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Monsters from Below, Technology from Above: Mapping the Asian Metropolis

As many urban studies scholars have noted, the rise of East Asian metropolises Seoul and Hong Kong has been linked from the beginning with the processes of modernity and imperialism, the world market and globalization. This paper explores the way new problems of the global urban landscape find symbolic form in cinematic representations. It analyses two films from Hong Kong and South Korea respectively, *So Close* (2002, dir. Corey Yuen) and *The Host* (2006 dir. Bong Joon-ho) for the way they figure relationships between the material, imaginary, individual and collective dimensions of urban reality. In the first, a cognitive mapping of the city occurs through computerized surveillance systems used by sister assassins; in the second, an understanding of class and international relations comes about through a modern horror plot in which a monster lurks in Seoul's Han River. This paper thus considers way these two global metropolises are imagined and allegorised as knowable systems, one drawing on a futuristic device, and the other on a primitive.