued, the neoliberal agenda is markedly imperialistic, for 'any hegemon, if it is to maintain its position in relation to endless (and endlessly expanding) capital accumulation, must endlessly seek to extend, expand, and intensify its power' (Harvey, 2003: 35). In the 1990s, the 'soft power' of the Clinton administration had sought to deliver both freedom and prosperity through the integration of a post-cold war global market. This process ended with the 'War on Terror', the invasion of Iraq marking a shift to a less consensual and considerably more coercive model of imperialist expansion. Thus the Bush Doctrine set about 'stretching the boundaries of pre-emptive

action to embrace preventive war, rejecting deterrence, demoting allies, putting the United States on a permanent war footing and firmly believing in the efficacy, necessity and morality of absolute military preponderance' (Gurtov, 2006: 48). Sold to the public as a justifiable response, not only to the events of 9/11 but to the ongoing terrorist threat, the 'War on Terror' became the militarised face of neoliberalism, entrenching a sense of continuous crisis in the public mind whilst undertaking an ostensibly justifiable curtailment of civil liberties at home and overseas that, itself, served the corporate agenda.

The chapters in this collection address themselves to all these themes – the disempowerment of the public sector; the social consequences of underinvestment in health, education and welfare; the imperative to economic growth and capital accumulation; the economic might of the corporation and the economic precarity of its workers; the rise of militarism; the denigration of rights discourses; and the emergence of neoliberal subject as mutable avatar of capital flow. The economic crash of 2008 is a consistent theme across the collection as each chapter explores how the gothic mode enables writers, dramatists, directors and fine art practitioners to grapple with the ethical, existential and social ramifications of global neoliberalism and proffer solutions that range from the revolutionary to a form of liberal appeasement that champions public welfare whilst refusing to challenge capitalism as a model.

Part I. Neoliberal gothic monsters

Since its inception, the gothic monster has provided a ready means of mobilising alterity discourses, the abject otherness of the vampire, the werewolf and the zombie enabling a critique of social norms and values, available models of identity and the monstrosity that lies within us all. Whilst the gothic monster proliferates across this collection, the three chapters that begin our study focus on the ways in which it has come to embody contemporary subjectivity formations and economic relations in a culture driven by a Social Darwinist *Zeitgeist* in which only the fittest survive and the victims are held responsible for their 'failure' to compete.

What are notable in all three chapters here are the ways in which neoliberalism's insistence that there is 'no alternative' to it are embodied in the gothic texts under consideration, sometimes overtly and sometimes in their inability to posit a viable mode of being outside the

neoliberal matrix of bio-power. Aspasia Stephanou's chapter, 'Game of fangs: the vampire and neoliberal subjectivity', thus traces the vampire's evolution from the nineteenth-century past of industrial capitalism to the neoliberal present's accelerated violence and corrupt precarity. Stephanou argues that the selfish individualism and hedonic consumerism of neoliberal subjectivity have come to be embodied in the contemporary vampire, itself characterised by a desire for unlimited expansion and the extension of life beyond its biological limits. For, as the predatory capitalists of Jody Scott's *I, Vampire* (1984) and Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan's *The Strain Trilogy* (2009, 2010, 2011) attest, such practices are ultimately destructive of all life, collapsing the future into a state of exploited exhaustion. As the world-weary vampires of Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013) attest, western subjectivity has become so etiolated that it has come to sustain itself by feeding off other, more vibrant cultures. The contemporary vampire, for Stephanou, thus comes to embody all we may become at the hands of a rapacious neoliberalism that threatens first to consume and thus to destroy everything that is truly of value in the world.

Such concerns are echoed in Stéphanie Genz's chapter, 'Austerity bites: refiguring *Dracula* in a neoliberal age', which explores the political, social and cultural contradictions that have emerged in the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis – a period that, as we have seen, has been characterised by substantial cuts to public expenditure, bank bailouts and mass unemployment. For just as anti-capitalist protestors have targeted the self-serving avarice of the greedy banker class, Genz argues, so have gothic texts come to embody and explore the contradictory field of forces set in motion by neoliberalism itself. For Genz, the vampire, as eminently commodifiable figure, both reflects and responds to capitalist imperatives, mobilising Fredric Jameson's sense that capitalism is both the best and the worst thing to happen to humanity, both 'catastrophe and progress all together' (Jameson, 1993: 86). Ranging across contemporary texts and theoretical positions, Genz focuses on the NBC television mini-series *Dracula* (2013–), which perfectly encapsulates our own post-recessionary subjectivity: weary of capitalism and trapped between the politics of austerity and the ongoing ideological imperative to partake in the neoliberal dream. With *Dracula* himself transformed into a benevolent American capitalist who throws down a challenge to the forces of monopolistic greed, the series therefore undertakes a thinly veiled critique of the economic interests that drove the US-led 'War on Terror'. But, Genz argues, whilst the series

may deploy the machinery of the gothic to evoke the neoliberal interplay of freedom and coercion, emancipation and subjugation to which we are all subject, it proffers no way out of the political uncertainty and economic instability of the present beyond the promotion of a 'kinder' form of capitalism that is capitalism nonetheless.

Barry Murnane's 'Staging spectrality: capitalising (on) ghosts in German postdramatic theatre' also addresses state capitalism but turns our attention away from the vampire and towards the ghost, focusing on the ways in which such spectral figures have come to dominate new German theatre, specifically as a means of representing the economic order that emerged globally following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Beginning with Heiner Müller's *Germania 3: Gespenster am Toten Mann* (*Germania 3: Ghosts on the Dead Man* (1995)), Murnane traces the ways in which the spread of capitalism in the former German Democratic Republic has become encapsulated by the aesthetic of spectrality. This, he argues, has come to dominate postdramatic theatre – which itself eschews the development of character and unified plot. Exploring the way Dea Loher's *Manhattan Medea* (1999) traces the patterns of transnational migration and capital flow that emerged following the Balkan wars, he illustrates how the figure of the ghost both critiques the spectralising tendencies of contemporary global capital and yet remains subject to reappropriation by it. For as gothic spectrality has become culturally prominent in Germany, he argues, the figure of the ghost has been effectively normalised in contemporary cultural and political theory. The result is an integration of the ghost into the State-sponsored economic models of the German cultural landscape that quashes the radical potentiality of the gothic mode. Thus, as Genz too has argued, the gothic ably evokes the neoliberal present but is unable to offer an alternative, having been skilfully reappropriated by the very forces it critiques.

Part II. Biotechnologies, neoliberalism and the gothic

Global pharmacology has come, over the course of the past thirty years, both to embody and to advance the neoliberal capitalist agenda, a very limited number of companies dominating the research, development and distribution of drugs across the world.¹⁶ And this gives them the corporate power to co-opt any institution, including elected governments, that may stand in the way of their profits. As is indicated by the case of Tamiflu® in the developed world and anti-retrovirals in Africa,

neoliberal pharmacology is no longer devoted to developing and producing useful new drugs that may in some way benefit humanity. Instead, pharmaceutical corporations are driven to sell drugs regardless of their efficacy, to suppress the unfavourable results of clinical trials, to invent new diseases purely for profit, or to magnify the threat of minor outbreaks and to offer unethical incentives to healthcare professionals across the world to prescribe their products.¹⁷ Meanwhile, in the sphere of biotechnology, the transnational trade in human organs has become a highly gothic encapsulation of global economic relations, the citizens of poor nations becoming little more than an aggregate of commodified body parts that may be resold, at a profit, to the ailing citizens of richer nations. Such developments have given rise to a slew of gothic novels, films and television series that interrogate the agenda of the biotech sector.¹⁸ We focus on three examples here: cinematic depictions of the international organ trade in Asia, big pharmacology and the television zombie in the United Kingdom, and literary representations of the dehumanised South African poor. In a world in which each of us is repeatedly interpellated by neoliberal capitalism and penetrated by the drugs and medical procedures it sells, each of these studies points to the ways in which gothic texts may reaffirm our common humanity, expose often hidden economic relations and explore ways of being that challenge the neoliberal consensus.

Katarzyna Ancuta's chapter, 'The return of the dismembered: representing organ trafficking in Asian cinemas', explores the gothic dimensions of the transnational organ trade as a spatial manifestation of neoliberal capital flow. Ancuta illustrates how existing economic hierarchies in Asia have become materially actualised in the trade of human organs – with countries like Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan buying body parts from the comparatively impoverished nations of Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand and China. In the latter two countries, moreover, the vast disjunction between those who benefit from global neoliberalism and those who are exploited by it becomes most sharply realised, these being the 'places of procedure' in which organs are transferred, like capital, from the poor to the rich. Thus, Ancuta argues, the highly gothic motif of organ transplantation becomes an affective (and therefore effective) metaphor for neoliberalism's impact on East, South and Southeast Asia. Her analysis of texts ranges across the continent and includes consideration of the Korean films *Sympathy for Mr Vengeance/Boksuneun naui geot* (dir. Chan-wook Park, 2002) and *The Man from*

Nowhere/Ajeossi (dir. Jeong-beom Lee, 2010), the Hong Kong film *Koma/Jiu ming* (dir. Chi-Leung Law, 2005), the Taiwanese *Declaration of Geneva* (dir. Wu Derrick, 2013), the Philippino film *Graceland* (dir. Ron Morales, 2012), and the Japanese films *Children of the Dark/Yami no kodomo-tachi* (dir. Junji Sakamoto, 2008) and *Casshern* (dir. Kazuaki Kiriya, 2004). Each functions, in a nationally specific way, as a gothic exploration of neoliberalism's exploitation of the global poor, whilst all affirm that our very humanity is being compromised by such capitalised acts of bio-violence.

Linnie Blake's chapter, 'Catastrophic events and queer northern villages: zombie pharmacology *In the Flesh*', engages with similar themes, focusing on Dominic Mitchell's BAFTA-award-winning drama series *In the Flesh* (BBC, 2013–14). This is set in a bleak northern English landscape in the period immediately following *The Rising* – when the recently dead emerged from their graves and wrought all manner of cannibalistic havoc on the living. Restored to personhood by a daily dose of the drug Neurotriptaline, the bodies of the Risen become, a complex liminality on which are written the political imperatives of our own neoliberal age. Allegorising the impact on the poor, the sick and the disabled of five years of ideologically driven austerity measures under the Coalition Government, and condemning wholesale the immigration hysteria that has gripped the United Kingdom up to the present moment, the series wholeheartedly condemns the inhumanity of our leaders whilst exploring the politics of fear that sets person against person and tears communities apart. As such, Blake argues, it allows for a significant interrogation of contemporary subjectivity in an age in which we all exist (to varying degrees) as hybrids of organism, machine and drug, endlessly penetrated by global pharmacology, the corporate machinations of which intersect with discourses of national security across the world.

Rebecca Duncan's chapter, 'Gothic vulnerability: affect and ethics in fiction from neoliberal South Africa', is thematically contiguous with the two chapters that precede it. Duncan explores the ways in which traditional gothic devices have been mobilised in the literary culture of post-apartheid South Africa as a means of negotiating the ways in which global neoliberal capitalism builds on colonialism's hierarchies of race and gender to consolidate the vulnerability of particular groups. Focusing on the ferociously political yet self-consciously commercial work of the South African author Lauren Beukes, Duncan examines the ways in which the multivalent dehumanisations of neoliberalism are

encapsulated in repeated scenes of the sentient body being reduced to little more than matter. Like Ancuta, she illustrates how neoliberal acts of violence against the subject may be interrogated by contemporary gothic texts that, in so doing, may enable us to think through strategies of resistance to the economic actuality of neoliberal economics and the ideologies of selfhood and society they entail.

Part III. The gothic home and neoliberalism

The third part of this collection moves from the global to the local, focusing on the family home as the primary site of everyday life under neoliberalism. Addressing the ramifications of the economic crash of 2008, these two chapters return us to one of the gothic's most beloved tropes – the haunted house. In so doing, both explore the ways in which neoliberal capitalism has penetrated our most private spaces, refashioning us and the ways we live accordingly.

Karen E. Macfarlane's chapter, 'Market value: *American Horror Story's* housing crisis', explores the ways in which the events of 2008 challenged the dream of the family home as traditional encapsulation of the American myths of hard work, self-reliance and (world-leading) social mobility. Exploring the first season of the television series, she charts the ways in which the post-2006 owners have become trapped in the house by the current economic situation, becoming akin to its long-term resident ghosts. Held hostage by their unsellable investment and reminded at every turn that their lives are subject to penetration by the spectral alterity of forces beyond their control, the series' protagonists, for Macfarlane, have come to embody the crisis in models of national identity engendered by global capital flow in general and by the economic collapse of 2008 in particular. Here the Ramos family, driven from the house by racist ghosts, enacts the collapse of the US sub-prime mortgage market, which loaned money specifically to black and Hispanic borrowers at inflated interest rates regardless of income. Though this makes them the only family to own the house without dying in it, it also underscores the ways in which neoliberalism has not only failed to eradicate longstanding ethnic hierarchies in the United States but has exploited them for its own ends. For Macfarlane, the haunted house of the neoliberal age becomes a potent symbol, not only of neoliberalism's failure to deliver on its promises of wealth generation but, as we have seen in Ancuta's Asia and Duncan's South Africa, of the way it has retrenched historic inequalities among class and ethnic

groups. Those foolish enough to buy into the neoliberal dream are doomed. Those excluded from it have had a lucky escape but remain dispossessed, inferior and not quite American enough.

Tracey Fahey's chapter, 'Haunted by the ghost: from global economics to domestic anxiety in contemporary art practice', also explores the impact of the 2008 crash on the domestic space, this time with reference to Ireland. Fahey investigates how the boom years of the Celtic Tiger led to the overproduction of housing stock that would never be inhabited or bought, the European Debt Crisis giving rise to 650 so-called 'ghost estates' – housing developments left either partially occupied or unfinished by developers bankrupted by the crash. These eloquent monuments to a vanished prosperity (itself driven by excess and greed) are read through Derridean hauntology as places adrift in time, houses that have lost their value as commodities, haunted by the spectre of what might have been. Thus reanimated and reimagined by the Irish artists and film-makers Aideen Barry, Elaine Reynolds, Eamonn Crudden and Anthony Haughey, the ghost estates are shown to embody the price paid locally for failures in global economic policy, the domestic sphere having become an anxious and unstable space, and its inhabitants mere ghosts of a future that never came to pass.

Part IV. Crossing borders

As the seductive yet deadly figure of the undead-yet-living vampire attests, the gothic has long walked the line between modes of being, models of identity and competing conceptualisations of what is both desirable and good. This preoccupation with states of liminality is encapsulated in this collection's final two chapters. Here the borders of the nation state become a permeable membrane through which the toxic waste of first world technology seeps out alongside the murderous economic imperatives of the neoliberal agenda.

Steffen Hantke's chapter, 'Gothic meltdown: German nuclear cinema in neoliberal times', focuses on three stylistically divergent 'nuclear incident' films produced for television and cinematic distribution and aimed at different target audiences: *Die Wolke/The Cloud* (dir. Gregor Schnitzler, 2006), *Der erste Tag/The First Day* (dir. Andreas Prochaska, 2008) and *Unter Kontrolle/Under Control* (dir. Volker Sattel, 2011). For Hantke, the nuclear power plant is an exemplary gothic site of neoliberal ideology. Here monopolised and transnational corporate power

intersects with the modern security state. And when the plant malfunctions, spilling radioactive poison into the environment, discourses of individual and collective citizenship, bodily autonomy, and social and economic enfranchisement and disenfranchisement are all called into question. Adapting the conventions of American disaster and post-catastrophic survival cinema to the German context, all three films are shown to deploy the gothic mode's representational strategies to explore the networks of power that hold the neoliberal world in place. For whether we inhabit national, transnational or even postnational spaces, the undead hand of neoliberal economics continues to exert a hold on all our lives.

The final chapter in the collection is Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet's 'Border gothic: Gregory Nava's *Bordertown* and the dark side of NAFTA.' This examines the Mexican–American border as a gothic space created by a combination of postcolonial power relations and the new economic and political conditions created by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It focuses on Gregory Nava's gothic thriller *Bordertown* (2006), which tells the story of a young Indian *maquiladora* worker who is raped and left for dead but manages to survive and tell her story to a journalist. The film, Soltysik Monnet argues, not only draws heavily on gothic imagery and representational practices (particularly in its depiction of unsafe working practices) but engages with the very issues that inform theoretical work on the neoliberal politics of the frontier, biodisposability and death.¹⁹ Thus, she illustrates, border towns such as Ciudad Juárez become contemporary underworlds, created by neoliberal practices that prey especially on young female workers, often from indigenous tribes. Grounding the film within its distinctive cultural context (specifically the fact that hundreds of young women have been murdered around Juárez in the last twenty years and almost none of these crimes have been solved) Soltysik Monnet explores the film's indictment of the governments of both the United States and Mexico. Both have colluded with the corporations that own the factories in which these women work to draw a pall of secrecy over the murders. Thus, the combined forces of neoliberalism, sexism and the lingering postcolonial disenfranchisement of native populations are seen to have created a climate of constant fear for women working in the border factories of the film, their murders being effectively sanctioned by the state. The gothic visual rhetoric of the film is therefore not merely an aesthetic choice but is also a rhetorical strategy that resonates

productively with contemporary cultural theory about the human cost of neoliberal policies.

Conclusions

Although they range across continents and focus on a variety of media, the chapters in this collection all demonstrate the ways in which global neoliberalism has impacted on the lives, dreams and subjectivities of people across the globe. They demonstrate, therefore, the ways in which international gothic texts provide an effective and affective means for viewers and readers to explore the often unspoken nature of their economic condition. Ultimately, what emerges most forcibly from the collection is a sense of economic, existential and humanitarian crisis – the neoliberal experiment having led us to war, to environmental catastrophe and to levels of inequality unprecedented in modern times. Alongside this is an awareness that the gothic is ideally positioned, as a mode, to evoke and interrogate such turmoil, focusing as it does on the monstrous, the liminal and the domestic in ways that undermine dominant ideologies, question old truths and envision different ways of being. It is entirely appropriate, we contend, that ours is a culture inhabited by monsters. For thirty years of neoliberal experiment have done extraordinary violence to our societies and ourselves, leaving us unable, it seems, to find a way out of the darkness.

Notes

- 1 The zombie's cultural predominance as the new millennium's monster of choice is witnessed by the extraordinary proliferation of novels, television programmes, films and games that showcase its insatiable hunger to consume both human beings and the societies they inhabit. Notable novelistic examples include *World War Z* (2006) by Max Brooks, Jonathan Maberry's *Patient Zero* (2009), Jon Ajvide Lindqvist's *Handling the Undead* (2009), *Dust* (2010) by Joan Frances Turner, and M. R. Carey's *The Girl with All the Gifts* (2014). In terms of television programming, *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2010–) has become the most popular programme on US television, its Season 4 premiere attracting an audience of over 20 million people (see Biebel, 2013). As the zombie has grown in popularity, moreover, it has moved across media and genres: films have become television programmes (*Zombieland*, 2013), graphic novels have been adapted for TV (*The Walking Dead*, 2010–; *Rachel Rising*, 2012), and both games (the *Resident Evil* franchise, 2002–16) and novels (*Warm Bodies* (Marion, 2010); dir. Jonathan Levine, 2013) have been made into films. Zombie films themselves have ranged from low-budget comedy (*Midget Zombie Takeover*, 2013) to politically engaged explorations of the contemporary

- workplace (*Dead Man Working*, 2013) to comments on the 'War on Terror' (*The Revenant*, 2009). They have given a new twist, moreover, to more established genres such as the ghetto movie (*Gangs of the Dead*, 2006), the road movie (*Deadheads*, 2011) and the Western (*Gallowwalkers*, 2013).
- 2 See Harvey (1989), Jameson (1991) and Callinicos (1990).
 - 3 See Punter (1980).
 - 4 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890); Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897).
 - 5 Both 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow' and 'Rip Van Winkle' were published in *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon* (1820).
 - 6 For detailed consideration of the global dimensions of the gothic see Byron (2013), and Byron and Townshend (2013).
 - 7 From its earliest manifestations, the gothic has displayed highly misogynistic tendencies, both in the form of sexual violence against women (as in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796)) and of a more nebulous sense of threat (as in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794)). William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786) and Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya; or, The Moor* (1806) delved into the terror of ethnic alterity, a theme developed in H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1886) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and later still in H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896) and R. L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). Meanwhile, the mode's historic class politics have been avowedly bourgeois, resulting in extreme depictions of both the aristocracy and the working class: Count Dracula himself typifying the former, whilst the latter (although catered to in the Victorian period in penny dreadfuls such as *Varney the Vampire* (1847)) emerge frequently as objects of horror, both in Europe and in the gothic tradition of the American South.
 - 8 The highly gothic 'miseries and mysteries' genre inaugurated by Eugène Sue in his *Mysteries of Paris* (1843) and critiqued by Karl Marx in *The Holy Family* (1845) is a case in point. Whilst it revelled in the dark and perverse underside of Paris, Sue's novel reduced its proletarian characters to sympathetic caricatures and failed to envision a political solution to the social problems depicted. In the United States, the genre would descend into melodramatic sensationalism that effectively demonised the working classes for the titillation of a bourgeois readership.
 - 9 Examples of gothic-clad conservatism are numerous. We would point, in particular, to the gender politics of television programmes such as *The Vampire Diaries* (2009–) and the heteronormativity of novels such as *Warm Bodies* (Marion, 2010). Both adopt the *mise-en-scène*, plot and character types of the gothic, but eschew its capacity for social engagement and political critique.
 - 10 Examples of gothic radicalism are equally numerous. We would point, in particular, to Max Brooks' novel *World War Z* (2006) – an accomplished exploration of international relations and global economics – and to television series such as *In the Flesh* (2013–14) and films such as George A. Romero's 'Dead' sextet, both of which deploy the zombie as an exploration of the rights and responsibilities of humanity and the inherently oppressive nature of the neoliberal State.
 - 11 In the UK, this was characterised by a belief in active government dedicated to reducing social inequality – a mixed economy in which core industries were owned by the State – industrial relations policies that entailed conciliation with the trade union movement – and a commitment to state welfare, health and education. In the USA, the 'Great Society' initiative promoted by Lyndon B. Johnson would echo

- the aims, if not the method, of the British, seeking to tackle poverty and inequality through State investment in education, medical care, the inner city and transport. See Dutton (1991), and Milkis and Mileur (2005).
- 12 David Harvey writes informedly on this in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989).
 - 13 'They reversed the nationalizations and privatized public assets, opened up natural resources (fisheries, timber, etc.) to private and unregulated exploitation (in many cases riding roughshod over the claims of indigenous inhabitants), privatized social security and facilitated foreign investment and freer trade. The right of foreign companies to repatriate profits from their Chilean operations was guaranteed' (Harvey, 2005: 8).
 - 14 As a recent Oxfam report has indicated, however, the 'trickledown' theory is entirely fallacious, a widening gulf of inequality having opened up between social classes and nations that threatens to consign future generations to ever-worsening poverty (Oxfam, 2014).
 - 15 In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, the European Debt Crisis occurred when several EU countries (Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Cyprus) found themselves unable to repay their government debt or bail out indebted banks without the help of outside parties such as the European Central Bank or the International Monetary Fund. The result was a swingeing programme of austerity forced on sovereign governments by the EU, impacting most markedly on the poorest members of society.
 - 16 These include American companies Pfizer, Merck, Johnson and Johnson, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Wyeth; British companies GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca; Swiss companies Novartis and Roche; and the French company Aventis.
 - 17 For a full discussion of the topic see Goldacre (2012).
 - 18 These include Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Year of the Flood* (2009), the Canadian TV series *ReGenesis* (The Movie Network, 2004–8) and the US vampire movie *Daybreakers* (2009).
 - 19 Specifically Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La frontera* (1987), Henry Giroux's notion of the 'biopolitics of disposability' and Achille Mbembe's 'Necropolitics' (2003).

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