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“Something Hungry and Wild is Still Calling”: Post-Apartheid Gothic

The postcolonial Gothic is now a mode widely covered by literary criticism, but South Africa has often been left out of investigations. This paper argues that only now that apartheid has ended can writers and critics explore how the Gothic manifests itself in South African literature. Showing possible connections between the postcolonial Gothic and recent South African fiction, it seeks to define a new category that can help define the contours of the literary field in South Africa: post-apartheid Gothic.

This paper looks at the way an extremely local genre, the Gothic, has travelled to South Africa, thus creating an avatar of a mode generally termed the “postcolonial Gothic.” It might seem rather paradoxical, at first sight, to associate the two words “postcolonial” and “Gothic,” as has been done extensively in recent criticism. Historically, the Gothic is undeniably a local, European genre. Strictly speaking, it designates literature that was written in Europe between 1764 – the date when Walpole published *The Castle of Otranto*, famously considered as the first Gothic novel in English – and the 1820s. Yet, depending on how exactly they define the word “Gothic,” critics disagree on the corpus it designates. As Max Duperray remarks, choosing or discarding a novel is significant, and linked to one’s definition of the genre (5). He explains, for instance, that in *Le roman gothique anglais: 1764-1824*, Maurice Lévy surprisingly chose to discard novels usually regarded as Gothic, like William Beckford’s *Vathek*, William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* or Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* because in these novels the action is not limited to a Gothic building. Lévy’s choice subsequently caused debates:

Levy’s decision to discount *Caleb Williams* and *Frankenstein* seems to me questionable. Admittedly both contain elements which fall outside the Gothic province, but they *use* the Gothic; why include many works too lame to do more than imitate a convention, and ignore great works which use it creatively? (Hume 59)

From these apparent contradictions springs a prerequisite: before examining how the Gothic travelled to South Africa, and beyond stating its locality – for after all, it seems to be perceived first and foremost as a European genre born from an interest in medieval architecture, combined with historical anxiety linked to the Enlightenment – we need to define it clearly.

Instead of considering the Gothic as a narrowly defined and spatially restricted genre, with all the difficulties it implies, my first step will be to adopt the perspective Jennifer Lawn suggests in her introduction to *Gothic New Zealand. The Darker Side of Kiwi Culture*, that is, “treating gothic as a mode, not a genre: a way of doing and seeing adaptable across dislocations of culture, time, and space, rather than a substantive category” (14-15). Such an approach, which has been widely adopted by scholars who have recently read or re-read literatures from the postcolony through the lens of the Gothic, should prevent us from falling into the trap of dilution, where “Gothic” would be thought of as an empty category, a label too vague to be used in a fruitful way.

The process of globalizing the Gothic is one of metamorphosis: it means transforming the codes and conventions of English Gothic literature from the eighteenth

and nineteenth centuries, adapting them to the local conditions of production of the literary works considered.¹ In a globalized literary landscape, two new categories have emerged: colonial and postcolonial Gothic, both historically determined by the process of colonization and its aftermath. Recently, books and articles dealing with Canadian, Australian, Caribbean or New Zealand Gothic have largely demonstrated the mutability of the Gothic mode. All the attempts at examining the specific category of postcolonial Gothic insist on the necessity to link it, on the one hand, to its European roots and to the sense that the Gothic is first and foremost a literature of terror, and on the other hand, to relate it to the local conditions in which it manifests itself. For instance, in *Postcolonial Gothic Fictions from the Caribbean, Canada, Australia and New Zealand*, Alison Rudd endeavours to demonstrate that “there is something in the postcolonial condition of former colonies that finds expression in the Gothic,” (3) a notion that echoes Gerry Turcotte’s assertion that “the Gothic mode was particularly suited to expressing ‘New World’ literary values” (*Peripheral Fear* 18). Such a conception of the Gothic implies two things about its globalization and relocation into non-English places: first, because the Gothic is linked to space, globalizing the Gothic means transplanting it from a local context to another local context, without erasing or negating their specificities. Second, the Gothic is linked to colonization and to the specific anxieties it has triggered both among the settlers and among the local populations.

Not only do critics assert that the Gothic provides an apt mode to express anxieties about colonization and post-colonization, and this regardless of how and when colonization occurred, but they are also careful to reaffirm the local specificities of the postcolonial Gothic. For instance, Rudd is careful to establish a distinction between the various geographical areas she examines in her book, arguing that Caribbean writing is “drawn to schizophrenia as a trope in order to express the social conditions and psychic stresses on the individual that arise from the history and legacy of slavery, and which has been abjected from imperial memory” (27). In Canada, she goes on to explain, the postcolonial Gothic is “inextricably linked to a sense of place, as an anxiety of unsettledness,” (27) while in Australia it is characterized by an emphasis on the relationship between innocence and guilt (28), and in New Zealand it is specifically linked to “a dreadful silence” (28). She thus lays emphasis both on the common features and on the local specificities of the postcolonial Gothic, an approach shared by Jennifer Lawn, who also insists on the necessity to “emphasise local appropriations of national or international influences” (12). This conjunction of the global, the atemporal, and the local, is also developed by Lawn in “From the Spectral to the Ghostly: Postcolonial Gothic and New Zealand Literature,” in which she argues that the “Gothic lends postcoloniality its achronological temporality and conversely, postcoloniality enjoins Gothic studies to devote close attention to local specificities of geography, history and culture” (146).

1. The capacity of the Gothic for metamorphosis is not a consequence of its globalization but was already one of its structural features in nineteenth-century England. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, for instance, which has often been read as a Gothic novel, departs from the initial connection between the Gothic mode and its setting, the (ruined) Gothic castle or abbey set in a sublime landscape. Stevenson turns London into a nightmarish place which bears many resemblances to the Gothic buildings of Walpole’s or Radcliffe’s novels and becomes a dark, labyrinthine place where terrifying events can occur, thus initiating a fruitful sub-genre, urban Gothic, in which the city becomes the locus of the characters’ anxiety (see Dryden, Goh, Lawler, Punter and Byron 226-229).

In post-apartheid South Africa, Gothic codes and conventions borrowed from the Gothic’s “building blocks”² provide writers with tools to help them situate themselves in a double perspective, inserting their work within a global trend and simultaneously probing specifically South African issues arising from the birth of the Rainbow Nation. If the Gothic mode has tolerated being transplanted into contemporary South African fiction, it is, perhaps, thanks to the Gothic’s special relationship to space. Paradoxically, it might be because the mode is initially so deeply grounded in a specific, local space that it has shown such adaptability. Indeed, most critics agree on the close link between the Gothic and the Freudian notion of the uncanny, a notion which, as Rudd reminds us, is also used by Homi Bhabha as the starting point of his analysis of the postcolonial condition in *The Location of Culture*: “The notion of the ‘unhomely,’ based on Sigmund Freud’s concept of the *unheimlich* or the uncanny is regarded by Homi Bhabha as the paradigmatic condition of the postcolonial” (Rudd 13-14; also see Azzam 19). The fact that the uncanny is at the core of the Gothic might account for the ease with which the Gothic mode has been adapted to postcolonial locations: such a transplantation was possible, and even natural, because the uncanny is a notion that closely associates the homely with its opposite, unveiling the capacity of the reassuring familiarity of home to turn into the “unhomely,”³ thus revealing a specific kind of anxiety, and even terror, linked to the colonial and postcolonial experiences of displacement:

Postcolonial and gothic discourses have for some time been paired in critical invocations of the “unhomely” or “spectral” legacies of imperialism and globalization. This legacy, which appears in the form of unresolved memory traces and occluded histories resulting from the experience of colonial oppression, diasporic migration, or national consolidations, is readily figured in the form of ghosts or monsters that “haunt” the nation/subject from without and within. (Sugars and Turcotte vii).

Such an association between the uncanny and haunting should not surprise us since, as Jean-Michel Rabaté reminds us, “to haunt comes from the frequentative form of ‘to live,’ or else it derives from the Germanic root *heim*/home” (51-52, my translation). Through the uncanny, postcolonial texts, and in particular postcolonial Gothic texts, negotiate a multilayered and complex history of appropriation and dispossession, and the trope of the ghost or the monster that haunts and sometimes literally becomes the land is a recurrent feature in postcolonial Gothic narratives. In their very useful overview of the Gothic, Punter and Byron argue that in such narratives “a logic of the phantom, the revenant, a logic of haunting” (55) dominates:

The story of the postcolonial [...] is in the mouths of ghosts; the effect of empire has been the dematerialization of whole cultures, and the Gothic tropes of the ghost, the phantom, the revenant, gain curious new life from the need to assert continuity where the lessons of conventional history and geography would claim that all continuity has been broken by the imperial trauma. (Punter and Byron 58)

Because it is linked to the uncanny, the postcolonial Gothic is therefore grounded in a sense of place or displacement – a feature directly derived, Julie Azzam suggests, from

2. “A haunted castle, a pact with the Devil, crime and punishment, the tribunal of the Inquisition: so many elements that must never disappoint the reader’s expectations. Paradoxically, the themes are known in advance. The Gothic is like a building game in which the arrangement of the various blocks makes endless variations possible” (Abensour and Charras, viii-ix, my translation).

3. “Thus *heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*” (Freud 226).

the affinity of the Gothic for space: “in the postcolonial gothic, homes, territories, and nations are represented as *heimlich* sites that screen the unhomely, foreign, and threatening nature from sight” (4).⁴

This sense of space, and emphasis on haunted places, is linked to the necessity of exploring personal and collective history. It could very well be that the Gothic genre lent itself to adaptations by colonial and postcolonial writers in such a fruitful way because it is grounded in time in addition to place. The ghosts that haunt the Gothic are, first and foremost, the ghosts of history – familial history, as in the case of *Otranto*, or national history, as many readings of the Gothic have suggested, illustrating the “conflicting impulses” of the Gothic “to return to the past and to create something new” (Punter and Byron 178). In the postcolonial Gothic, these conflicting impulses are complicated by the competing historical layers that superimpose themselves over the same territory. The “unhomely” in the Gothic is linked to a sense of individual homelessness – or “unsettledness,” to take up Rudd’s argument about Canadian literature – but also to a more general sense of national homelessness linked to the violence and abjection of colonization and decolonization: “So the postcolonial Gothic is an aesthetic that links the psychological to the sociohistorical and political in a peculiarly direct manner: art’s catharsis is both personal and political because the ghosts of history are linked to self and other” (Gaylard 5).

Furthermore, Azzam argues that “the British Gothic is a ‘form of racial discourse’ that defines the borders between what is British and what is not British, and what is familiar and what is foreign” (37). As such, it is particularly apt to explore the nature and the limits of national identity in non-English or non-British contexts. What is displaced is not the preoccupation of the British Gothic with Britishness, but its capacity to explore the instability of boundaries and the anxieties caused by personal and collective identities in other geographical contexts, as Punter and Byron point out: “the Gothic always remains the symbolic site of a culture’s discursive struggle to define and claim possession of the civilized, and to abject, or throw off, what is seen as other to that civilized self” (5).

Such a preoccupation with the contours of national identity should have incited South African writers to resort to the Gothic mode to express possible anxieties about the Rainbow Nation that emerged after 1994. Yet, interestingly, most studies of the postcolonial Gothic exclude South Africa from their scope. The most obvious explanation that can be offered for this absence is that the status of South Africa as a postcolonial country is complex and problematic, because of the various “layers” of colonization in the country and, above all, because of apartheid. It can be argued that apartheid, which caused both South African writers and their readers to adopt a particular political and/or racialized approach to literature, prevented the Gothic mode from emerging clearly in South African literature before 1994, and that only now that the regime has ended can critics turn to South African literature with a Gothic “lens” – which would suggest that the Gothic could equally be defined as a mode of writing and a mode of reading.⁵ Gerald Gaylard, for instance, views Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* as an

4. See, in addition, Hélène Machinal’s assertion that the English Gothic novel is first and foremost about architecture, as it is a construct, both in terms of internal and external layout (15).

5. Reading is part of the identity of the Gothic, perhaps because the first Gothic writers were so much inspired by their readings, from medieval romances to revenge tragedies. The success of the genre in the eighteenth century was

example of what he terms the “Southern African Gothic,” describing Coetzee’s Gothic as “a heady mix of a philosophical meditation on suffering, the suffering inflicted by Modernity and Empire, and of the possibilities for opposition to and escape from this system and the suffering it inflicts” (9; see also Denison 175-9). Another example is Julie Azzam, who reassesses an interesting motif found in the *plaasroman*, a South African genre famously analyzed by J. M. Coetzee in *White Writing*, that of the buried corpse that surfaces again, as a Gothic trope which she traces from Schreiner’s *Story of an African Farm* to Gordimer’s *The Conservationist* and Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country* (Azzam 80-130). She argues, in particular, that “[a]s Africa ‘comes back’ from its narrative and historical repression the gothicized *plaasroman* has the opportunity to function as a vehicle of political reconciliation through the full acknowledgement and integration of the past with the present” (85).

It is precisely thanks to the capacity of the Gothic mode to function as a “vehicle of political reconciliation” that a specific form of postcolonial Gothic has emerged in the New South Africa, a form I would like to label “post-apartheid Gothic.” This phenomenon might be explained by the fact that apartheid exerted the same pressure on the cultural and national fields in South Africa as colonization in other countries, giving birth to a similar need to come to terms with a violent and repressive history while negotiating a new and problematic identity. What is more, the end of apartheid has radically shifted the ideological and political positioning of South African citizens within the nation, giving rise to a certain instability – a phenomenon not dissimilar to the political and ideological instabilities that led to the emergence of the eighteenth-century Gothic and of its nineteenth-century avatars, as suggested by Punter and Byron in their overview of the Gothic: “[t]he Gothic is frequently considered to be a genre that re-emerges with particular force during times of cultural crisis and which serves to negotiate the anxieties of the age by working through them in a displaced form” (39).

Interestingly, the few articles devoted to post-apartheid Gothic to date have focused on literature in Afrikaans, perhaps because the greatest need to come to terms with the guilt of apartheid is to be found in the Afrikaner community.⁶ In his reading of Marlene Van Niekerk’s *Triomf*, Jack Shear argues that Gothic fiction is a “malleable form” and that “the Gothic survived its eighteenth-century roots because its central theme – the presence of horrors that bear an uncanny resemblance to real fears – is easily reworked to accommodate the frictions of an evolving society” (2). This explains why the Gothic mode has also found its way into recent South African fiction in English: Gothic *topoi* – the haunted house, the isolated landscape, the skeleton in the closet, maze-like spaces, ghosts, dysfunctional families, to mention just a few examples – have provided writers with tools to explore the deep anxieties generated by the redefinition of South African society as the Rainbow Nation. A comparison could be drawn with Canada where, Rudd argues, because of “official commitment to the ideology of multiculturalism [...], the process of refiguring a multicultural identity has produced a sense of anxiety that has resulted in a destabilization of the literary and cultural traditions of English-speaking Canada,” an anxiety which is negotiated through the recourse to Gothic tropes (69).

certainly linked to its strong appeal to readers, who could easily identify with the characters. Jane Austen plays with this feature in *Northanger Abbey*, in which Catherine Morland is both an enthusiastic reader of Gothic romances and a young innocent heroine similar to the ones found, for instance, in Ann Radcliffe’s novels.

6. See Shear, Eva Hunter on Karel Schoeman’s *This Life* and Sheri Ann Denison’s PhD Thesis, in particular 203-217.

A few dominant trends will now be suggested regarding the form post-apartheid Gothic has taken in recent South African fiction. Most of these novels' recycling of Gothic conventions within a post-apartheid context is part and parcel of the writers' attempt at negotiating a new, problematic identity.

A first strategy can be identified primarily, but not exclusively, among white writers who make a structural use of haunted spaces as a means of acknowledging the link between past and present, and of attempting to exorcise the guilt of apartheid. André Brink's novels of the late 1990s and early 2000s, for instance, all feature the Gothic trope of the ghost. In *Imaginations of Sand*, the ghosts are the heroine's ancestors, thus illustrating both the familial dimension of Gothic haunting and the cross-cultural nature of the postcolonial ghost. In this case, it means claiming a Khoikhoi ancestor in the heroine's officially all-white lineage, thus making her "coloured" – at least at a phantasmatic level – and recuperating part of the Rainbow Nation identity now required to belong to a genuine post-apartheid South-Africa.

Brink also invokes ghosts in *Devil's Valley*, described by Paulette Coetzee as "an absorbing, playful journey through a fictional landscape filled with gothic horror, grotesque humour and weird beauty" (130). In this novel, haunting is a recuperative strategy again. The ghost that explicitly haunts the settlement is that of the founding father, the first Lukas Lermiet, who embodies the evils of the past and the haunting nature of apartheid's sins – in this case, the clash between an ideology based on purity and the practice of miscegenation on a large scale. Guilt is at the core of Brink's Gothic narrative, and the final destruction of the settlement reads both as a parody of the apocalyptic endings often found in fictions written by whites under apartheid and as a symbolic exorcism of the evils of apartheid: the ghost of Lukas Lermiet is invoked the better to be put down to rest definitively. Let us note in passing that it is associated with another Gothic trope, that of monstrosity, through the allusion to the "throwbacks," the children that have to be killed at birth. Flip Lochner first thinks they are the result of inbreeding and incest – yet another Gothic trope – but finds out they are the result of miscegenation (286). These monsters are a physical manifestation of another kind of haunting, that of the black mother, Bilhah. As Lukas Lermiet himself tells Flip, "the problem with yesterday is it never stays down, you got to keep stamping on it" (286-287), a phrasing that cannot fail to evoke the return of the repressed underlying the Gothic.

The novel's ghosts – literal ones (the ghost of Lukas Lermiet) and figurative ones (the ghost of the black mother) – and monsters are clearly Gothic motifs. But the novel features another Gothic trope of structural importance: the eponymous valley, a good example of what Lawn calls "gothogenic zones" ("Introduction" 13). Recuperated as the Lermiet family's home in spite of prior occupation by native inhabitants, the valley is the uncanny place *par excellence*, associating the trope of the homely and that of the unhomely through a symbolical re-enactment of the dispossession process perpetrated by Afrikaner colonizers. As is often the case with the postcolonial Gothic, this uncanny place is highly symbolical of historical events like the Great Trek or Afrikaners' conflicts with local populations over land ownership. The final disintegration of the place is reminiscent of Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher," in which the haunted house similarly crumbles, symbolizing the end of a lineage – and, in *Devil's Valley*, of a whole era. As Maurice Lévy states about the Gothic castle, "once everything is consummated in time, the indispensable welcoming space vanishes, collapses, or is sold off" ("Châteaux" 7,

my translation). It can be argued that the function of the setting in *Devil's Valley* is very similar to that of Gothic castles in historical Gothic novels. Just as “the Gothic castle can be seen as a location where [social] violence can flourish, in one sense – at least in its earlier manifestations – safely contained by its distancing in time and place, yet at the same time inextricably entwined with more contemporary history,” (Punter and Byron 288) Devil's Valley, the isolated and terrifying locus of the Lermiet family's history, spatially embodies a national history of violence which is thus appropriated and re-enacted. Brink's novel can therefore be read as a post-apartheid reconfiguration of a Gothic motif for purposes of national redefinition and exorcism.

But the ghosts of apartheid are not easily laid to rest, and ambiguous Gothic narratives have emerged that stage the challenge of defining a new identity for South Africa, and the difficulty individuals have finding their place in it. The notion of “taking place” as a symbol of finding one's personal identity within the nation recurs in many recent novels. Damon Galgut's *The Impostor* (2008) is a good example of how recent South African fiction uses Gothic tropes to explore the dead ends of the Rainbow Nation. Galgut's novel, which is clearly placed under the dual sign of space and colonization in the epigraph (“Your hinterland is there. Inscription on a statue of Cecil John Rhodes, The Company's Garden, Cape Town”) includes several “gothogenic zones,” starting with the half-ruined house where Adam settles at the beginning of the novel:

The house was a shock. It was out at the edge of the white town, where the roads were untarred and the ground sloped steeply upwards to the rocky crest of a ridge. It was very bare and basic, with a slanted tin roof. The windows had a blind, blank look to them. The paint was faded and peeling. The fence was overgrown with creeper, and the creeper had twined through the gate. (6)

The description reads like a catalogue of Gothic conventions: the place is isolated, the derelict house reminds us of the prominent part played by ruins both in the Gothic revival and in Gothic fiction, its windows are reminiscent of blind eyes, and the creeper symbolizes contamination and invasion, a recurrent motif in the novel. Inside, the air is “dead and heavy, as if it had been breathed already” (7), and Adam's friend Charmaine insists that “there are *presences* here” (7). From the start, Adam finds this new home deeply unhomely:

In the daytime he was a rational and sceptical man and he didn't believe in presences. But now, at night, with strange walls enclosing him and a strange roof creaking overhead, a lot of things seemed possible. It was as if another person, from another time, was buried under his skin. This person was squatting by a fire, with a vast darkness pressing in. (9)

Unhomeliness arises from the conjunction of darkness – Adam has to light a candle as there is no power in the house – strangeness and haunting; Adam feels trapped in a space characterized by the Gothic superimposition of different eras, as testified by the feeling that he is somewhat haunted by a more primitive version of himself. This unhomeliness prefigures his feeling of being an impostor, that is, somebody who is not where he should be. This feeling is reinforced as Adam spends time in the other gothogenic zone in the novel, at his friend Canning's place, Gondwana, which has many attributes of the Gothic castle – including the clear sense that Canning rejoices in having inherited it from his dead father. Adam is often invited there because Canning identified him as a childhood friend with whom he shared a key moment in his life – the moment when he swore to enact revenge on his father for not loving him, and telling him so, when he

was a child. But paradoxically Adam does not remember anything about the episode, so that in the novel, the Gothic also springs from the contrast between the hero's partial memory loss and his friend's enthusiasm about being reunited with him, a contrast that reinforces Adam's impression that he is a fake. *The Impostor* therefore offers a typically Gothic combination of temporal and spatial displacements that lead to the protagonist's anxiety. The place where Adam feels like an impostor is explicitly the New South Africa, with its new social hierarchies and conventions that are repeatedly described as incomprehensible to him – a case in point being his relationship with the mayor. In *The Impostor*, the Gothic mode, in particular the Gothic characterization of places, therefore gives Galgut tools to express a sense of “unsettledness” linked to the social and cultural changes in post-apartheid South Africa.

Henrietta Rose-Innes also draws upon Gothic conventions in two novels, *Shark's Egg* (2000) and *The Rock Alphabet* (2004), in which, like Galgut, she plays on the spatial conventions of Gothic literature. Both books combine the Gothic's affinity for space with the Gothic trope of the split self and of duality. In *Shark's Egg*, the uncanny arises from Joanna's confrontation with Leah, who is clearly portrayed as her double and finally takes her place both with her boyfriend, Alan, and in her house – a home that is, in itself, typically Gothic with its winding stairs and its isolation, set against the background of the sea, which replaces the sublime landscapes of Radcliffean novels. Because it focuses on an individual conflict between two young women, *Shark's Egg* explores the human psyche more than the collective identity of the New South Africa. By the end of the book, Joanna has changed her name to Anna, an indication of how unstable and fragile her sense of identity is. The final passage, in which she watches Leah making love with an estranged Alan, associates the motif of the double with the uncanny:

She had not recognised him. Of course those had been his hands, his face: she knew them by heart. But he was changed, a stranger now – living in a foreign place where she had never been, speaking a new language. She pressed her face against a cold crossbar, shutting out the light with her arms. (112)

Here, the familiar combines with the unfamiliar, and the notion of unhomeliness (“a foreign place”) pervades everything, leading to Anna's disorientation and sense of entrapment (“shutting out the light”). Even if the focus is clearly on the personal, the notions of the “foreign place” and the “new language” might also suggest a deeper and more collective anxiety about national identity. And Anna's ambiguous final escape “towards the railway tracks, the sea, the glittering day” (127) might open up new perspectives for the nation – just as they might suggest a suicidal gesture: “*sink or swim*” (127).

The Rock Alphabet explores this collective dimension much more explicitly, drawing on the South African background in which it is set and playing on the postcolonial motif of the lost children, which recurs, for instance, in Australian fiction (see Rudd 114-119) and is linked to a perception of the landscape as alien and frightening. In *The Rock Alphabet* the Gothic landscape is the mountain behind Ivy's house, the place where Jean and Flin were found and where Flin mysteriously disappeared again, becoming a kind of ghost that haunts the novel, as shown by what Jean hears when coming back to the place years after the disappearance of his adoptive mother: “But outside the window, in the thin blue light, something hungry and wild is still calling. It is barely a human voice, barely a language. It comes in through the window, it climbs around in the room. *Brother. Little brother. Come out.*” (23) What Jean hears is his lost brother's voice,

which recurs throughout the novel, and which is clearly assimilated here to the voice of the landscape, a ghostly, “barely human” voice. *The Rock Alphabet* exemplifies post-apartheid Gothic fiction in its exploration of the relationships between the characters and the land, an untamed wilderness that has to be accepted as it is, but also between the various characters. In typical Gothic fashion, Ivy and Jean are reflections of each other and Ivy frequently dreams of Jean as her lost double before meeting him again. The narrative offers other doubling patterns, the most obvious being the perception of the two lost boys as antithetic doubles: the wild one, Flin, is finally claimed by the primitive landscape, while the tame one, Jean, becomes civilized. The boys therefore illustrate the Gothic tension between primitive and civilized. The motif of the double even informs the narration: focalization alternates regularly between Ivy’s and Jean’s point of view, giving the reader a double perspective on the narrated events.

In *The Rock Alphabet*, post-apartheid Gothic is about exploring the connections between past and present, coming to terms with the past being the condition for finding one’s place in the present. Ivy’s job, which consists in labelling rock samples and artefacts found by a family of archaeologists, stands for the novel’s move toward the recuperation of a lost past, coupled with a need for exorcism symbolized by the final dismantling of the collection. Ivy chooses to settle in the mountain house, at the end, because she has been through the (Gothic) labyrinth of the mountain, found the bones of old Bernard Faro, and emerged a different person – a change symbolized by a metamorphosis of the mountain house itself, which looks “like home” (175) upon her return. Rose-Innes’s post-apartheid Gothic shuns investigating the country’s identity in a collective way but, instead, explores individual experiences of (un)homeliness. In *Shark’s Egg* and *The Rock Alphabet*, as in all the novels examined here, post-apartheid Gothic seems connected to a sense of place, to an exploration of what it means to belong – or not.

Post-apartheid Gothic is a trace of the inscription of South African literature within a global literature. Global in its connections with other postcolonial forms of Gothic yet local in its relationship to the South African landscape and the specific issues raised by the emergence of the Rainbow nation, post-apartheid Gothic provides writers with a literary mode through which they can probe the contours of the emerging New South Africa.

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