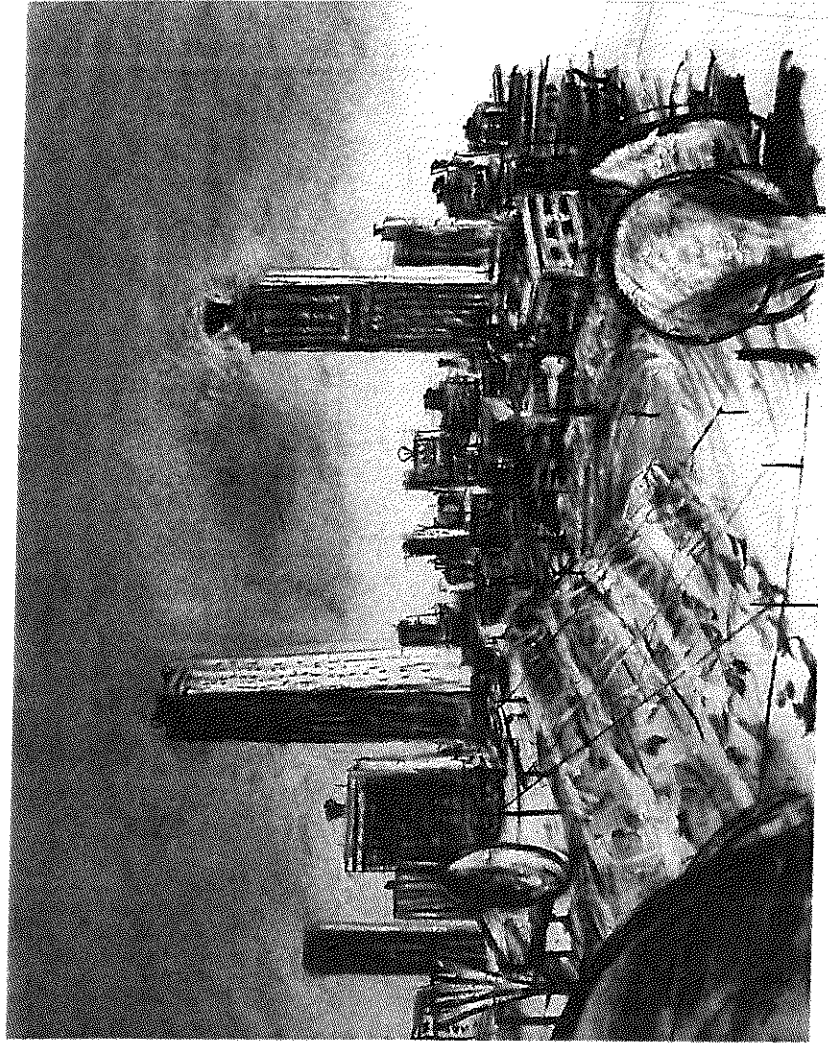




# Johannesburg

## The Elusive Metropolis



Edited by

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With an afterword by Arjun Appadurai and Carol A. Breckenridge

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It is altogether impossible to live at all without forgetting.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *Untimely Meditations*

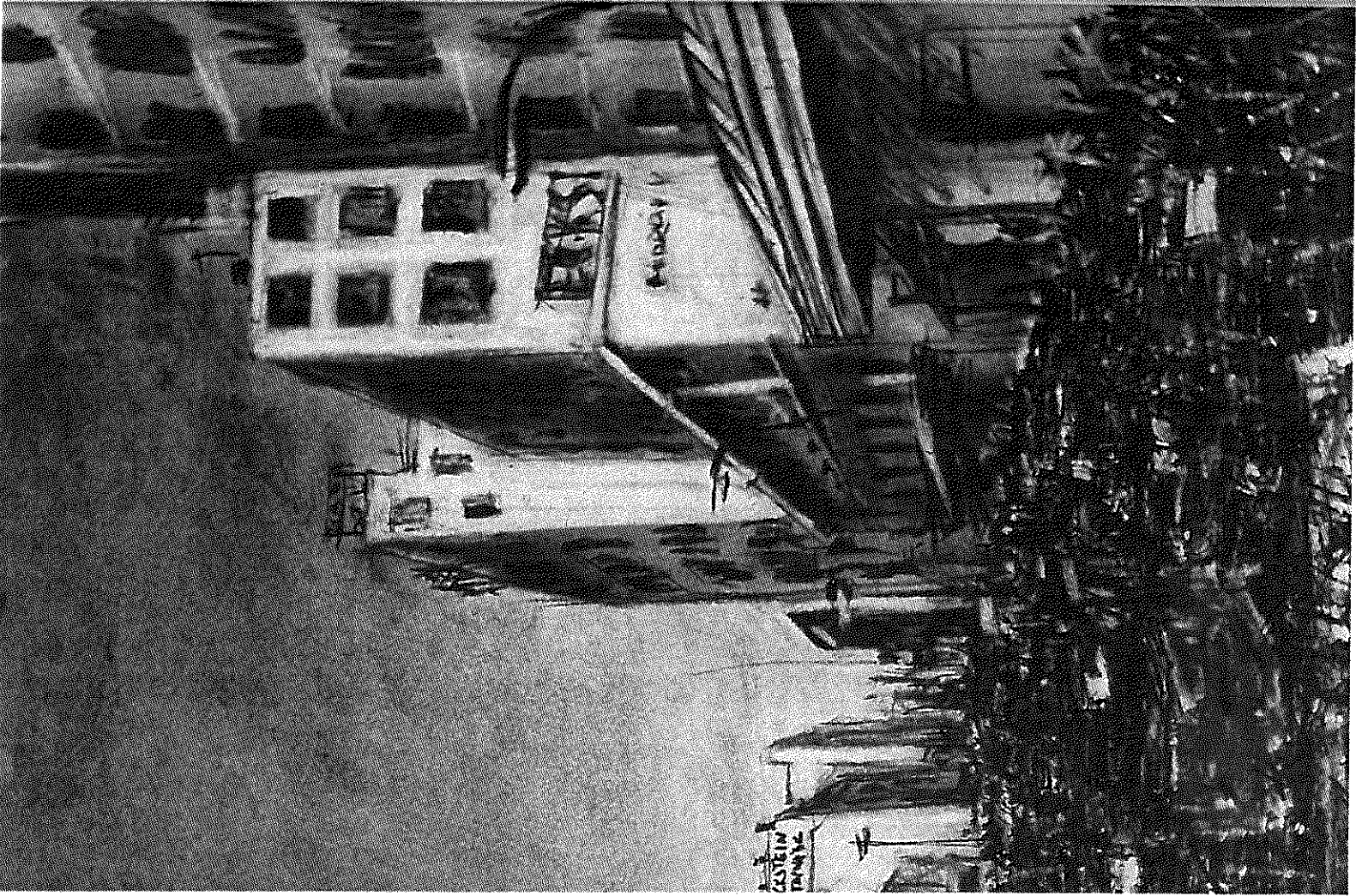
## 1 Aesthetics of Superfluity

ACHILLE MBEMBE

If there is ever an African form of metropolitan modernity, then Johannesburg will have been its classical location. The idea of the metropolis in European thought has always been linked to that of “civilization” (a form of existence as well as a structure of time) and capitalist rationalization. Indeed, the Western imagination defines the metropolis as the general form assumed by the rationalization of relations of production (the increasing prevalence of the commodity system) and the rationalization of the social sphere (human relations) that follows it. A defining moment of metropolitan modernity is realized when the two spheres rely on purely functional relations among people and things and subjectivity takes the form of calculation and abstraction.

One such moment is epitomized by the instrumentality that labor acquires in the production, circulation, and reproduction of capital. Another moment is to be found in the way that the circulation of goods and commodities, as well as the constant process of buying and selling, results in the liquidation of tradition and its substitution by a culture of indifference and restlessness that nourishes self-stylization. Yet another is to be found in the ways that luxury, pleasure, consumption, and other stimuli are said to affect the sensory foundations of mental life and the central role they play in the process of subject formation in general.<sup>1</sup>

This study is highly speculative. It uses the notion of superfluity to revisit the biopolitics of Johannesburg as a “racial city” and its transition to a metropolitan form. In the wake of the collapse of apartheid (an insidious form



of state racism), the collage of various fragments of the former city is opening up a space for experiences of displacement, substitution, and condensation, none of which is purely and simply a repetition of a repressed past but rather a manifestation of traumatic amnesia and, in some cases, nostalgia or even mourning.<sup>2</sup> In the process, an original form, if not of African cosmopolitanism then of the performance of worldliness, emerges. It is structurally shaped by the intertwined realities of bare life (mass poverty), the global logic of commodities, and the formation of a consumer public. Today, the nervous rhythm of the city and its cultural pulse are made up of an unrepentant commercialism that combines technology, capital, and speculation.

As I use the term here, *superfluity* does not refer only to the aesthetics of surfaces and quantities, and to how such an aesthetics is premised on the capacity of things to hypnotize, overexcite, or paralyze the senses. To my mind, *superfluity* refers also to the dialectics of indispensability and expendability of both labor and life, people and things. It refers to the obfuscation of any exchange or use value that labor might have, and to the emptying of any meaning that might be attached to the act of measurement or quantification itself, insofar as numerical representation is as much a fact as it is a form of fantasy.<sup>3</sup>

But the abolition of the very meaning of quantification, or the general conversion of number into fiction, is also a way of writing time, of forgetting and remembering. Moreover, I argue that the post-apartheid metropolis in general, and Johannesburg in particular, is being rewritten in ways that are not unlike the operations of the unconscious. The topography of the unconscious is paradoxical and elusive because it is bound to several distinct modes of temporality. So is the psychic life of the metropolis. This psychic life is inseparable from the metropolitan form: its design, its architectural topographies, its public graphics and surfaces. Metropolitan built forms are themselves a projective extension of the society's archaic or primal fantasies, the ghost dances and the slave spectacles at its foundation.

### Superfluity

Johannesburg began as a mining camp of tents and corrugated iron buildings during the Witwatersrand gold rush of the late nineteenth century. As South Africa was consolidated as a white supremacist state, Johannesburg developed into a colonial town. Like every colonial town, it found it hard to resist

the temptation of mimicry, that is, of imagining itself as an English town and becoming a pale reflection of forms born elsewhere. Johannesburg's earliest settlers did not experience a sense of having genuine ties with the world surrounding them. To a large extent, this tradition of mimicry continues to determine if not the language of the city today, then at least part of its unconscious. This might explain the level of "falsehood" many analysts identified in Johannesburg's cultural life: what appears alternatively as a mélange of and a deep antagonism between provincial and cosmopolitan ways.<sup>4</sup>

That the city started as a *tabula rasa* did not mean that the new could be inscribed upon it without reference to a past. As in every settler colony, the past was to be found elsewhere, in the myth that Johannesburg was a European city in a European country in Africa.<sup>5</sup> It was a *tabula rasa*, too, in the sense that, with the displacement of earlier frontiers of accumulation (land and cattle), Johannesburg became the first site on the continent where capital, labor, and industry came together. In contrast to what happened in other regions of Africa, here the extraction of primary resources did not necessarily lead to marginalization within the global economy. People's experience of the market was constantly disciplined and brought into line with formal and, most often, coercive institutions. Money was one such institution, but so were numerical and legal frameworks for the valuation of people, property, contracts, and credit (see Posel 2000). Early on, the city was inscribed within increasingly wide networks and complex, long-distance interchanges and transactions. In the process, a distinctive commercial civilization emerged that was based partly on race, in particular through the sale of people as property. In this way, Johannesburg became a central site not only for the birth of the modern in Africa, but for the entanglement of the modern and the African—the African modern.<sup>6</sup>

But even cities born out of mimicry are capable of mimesis. By *mimesis*, we should understand a capacity to identify oneself or establish similarities with something else while at the same time inventing something original (see Halliwell 2002). More than any other African city, Johannesburg has evidenced this capacity to mime. In the process, the city has developed an aura of its own, its uniqueness. The mimetic structure of Johannesburg is still evident in the city's contemporary architectural forms or, more simply, in its mania for wealth, for the sensational and the ephemeral, for appearances.

From its beginning in the late nineteenth century, Johannesburg has always imagined itself to be a modern city.<sup>7</sup> Early on, it developed along utilitarian

and functional lines, with a clear delineation between the zones of work, living, recreation, and transportation. It had its own newspapers, its horse-drawn trams, its solid stone buildings, its stock exchange, its banks, post offices, telephone exchange, railway stations, and various social clubs. Later on, it built its galleries, parks, and museums.

The modern city has a number of characteristics. It is, above all, the product of capitalism. In the South African case, industrial capitalism grew out of diamond mining in Kimberley and gold mining in the Main Reef of the Witwatersrand. This is why Johannesburg is also known as "gold-reef city" or Egoli (City of Gold). One can still see traces and markers of this early history in contemporary Johannesburg's landscape, scenery, and folklore. It is not uncommon to drive down a Gold Street, a Quartz Street, or a Nugget Street, just as it is easy to see remnants, here and there, of the machinery that lowered miners below the surface and hauled up ore. From the airport highway, one can still see the slagheaps not far from the very center of the city, those manmade hills in ochre colors, "the mine-dumps, the refuse of stamp-mill and cyanide-tank, the ghosts of the mines' earth gazing down on the world they left behind."<sup>8</sup>

As Marx showed long ago, capitalism is not simply a mode of production and accumulation; it also involves flow and motion (Marx 1073: 186). Capital depends on the circulation of commodities, understood here as both labor power and the means of production and exchange (see Braudel 1982). The material life of cities is made up of people and things, of images and signs. After 1873, when silver was demonetized in Europe, gold became the foundation of the global economic system or, in any case, its primary means of exchange. The discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand in 1886 immediately triggered a gold rush, not unlike the ones in California in 1848 or Australia in 1851. Within a few years, what had been until then a small mining camp experienced a population explosion.

Migrants to Johannesburg came from all corners of the earth. They included Cornish "hard-rock men" and Australian miners, Scottish and American engineers, bankers, lawyers, adventurers, gamblers, schemers, criminals, and fortune hunters, journalists, sex workers, refugees, thousands of impoverished Eastern Europeans (including Polish and Russian Jews fleeing persecution), Frenchmen, Italians, and Greeks.<sup>9</sup> Many dreamed of fast and easy riches. Others simply wanted to escape lives made wretched by misery and debasement. They were joined by criminals, vagabonds, hustlers, musicians, and other marginal figures (van Onselen 1982). Whether rich or poor, many

had bought into an idealized lifestyle that surrendered unreservedly to the world of things—wealth, luxury, and display (Wheatcroft 1985).

Like other modern cities, Johannesburg was founded within the sphere of superfluity. Marx refers to superfluity in the context of a broader discussion on money and commodity value. For him, it is the particular usefulness of the commodity, whether as a particular object of consumption or as a direct instrument of production, that stamps it as money. But the opposite can also occur: a commodity "which has the least utility as an object of consumption or instrument of production" happens "to best serve the needs of *exchange as such*." Such is the case with precious metals. From the outset, says Marx, "they represent superfluity, the form in which wealth originates" (1973: 168–69).<sup>10</sup> But for Marx, superfluity also pertains to "the sphere of satisfactions and enjoyments," to the "world of gratifications" and "fleeting pleasures." As for money and wealth, they not only have sensuous qualities, they can also be seized and lost in the same manner. Wealth, in particular, does not appear only in material and tangible forms. For wealth to be realized, it has to be constantly thrown back into circulation. More important, it has to exist in the subject's head as "a pure fantasy" (Marx 1973: 204, 232–33).

In his study of capitalism and the structures of everyday life from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the French historian Fernand Braudel defines the sphere of superfluity as a complex area of daily life located beyond the sphere of poverty and necessity. He associates superfluity with luxury, rarity and vanity, futility and caprice, conspicuous spectacle, and even phantasm (Braudel 1981: chaps. 3 and 4). A mode of relation to objects, superfluity is manifested in domains as varied as the consumption of food and drink, houses and their interiors (types of furniture, floors, walls, ceilings, doors and windows, chimneys and fireplaces, furnaces and stoves), and costume and fashion.

In contrast to Braudel, Hannah Arendt (1966) invokes the notion of the superfluous to refer to situations of misery and destitution. She argues that many European immigrants who settled in South Africa were unemployed in the societies they came from. As such, they belonged not to an actual active army of labor but to a class of superfluous men. Once in Johannesburg, they formed a mass of human material ready for exploitation. Indeed, it was believed in the nineteenth century that only the conquest, settlement, and exploitation of overseas territories could permanently solve the problem of superfluity.

For Arendt, it is a remarkable paradox that, in South Africa, the purported solution to superfluity was initially a rush for the most superfluous raw

material on earth: gold (King 1867). Gold, Arendt wrote (1966: 188), hardly had "a place in human production" and was "of no importance compared with iron, coal, oil, and rubber"; instead, it was "the most ancient symbol of mere wealth." In its uselessness in industrial production, she concluded, "it bears an ironical resemblance to the superfluous money that financed the digging of gold and to the superfluous men who did the digging."

If the capital, technology, and expertise for mining came mostly from Riga, San Francisco, Hamburg, Kiev, or London, most of the "superfluous men who did the digging" were "migrant black workers without rights and with little choice but to sell their labor cheaply," Hermann Giliomee writes (2003, 323). They flocked to the Rand from as far away as Basutoland, Mozambique, and later on from Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and Zambia. Here, superfluity was not a matter simply of numbers or of surplus populations. In fact, if anything, there was never enough labor power at the beginning of the industrial revolution in South Africa. This is why, from the start, a dense nexus of overlapping and interweaving threads connected migrancy and modernity in South Africa (see Moodie 1994; Comaroff 1992: 155–80). Through the movement of bodies, superfluity came to be based on not only the prominence of money, credit, and speculation but also the obfuscation of any use value black labor might have had. Such obfuscation was itself a mode of rationality closely related to the circulation of capital. But contrary to most Marxist analyses (see Harvey 2001: 314), the circulation of capital is predicated not just on class relations but also on human investment in certain forms of racial delirium.

### Delirium and the Racial City

It is by now a commonplace to assert that the city of Johannesburg grew in connection with both the forces and relations of production. Less well understood is how relations of race and class determined each other in the production of the city. It can be argued that race here became, in and of itself, both a force of production and a relation of production. As such, race directly gave rise to the space Johannesburg would become, its peculiarities, contours, and form. Space became both a social and a racial relationship, one that was additionally inherent to the notion of property.

Race in South Africa first manifested itself as a peculiar investment in the cognitive framing of people, things, and relationships (their respective quali-

ties and the scales by which equivalences, differences, and incommensurability between them could be formally established). In the money economy of early Johannesburg, this peculiar investment took the form of a social utilitarianism applied to practical and mental forms. As a potential commodity form, black life was not only needed but also valued for its industrial utility. It could be sold and acquired through a multileveled market. But the specifics of the commodity form and the particulars of the market in which blacks circulated were predetermined by a logic of productive sacrifice that was the key underpinning of a racialized institution of private property. In the calculus of superfluity, racism was not only a way of maintaining biological differences among people, even as mining capitalism, migrant labor, and black urbanization established new connections between people and things. More fundamentally, racism's function was to institute a contradictory relation between the instrumentality of black life in the market sphere, on the one hand, and the constant depreciation of its value and its quality by the forces of commercialism and bigotry, on the other.<sup>11</sup> Here, superfluity was akin to the dissipation of value and its reorganization in the realm of the biopolitical. In a context in which native life had become the new frontier for capital accumulation, superfluity consisted in the vulnerability, debasement, and waste that the black body was subjected to and in the racist assumption that wasting black life was a necessary sacrifice—a sacrifice that could be deemed because it served as the foundation of civilization. In this sense, racism was a transactional practice with radical implications for the distribution of death—as raw black labor was acquired and intensively consumed.

The pattern of labor organization in the mines of the Witwatersrand had been experimented with, and it met with relative success in the diamond mines of Kimberley. Foundational to the capitalism that built Johannesburg was the belief that black labor pertained to the domains of both need and use. Native life, in turn, was both indispensable and expendable. Because native life was seen as excessive and naturally doomed to self-destruction, it constituted wealth that could be lavishly spent. Although many whites in South Africa were disinclined to undertake manual labor,<sup>12</sup> they were convinced that the natives were "indolent individuals whose habitual shyness of work made them a sort of naked leisure class," the historian C. W. De Kiewiet writes (1957: 83–85). As a consequence, "confiscation of land, discriminatory taxation, and all the means used to drive [them] into the labour market" were justified on moral grounds "because they struck at superstition and sloth."<sup>13</sup>

The search for profit required that the same population that labored be doomed to continual depredation, if not slow death. Many studies have established the high death rates from pneumonia, tuberculosis, and silicosis in the gold mines (Crush, Jeeves, and Yudelman 1991: 41–45; Packard 1989; Johnstone 1976). Beneath the surface of the city, a labor system based on a rigidly hierarchical racial division of labor had become entrenched. Sarah Gertrude Millin (1926: 80) describes hundreds of thousands of blacks who hammered “holes into the rock for dynamite charges, their black, naked torsos . . . glistening with sweat along corridors a mile, two miles long.” Vertical shafts “had to be driven into the ground to tap the reefs several hundreds of feet below the surface. That was but the beginning of shafts that would finally reach depths of a mile and more, and of underground workings with a combined length of thousands of miles.” As black miners reemerged from the “sarcophagus” with the whitish-gray mine dust (the silica) upon their clothes and faces, one could hear the damage of silicosis in their coughing and see its effects in frequent funerals (De Kiewiet 1957: 157). This is why, as artist Minnette Vári argues, Johannesburg is a metropolis “that pokes and thunders at the sky while its reason for being there is thoroughly subterranean.” The mine shaft evokes a sepulchral crevice, as “gleaning ore is taken from inside the earth and brought out, like a reverse interment” (Peffer 2003: 26). Built underneath the city is thus an original violence that was explicitly directed at what servile use had degraded and rendered profane (Bataille 1988: 55).

In this economy, race also manifested itself in the indeterminacy of the value and ontological status of both native life and black labor. Such indeterminacy resided in a kind of doubleness. Through the commodification of labor, the superfluity of black life could be manifested. But the same process also transformed the native into something more than the object he or she was, a thing that always seemed slightly human and a human being that always seemed slightly thinglike. The spectral power of racism in South Africa resided in the constant activation of this doubleness. For racism to acquire such power, profit and delirium had to be so closely connected as to constantly trigger the vertiginous capacity of the native to be both a thing and a metonym of something else.

This is why, far from being an accident, racism became a constitutive dimension of the city’s modernity. Race thinking became a weapon in a long civil war of which the Anglo-Boer moment was but an episode. It became a device whose aim was to create walls between people. As such, Johannesburg

was until very recently the physical embodiment of an apparently impossible nation. The geography of the city; its cardinal orientation; its planning, zoning, and codes; its infrastructure, streets, and utilities; and its residential patterns and distribution of wealth and income all told a larger story of conquest and the divisive power of race and capital. The settlers’ denial of a common origin or destiny between them and the natives resulted in the emergence of a dual nation and a dual city.

But race in South Africa should also be understood as a mirror, a constellation of imaginary identifications, emotions, feelings, and affects. Indeed, the existence of a void in the symbolic structure is the precondition for the racist drive to emerge—for any form of racism to operate at all.<sup>14</sup> It can be argued that the racial city was always a psychotic city or space of delirium. This delirium was of both a political and a psychic nature. And in both cases, it had a paranoid and schizophrenic dimension.<sup>15</sup> Because of this dual structure, delirium at times manifested itself through the production and overcoding of fears and fantasies, faked objects and images.

Thus, between 1890 and 1914, “periodic waves of collective sexual hysteria” swept Johannesburg, in which “white women, on an unprecedented scale, alleged that they had been sexually molested or assaulted by black men” (van Onselen 2001: 257). At other times, delirium was expressed in the form of a primal repression at once political and psychic.<sup>16</sup> According to Deborah Posel, the policing of sexuality manifested itself, among other ways, in the state’s prohibition of cross-racial sex, the stigmatization of miscegenation, the criminalization of homosexuality, and the banning of pornography (2005; see also Elder 2003). Indeed, in order to form docile white subjects and to ensure the reproduction of the racist social formation, political coercion demanded psychic and sexual repression.<sup>17</sup> The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Immorality Act Amendment Act (1950) “were two of the earliest apartheid measures designed to preserve the imagined racial purity of the White group,” A. J. Christopher writes (1994: 141). For this reason, the apartheid polity produced so many slumbering and schizophrenic subjects. Deeply marked by a tremendous fear of life and used to resorting to shortcuts, white South Africans developed an extraordinary capacity to live in a world of prearranged impasses and untenable lies.<sup>18</sup>

From a spatial point of view, the apartheid city—its ordering and its geographical layout—has often been defined in the same terms as any other colonial city, as a rigid, segregated place divided between a center (the white city) and peripheries and outskirts (the native locations) (see Fanon 1963:

37–40). Indeed, during the years of racial segregation, architecture and city planning were both the transcription of larger mechanisms of social and urban warfare. The apartheid transcription of race took various discursive forms, most insidiously the medicobiological. It borrowed its discourse from a materialist anatomophysiology and argued that blacks had a racial predisposition to disease. Concerns about the health of whites led to the passage of a series of health acts and the forced removal of thousands of blacks from the city (Packard 1989). Although race as such could not be pinned to a stable biological meaning, it was used as a weapon in the production of a city of barriers and asymmetric privileges.

Indeed, since the early history of South Africa, state racism's function had been the biological protection of the so-called white race. This protection translated into the physical form of the city and the management of "urban problems" as well as the various bioregulatory policies designed to manage white life and black life; that is, to optimize it or, conversely, expose it to risk, random events, and accidents (see Foucault 2003: 239–53). The racial state attempted to erase class conflict among whites by conflating white poverty with white purity. For the class struggle, it substituted a race struggle. In recasting the theme of racial confrontation as a struggle for existence and survival, the state entrenched racial privileges as customary rights for whites and as the foundation for the unequal distribution of wealth and the exercise of power (Gillomee 2003: 315–54, 447–86).

Johannesburg's architecture and city planning manifested an instrumental rationality that combined a pastoral urban imaginary for white citizens with a militarization of space for blacks. Early on, this pastoral imaginary took shape in the layout of the suburbs and in domestic architectural forms. Hundreds of cottages spread for miles across the empty veld; gardens were created, and trees were planted along avenues. The first of Johannesburg's millionaires built mansions, spacious single-story bungalows with wide Victorian verandas, plenty of decorative wood- and ironwork, turrets, and other embellishments. The experience of home was determined by the sensuous impact of the building materials and investment in visual surfaces. Among the most important signs of distinction and status were marble columns, mosaics, plate-glass windows, alabaster mantelpieces, painted ceilings, and other extravagances (Rosenthal 1970: 235–26). The use of faked material was widespread among the less wealthy and was aided by an emerging culture of masquerade and artifice, superficiality and hollowness. Plastering could be disguised as marble, brickwork as stone. More important, a separation

between the indoor world and the world outside, or between members of the family and domestic servants, became a defining aspect of white subjectivity in a racially divided city. In contemporary Johannesburg, this duality of inside and outside is visibly achieved by the walls that encircle and shield nearly every house or building.

As long as Johannesburg remained a racial city, this pastoral idea of the urban ensured that claims for a harmonious relation between the indoor world and the world outside formed the basis of white subjectivity. In the most extreme cases, a telluric bond and a sense of unity with the soil and the spirit of the people, fueled by a nostalgic pathos, were called upon to manifest the tragic character of the utopia of racial purity and segregation. Because it constructed dwelling as both seclusion and security, the pastoral imaginary of the racial city functioned as a way of assuaging white citizens' fears and instilling in them a morality of social conformity in exchange for racial privileges. But the dualism between inside and outside also served as a basis to reject the racial other, and indeed to legitimize a separation from the world. Urban rationality and planning sought to avoid, as much as possible, overlays or collisions. Thus, to a large extent, the apartheid city was a city of boundaries and contrasts. The role of architecture and planning was to trace partitions within well-defined spaces with clear protective boundaries so as to avoid the disruptive effects—real or potential—of race mixing.

In particular, the apartheid state attempted to establish a relationship between spatial patterns and the moral order. The physical distances that separated the races were largely understood to consecrate moral ones. Much like class relations in Paris, as David Harvey (2003: 40) has argued, race came to be inscribed in the space of the South African city (or, for that matter, on the farm) "in such a way as to make the spatial pattern both a reflection of and an active moment in the reproduction of the moral order." In the process, the arts of city building and of inhabiting the city became synonymous with the creation of an illusory harmony and purity based on the fiction of racial distance. This led to the emergence of diverse urban worlds within the same territory—strange mappings and blank figures, discontinuous fixtures and flows, and odd juxtapositions that one can still observe in the present-day South African urban landscape.

Nevertheless, the apartheid city—and Johannesburg in particular—was tubular in the sense developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987: 93–94): a space made up of leakages, of several lines of flight that not only coexisted but intermingled, that transformed and crossed over into one

another. To be sure, this was not akin to endless multiplication or proliferation: each fragment of the city interlocked with others in a space that was always undermined by fissures and cracks (see Rogerson 1989). The apartheid state constantly tried to plug these lines of flight by fomenting a micropolitics of insecurity while inflating the discourse of separateness.<sup>19</sup>

### Disjunctive Inclusions

In spite of its appearance of fixity, Johannesburg was never a totally foreclosed city even at the height of apartheid. The city was constantly marked by a dialectics of distance, proximity, and reciprocal dependencies among the different races. But each element of this dialectic contributed in its own way toward shaping a structured racial inequality. The most obvious figure of this is the domestic worker and, in particular, the “black nannies” of the suburbs, whom Rory Bester (2001: 222) describes as “toiling alone inside white homes, and occasionally meeting on the pavements outside.” Commenting on Ernest Cole’s book of photographs of life under apartheid, *House of Bondage* (1967), Bester points to this enigmatic figure of South African urban modernity on the back of whom so many white children grew up and whose “routine duties involved a daily round of cleaning, sweeping, polishing, tidying and dusting,” making beds, and “serving the family at meal times.”<sup>20</sup> The Group Areas Act of 1950 had made it illegal for black workers to live under the same roof as their white employers. “Hence the development of outbuildings—or ‘maid’s rooms’—for black domestic workers, rooms often just big enough for a bed and a toilet,” Bester writes. In this, one can see how a logic of servility or reciprocal dependency interrupts the coded intervals of the apartheid city while opening up a space for combined processes of re-stratification and involution, proximity and distance.

But the black nanny was not the only living metaphor of the inextricable relationships between blacks and whites. So was the migrant worker. As De Kiewiet has noted (1957: 179), segregation never entailed a real separation between two distinct communities. The prejudices that race and color engendered always hid a close weaving between black and white. Having been deprived of free access to water and land, the natives were left with one thing to sell: their labor. Indeed, since the earliest phase of white settlement in South Africa, the confiscation of land had gone hand in hand with the annexation of labor, discriminatory taxation, and the quasi-extinction of native

property. “Driven by destitution from their own land to seek a livelihood, the natives entered a European society that was itself economically backward and too poor and unproductive to turn their labour to profitable account.” But “by the time diamonds were picked up and the first gold was discovered, black and white were far on the way to a new society in which both elements were joined indissolubly to one another in the closest economic relationships” (84–87).

In the apartheid city, racial segments interacted with one another in a number of different ways. Moreover, there was always a social shadow that escaped the apartheid binary imaginary and its attempts at totalization. Writing about black urbanization and the squatter communities in the mid-1980s, Lawrence Schlemmer (1985: 168) observed that “the well-ordered pattern [of apartheid planning] has more and more been broken, openly and manifestly, by a very visible informal phenomenon—the growth of massive squatter and shack settlements on the edge of some industrial complexes. The formal system of planned residence and controlled movement has been breached for all to see. . . . There are people building homes and developing communities outside the ‘compound’ gates, as it were.” Illegal residence and work in the city were only part of an array of tactics that included pass law evasions, squatter struggles, various forms of boycott, and campaigns of defiance and civil disobedience (see Boraine 1989).

This pattern of disjunctive inclusion can be explained by three factors. First, the apartheid state apparatus operated as a machine that was both territorial and deterritorializing. A network of exclusive connections and disjunctive inclusions, it superposed and juxtaposed a geographic organization and the organization of *gens* inherited from the frontier wars period (Elphick and Giliomee 1979). By the end of the nineteenth century, “some territories had been entirely annexed; some were partly dependent, and others were entirely independent”; “tribal tenure and private ownership existed side by side with squatting and utter landlessness,” while the dispersive forces of local conflicts and settlers’ pressure caused ethnic groups to splinter or become embedded in larger ones (De Kiewiet 1965: 149). In continuity with earlier colonial policies, the apartheid state established—both among people and between territories and people—relations that were at once conjunctive and segregative. Although firmly welded to the law, segregation was only one of the apartheid state’s many modes of deployment. In the cities (especially in the case of domestic servants), in the mines, and in the rural towns and farms, other interracial modalities bordered on intimacy and



paternalism—which is not to imply that they were less extractive or coercive. Despite or due to the conscious desire and labor of separating, prescribing, and prohibiting, the daily microphysics of racism came to be made up of multiple forms of transgression and codependency, especially in areas where black or servile labor was needed. Because of the logic of segmentarity and overlapping divisions, *crossing* boundaries, transgressing them, or eluding them became the main modality of action for blacks in the city.

Second is the fact, mentioned above, that the apartheid state apparatus also operated as a deterritorializing machine. Cities came to play a critical role in this process as theaters of cruelty and desire. Deterritorialization involved the appropriation of land, the disassembling of older territorial lineages, the formation of neoterritories and artificial enclaves (“reserves,” “homelands,” and Bantustans), and their overcoding and progressive transformation into fragments and scattered partial forms hanging on to the state’s body (see Horrell 1973). To a great extent, the formation of the racial city of apartheid was inseparable from the institutionalization and demise of the “reserves,” those semiautonomous territories that, beginning in the early twentieth century, served to regulate the flow of migrant labor and to minimize urban welfare spending (Legassick 1974; Wolpe 1972). According to Gilhoo (1985: 39–42), the reserves retained their role in the reproduction of labor even after their political functions changed. Indeed, the reserves not only served as an exclusive home base for migrant laborers, they also justified the exclusion of blacks from holding or leasing farmland in the white rural areas. Even more important, they underpinned the “policy of possessory segregation” and therefore embodied black disenfranchisement and the denial of black claims to citizenship in South Africa (Bester 2001: 219).

In many ways, the development of the reserves was akin to a reshaping of the very nature of sovereignty. The latter was partitioned according to supposed differences among black ethnic groups despite their interconnections. Under the apartheid calculus, territorial fragmentation meant to determine separate freedoms and separate citizenships depending on whether one was black or white and, above all, to express ethnocratic forms of sovereignty.

Third, as both a territorial and a deterritorializing machine, the apartheid system privileged graphism as a mode of operation. Graphism consisted foremost in tracing marks on the body and on the territory. It also entailed various acts of coding and inscription and, above all, legislative efforts to define the various races and enforce the separate use, occupation, and ownership of critical resources (Posel 1991, 1992). It was enacted through small gestures of

everyday life, such as the public contexts of walking or, more generally, pass laws (Pirie 1992; van Niekerk 1989). As we have seen, territorial segmentation was a key form of the state’s inscription of power onto the landscape. But the main site of this inscription was the black body itself. It could be searched every day at the end of the shift in the mines. It could be stripped naked, required to jump over bars. Hair, nose, mouth, ears, or rectum could be scrutinized with meticulous care. Floggings with a *sjambok* (leather whip) or tent rope, or striking with fists, were the rule (Simons and Simons 1983: 42; Worger 1987: 112). In order to memorialize themselves, public and private powers traced their signs on the naked flesh of the black body. They belabored it and laid it bare through various techniques: tattooing, excising, incising, carving, scarifying, mutilating, or encircling (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 144). This is how labor capacity was distributed; different moments of the social reproduction process isolated and singularized; torture, punishment, and death inscribed; and debts created through harm, injury, and pain.

Despite all this, one must not lose sight of the incompleteness of apartheid rule and its attempts at colonizing the city. Johannesburg, for many blacks who migrated there, offered a sense of cultural release, a partial state of freedom, inebriation, and ease. The potential for freedom rested as much on the sensory flow of urban experience as on the contingency and unpredictability of everyday life.<sup>21</sup> Order and disruption went on at the same time. Political resistance in response to regimentation and coercion paved the way for a powerful narrative of freedom (see Mandela 1995; Sisulu 2002). Black people reframed, juxtaposed, misled, and worked against concretions of power. Confronted with the cruelties of a bare world, they also colluded with these cruelties in myriad ways. In the process, they exposed the contingency of apartheid and the structural instability of its narrative authority. This is how Johannesburg became a heteroglot city. The making and remaking of its forms gave the city a fugitive quality. More than any other figure, the black migrant worker epitomized this experience of transience and juxtaposition, displacement and precariousness. The flux of urban circumstances and an experience of time as provisional became the hallmarks of the migrant worker’s urban sensibility; nervous discomfort and improvisation became essential elements of a tactical repertoire.

The biopolitics of the mine compound and township life was in direct continuity with the earlier politics of land dispossession codified in the 1913 and the 1936 land acts. These and other laws were aimed at driving noncitizens

(i.e., blacks) out of sight, relegating them to the forgotten subterrains of the outer city—the townships. They were enforced through a combination of brute force, dispossession, and expropriation, and the imposition of negative laws and sanctions. The rights of blacks to live in the city were constantly under threat, if not denied in full, which is why most social struggles of the post-apartheid era can be read as attempts to reconquer the right to be urban (Posel 1991: 61–180, 203–26). These new struggles have taken several forms, ranging from squatting to dreams of upward mobility via the new black middle class.

The racial state in South Africa combined two technologies of power. In relation to blacks, both the techniques of power and profit were, ever since the founding of Johannesburg, centered on the body: the individual body of the migrant worker and the racial body of the populace. These bodies were serialized and subjected to various forms of spatial distribution and apparatuses of capture. The township, the hostels, the mine compound, and the jail were prominent regulatory institutions that shaped the lives of black workers in the city. They were part of the urban form yet separate from it. Parallel formations, they constantly intertwined with the city, embedding themselves in the heterogeneous regime of signs that the apartheid city was. They were sites, floating spots where “inhumanity” could be immediately experienced in the body as such. Around them, was instituted a field of visibility and surveillance, hierarchies and inspections.

The site par excellence of this anatomopolitics of the black body was the mine compound. Jack Simons and Ray Simons (1983: 42) describe this debasing form of working-class housing.

The compound was an enclosure surrounded by a high corrugated iron fence and covered by wire-netting. The men lived, twenty to a room, in huts or iron cabins built against the fence. They went to work along a tunnel, bought food and clothing from the company's stores, and received free medical treatment but no wages during sickness, all within the compound. Men due for discharge were confined in detention rooms for several days, during which they wore only blankets and fingerless leather gloves padlocked to their wrists, swallowed purgatives, and were examined for stones concealed in cuts, wounds, swellings and orifices.

To a large extent, this constituted a space of exception in which a supposed labor contract was converted into a period of imprisonment with hard labor (see Gordon 1977).

One of the main characteristics of township life under racial dominion was its close articulations with biopower. Michel Foucault (2003: 256) has argued that biopower is, to a large extent, power's hold over the right to preserve life and administer death. He also showed how modern societies that function through biopower can justify the killing of populations only through appeals to race or racism, that very “precondition that makes killing acceptable.” By “killing,” Foucault meant not simply “murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on.”

In South Africa, the rights to kill, to let survive, and to let die were exercised in a paradoxical context. On the one hand, South Africa differed from the United States and Australia in that the dance of race and death did not lead to the native population's decimation. Indeed, this could not be allowed to happen since native labor was needed as raw material to keep whites alive. According to Arendt (1966: 193–94), citing De Kiewiet, it was “this absolute dependence on the work of others and complete contempt for labor and productivity in any form that transformed the Dutchman into the Boer and gave his concept of race a distinctly economic meaning.” The Boers, she adds, “were the first European group to become completely alienated from the pride which Western man felt in living in a world created and fabricated by himself. They treated the natives as raw material and lived on them as one might live on the fruits of wild trees.”

On the other hand, in order to kill or to let live, the apartheid state used different devices and technologies at different times. To use Foucault's terms, the apartheid city became one of the sites through which the state ensured the spatial distribution of black bodies and the organization, around those bodies, of a regime of visibility. The techniques used to control these bodies were precisely those that Foucault identified in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Their aim was to increase the productive force of black labor in the least costly way possible; a “whole system of surveillance, hierarchies, inspections, bookkeeping” was established, at the center of which were the pass laws (Foucault 2003: 117). Other techniques were directly related to those aspects of social engineering that dealt with epidemics (like tuberculosis) and the possibility of frequent death (see Packard 1989). The end of apartheid raises anew the question of how to inhabit the city. For blacks, especially, making oneself at home in the city takes on a peculiar

urgency, if only because it has been the dominant site of their exclusion from modernity.

### The Waste of Affluence

Contemporary Johannesburg is undergoing a massive spatial restructuring not unlike the one that occurred under apartheid. In the central business district, blocks of dilapidated and worn-out structures are competing with government-sponsored building projects. Elsewhere, growth is fueled by private capital for middle- and upper-income residents, insurance companies, banks, and corporations. The new urban spatial restructuring is driven as much by city planning authorities as by private developers, real estate capital, architects, and designers. More than ever before in its history, Johannesburg's city space is a product that is marked, measured, marketed, and transacted. It is a commodity. As such, its representational form has become ever more stylized.

This process is not unique to South Africa. During the last half of the twentieth century, there was a global homogenization of urban space. Nowadays, Christine Boyer writes (2001: 408), "every traveler knows that airports, highway systems, downtown skyscraper centers, and suburban sprawl look the same the world around. At the local level, however, space is fragmented into separate districts of work, leisure, and living; hierarchicalized with respect to property values, revitalized and restructured with the movements of capital." Post-apartheid Johannesburg has become the regional headquarters of international banks and transnational corporations and a major site of concentration for accounting, legal, and information services. The cityscape is dominated by office developments and shopping emporiums, convention and entertainment centers, and hotels. White-collar and service employment are expanding, as are residential areas for the middle class and the wealthy elite. These developments are concomitant with the emergence of media and high-technology centers and new theaters of consumption in which space and images are both figural forms and aestheticized commodities. In what follows, I briefly describe two examples of these new public theaters of late capitalism: Melrose Arch and Montecasino.

Set in the leafy suburbs of northern Johannesburg, Melrose Arch is a private development by the Sentinel Mining Industry Retirement Fund (formerly known as the Mineworkers' Pension Fund). It is an eighteen-hectare office, re-

tail, residential, and recreational complex located just off the M1 highway, near the megamalls of Sandton and Rosebank. The precinct resembles a miniature European city, with buildings arranged around paved piazzas. Motor traffic runs along an interconnected system of one street (High Street), one drive (Crescent Drive), and one boulevard (Melrose Boulevard), while pedestrian walkways connect its shops, restaurants, apartments, a gym and hotel, open streets, benches, and safe, covered parking. The complex is an incorporated municipality. It has its own utilities, its own police system, refuse removal, and security. It also has its own postal code and telephone exchange.

Melrose Arch is sold to residents and visitors not as a theater of consumption but as a social environment, a "community," and a place where people come together to eat, dance, listen to music, enjoy a good conversation, drink coffee, interact, and be entertained. The Melrose Arch Hotel describes itself as a destination for those who take pleasure in modern elegance and sophistication.<sup>22</sup> The complex aims at pleasing the senses, especially the eye and the tongue. But it is also a place for shopping. Its retail offerings include a pharmacy, an optician, a dry cleaner, a supermarket, postal services, a stationer, medical services, banks, office supply stores, gift shops, fashion boutiques, a music store, an art gallery, and a nightclub.

Much has been invested in the surfaces of Melrose Arch, including the streets and sidewalks. Tuscan paving stones were chosen for the road surfacing, and Port Shepstone stones were used to accentuate the design and colors of the buildings while maintaining an old-world, handcrafted feel. The detail and combination of colors and textures is visually impressive. Commercial and community pavings are combined. The paving links and complements the design of the buildings as well as the village-like atmosphere of the precinct as a whole.

Another kind of surface can be found in the names of restaurants and cafés: Europa, FooMoon, Giovanni's, Moyo, Latchi Fisherman's Village, the Meat Co. These and other restaurants are clustered together and spill out onto Melrose Square and along the high street pavements. The configuration was designed to create social density and interaction. The restaurants themselves offer varied menus drawn from what are described as cosmopolitan and exotic cuisines: Californian, Cape, French, Mediterranean, African, Asian, and European.<sup>23</sup> In spite of their diversity, all these cuisines are said to produce a titillating taste that is uniquely from Johannesburg.

Take, then, the design of the nightclub, Kilimanjaro. One enters the nightclub on a red carpet that sweeps up to an enormous, hand-carved wooden

door. Visitors must be suitably dressed to gain admittance. From the entrance, one can glimpse a double-level, wire-mesh “hut” and the circular, wooden staircase around it that leads to the restaurant, bars, and lounge upstairs. The interior of the nightclub is made of carved wood, glass, and rough plaster. According to the club’s promotional materials, its interior texture aims to excite a wide range of tactile sensations. Pulses of multihued light are an integral part of the decor. Off to one side of the dance floor, a huge sheet of frosted glass functions as a video projection screen or a translucent wall.

In the Melrose Arch Hotel, lighting is also used to dramatic effect. Underlit floors, oversized lampshades with cable chandeliers, a wide variety of wall and ceiling fixtures, and natural light flooding through skylights are the norm. One enters the hotel through Zanzibar doors. Steel buckets were built on the pool deck. Planted with ficus trees, they frame a pool with a shallow area in which tables and chairs have been placed. Underwater music and water that changes from yellow to red to purple complete the decor.

Another such urban development is Montecasino, a monumental (thirty-eight hectares) upmarket complex combining a casino, a hotel, and a shopping mall. The venture is owned by Tsogo Sun in partnership with the U.S. gaming giant MGM Grand.<sup>24</sup> The Montecasino complex has been designed to look like a Tuscan village and was named after Monte Cassino, the famous Benedictine monastery destroyed by Allied bombs in World War II. The complex is located in Fourways, between shopping malls to the south and a squatter camp to the north. It has an expanse of 8,500 square meters, 2,300 square meters of which are given to “shoppertainment.” The vast gambling floor is studded with forty artificial trees (some of them eight meters high) and boasts 2,300 slot machines and table games (J. Thomas 2000b). Its exterior resembles a large, tumbledown slum. *Business Day* reports, “To replicate the effects of weathering on a real Tuscan village, designers . . . did intensive colour studies and tested various methods of layering the building materials for floors and walls. Each stone was hand-carved to match the scale of the façade. The painting and plastering techniques were perfected in a large mock-up building on site before contractors began work in the casino” (J. Thomas 2000a).

“Entering the casino complex is rather like visiting a European necropolis during the height of the tourist season,” writes David Le Page in the *Economist*. “Washing hangs from lines between the buildings, paralyzed cocks leer from the roofs, ducks are poised in the middle of a stream, the old bicycle, motorcycle and battered Fiat are all there. But you know they will never

again be used. The village appears lifelike, but the proper inhabitants are not there. . . . The village streets are lined with authentic metal and plastic bushes and trees, which also serve as convenient concealment for surveillance equipment. . . . Then, in an effort to renew the illusion of an Italian village, the ceilings have been painted to resemble sky by day, by dusk and by night” (Le Page 2001).

Like other casinos in South Africa, the mark of the entire complex is fakery: fake pigeons perch on fake parapets; phony ducks frolic in pseudostreams. Security guards are dressed in wine-colored Italian police uniforms. Beneath the faked Tuscan sky, slot machines flash, honk, and chatter.<sup>25</sup> Inside the development, an enclosed village has been created comprising various neighborhoods. These range from an elite uptown to a fishing village with fountains, piazzas, and cobbled streets. Pavement eateries and buildings apparently aged and weathered complete the panorama. Although one has the impression of being in a village exposed to the elements, the entire complex—including two-and-a-half kilometers of cobbled or paved walkways—is covered by a massive roof.

What is particularly striking about Melrose Arch and Montecasino is their incorporation of technology. Melrose Arch is surrounded by a fiber-optic ring that offers high-speed access to the Internet. Buildings, basements, and public spaces have been specially designed for high-quality cellular reception. This technological sophistication extends to security. When its three-part security system rollout is completed, Melrose Arch will be protected by a total of 1,000 cameras, of which there will be 29 Digital Sprite multiplexers, 240 cameras, and 15 high-speed domes, two 224 input matrixes, five workstations, and a supervisor station. Cameras are installed in the superbase-ment that spans the entire site as well as along the streets, intersections, and walkways. Digital multiplex recorders ensure that remote viewing is possible, with simultaneous hard-disk recording and playback.<sup>26</sup> Montecasino has a security force of over three hundred personnel. Two reaction vehicles monitor the complex and its surroundings, and regular police vehicles patrol the area. A site is allocated to the police within the premises, and the complex subsidizes a wide range of police equipment. Access to the casino is controlled and guarded twenty-four hours a day.

The increased visibility characteristic of places such as Melrose Arch and Montecasino describes at least two parallel and competing trajectories that have been inscribed in Johannesburg since its origins. One was the development of the city as a spatially bounded entity with a recognizable center

and public and shared spaces (streets, squares, parks, cafés, libraries, galleries, leisure and recreational facilities), its boundaries demarcated through planning, architectural rules, transport and communication networks, and specific art forms. This vision of the urban presupposed a political city (polis) with a distinct spatial and social division of labor and the constitution of a civic sphere through cultural institutions and societies (including literary, art and music societies, libraries, theaters, newsrooms, social clubs, learned societies and other charitable and philanthropic bodies). Yet because of formal segregation, the political city in Johannesburg became the racial city. To a large extent, race defeated the triumph of the idea of the city as a site of free movement and free association. It affected everything, including the domains of taste, language, sensibility, and image. By hindering the cultivation of learning, racism precluded the development of a civilized urban society and the emergence of a polished urban culture and sociability (cf. Stobart 2002). Instead of growing hand in hand, commerce and culture (the creative and refined activities of the mind) grew apart.

This second trajectory was a metropolitanism always embedded in and enframing the “racial city” of the apartheid era. The end of legalized segregation has made it possible for Johannesburg to reconnect with this part of its historical identity as an urban form that served the needs of capital and, in the process, became the synthesis of individuality and freedom. There was always a tension between the apparent fixity of race and the potential unfixing of the commodity form, even after race itself became a commodity. Georg Simmel characterized the metropolis as the seat of money economy, as well as a site of concentration of purchasable things. This concentration is said to stimulate the individual to the highest degree of nervous energy. Because a money economy is concerned only with the exchange value that reduces “all quality and individuals to a purely quantitative level,” life in the metropolis is necessarily dominated by “rationally calculated economic egoism.” It is characterized by a “purely matter-of-fact attitude” in the treatment of people and things—an attitude in which “formal justice is often combined with an unrelenting hardness.” This matter-of-factness goes hand in hand with what Simmel (1971: 326–27) calls the *blasé* attitude: an indifference toward the distinctions between things that results from overstimulation and enervation.

But above the calculating exactness of practical life and the quantification of the world, one of the distinctive features of late modern metropolitan life forms is superfluity. Here, superfluity is not merely extravagance, caprice,

and eccentricity, the collapse of the distinction between meaning and form. It is the superfluity of weighing, calculating, and enumerating, of converting quantities into qualities and vice versa. Superfluity is also a mode of psychic experience in which the distinctions between things, and thus things themselves, become meaningless. Since things have neither singularity nor originality except through their quantification and their equation with money, their core can be hollowed out, their peculiarities erased, and their uniqueness decolorated. As a result, the ultimate form of superfluity is the one that derives from the transitoriness of things, their floating “with the same specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money” (Simmel 1971: 330).

In this sense, places such as Montecasino or Melrose Arch are doubly significant. First, they act as witnesses to the fractured urban space inherited from the apartheid era. With the end of legally sanctioned segregation, Johannesburg is nowadays a metropolis increasingly forced to construct itself out of heterogeneous fragments and fortuitous juxtapositions of images, memories, citations, and allusions drawn from its splintered histories. Some of its fragments seem to recall the postcolonial city form in Africa. The latter is characterized not so much by decay as by the coexistence of divergent elements of different origins brought together in a space whose limits are constantly made and remade. Life, here, is lived under volatile conditions. Small shifts, recombinations of elements from different registers, coalesce to produce a skill of improvisation and qualities of flexibility and resilience (Guyer 2004: 114).

It is possible to observe such developments in present-day central Johannesburg or in Hillbrow. For the most part, the white population has abandoned these areas, leaving behind an infrastructure now occupied, inhabited, or used by blacks in ways sometimes radically different from its original purposes.<sup>27</sup> New forms of spatial imagination are emerging behind the mask of modern architectural forms and apartheid urban planning. Either the space inherited from the apartheid city is drawn out and stretched, or the links of each part of the city with what used to be the whole are interrupted or saturated (see Morris 1999). In the process, Johannesburg loses its original contours; it is reduced to an empty set, or, paradoxically, gains depth. By forcing the city to open up, this process of deframing and enframing has set different repertoires of spatial imaginations and practices into collision.

It is not simply the meaning of buildings or streets that is changing. Contemporary downtown Johannesburg visually resembles other African cities in the aftermath of decolonization: a matrix of plural styles, a striated,

striped city that concatenates the most formal and modern with the most informal. In some instances, these breaks signal the force of an obstacle. In other instances, they prefigure the power of a new impulse—a new intensity. In still others, inherited elements of the city are destroyed to make way for the creation of the new. All these instances belie any notion of the city as a symbolic totality. The appropriation of its different styles is not necessarily optical—as shown, for example, by the ease with which old buildings may be left to ruin as silent witnesses to the past. Mostly, the appropriation of the city space is tactile, allegorical, and onomatopoeic. Behind its disorderly convulsions and apparent formlessness, there is a recognition that the metropolis is fundamentally fragmented and kaleidoscopic—not as an art form but as a compositional process that is theatrical and marked by polyphonic dissonances.

On the other hand, Melrose Arch or Montecasino can be defined as synthetic spacetimes, constructed tableaux on which disparate images are grafted. As such, they are an integral part of the process through which late modernity and the globalization of capitalism have transformed human perception. The modes by which these spacetimes or tableaux are seen and inhabited cannot easily be subsumed under the commonplace triptych of manipulation-alienation—mass deception. It is now generally recognized that goods offer themselves as artworks not just for sale but also for use in people's fantasies and in the production of lifestyles. So, too, is the fact that late modern capitalism has effectively brought about a proletarianization of commodity desire as well as a stylization of consumption (Ward 2001: 193–98). Commodity aesthetics might still be construed as a fake system of representation. And to a large extent, South African casinos epitomize precisely the “calico world” Siegfried Kracauer (1995) spoke about: copies and distortions ripped out of time and jumbled together in a dramatic geographical and temporal arbitrariness. But this still does not “address the mystery of consumer desire” Bill Brown describes (2003: 29), “without which capitalism (in any of its stages) cannot be sustained,” nor does it tell us how commodity relations have come to saturate everyday life even for the poorest of the poor (see Farrell 2003). It is not simply that things are objects of consumption. It is also that they organize desires and provoke fantasies. Their spectral power (the capacity to be owned and to possess) derives from more than their evanescence and lubricity.

These spacetimes exist first and foremost as interfaces of other local and faraway places. Their architectural styles are based on the recombination of

borrowed imagery and, in the worst cases, of outright “urban junk.” They are marketed by private developers and property owners in contrast to an unraveling, chaotic city center besieged by swarming and inchoate crowds, incessant shouting and peddling, and a failure to contain disease, crime, and pestilence. Allusion plays a critical role in this architecture. “Exotic” local and faraway styles are theatrically restaged in simulated environments, where they contribute to the paradoxical reconciliation of place and ephemerality. I have shown how Montecasino tries to recapture the quiet life of a rustic Tuscan village, creating scenographic visions that rely on an art of verisimilitude. Take, elsewhere in South Africa, the ethnokitsch of Sun City and Lost City in the North West province. Sun City is publicized as an excursion into a “lost African empire,” complete with lush jungles, a volcano, and a majestic palace. The gaming areas are filled with large leaves adorning the roof and weathered stone walls. A similar theme runs through the Morula Sun outside Pretoria, where, as *IOL* describes it, “the architecture lends itself to the style of a traditional Tswana village with conically topped roofs, reed ceilings and colours reminiscent of those found in African beadwork” (Eksteen 2000).

These places also act as visual displays of the logic of the commodity. As scenographic segments of Johannesburg, Melrose Arch and Montecasino manifest the spectacle of capital in the same way the gold mine did in the early twentieth century: in its purest form. In each of these two instances, in the words of Boyer (2001: 63), “a whole complex of looking is held in place by the force of pure entertainment, by the very act of showing, which keeps the gaze focused on surface appearances and constructed sets of images.” Thus the importance accorded to sensuous colors and tactile building materials. For instance, the façade of Melrose Arch is a planar wall assembly of glass plates twenty meters high by ten meters wide. It is supported with pretensioned stainless steel trusses and wind girders. The complex is designed to turn the urban street inward and so internalize its own set of public spaces and services within privatized layers of shops, restaurants, offices, and condominiums. By saturating its public, social, and cultural spheres with the commodity and by asserting its identity as a city of consumption mindful of the status of the ornament, the arts of commercial entertainment, and imaginary travel, Johannesburg has become a metropolis.

What does this apparently endless play of citations and allusions have to say about the memory of the racial city? It can be argued that these new spaces are setting up new boundaries and distances increasingly based on

class rather than race. A political-economic reading of such spaces would suggest that private and commercial interests are reducing the nascent democratic public sphere to an arena “where private interests compete and consumer choices are displayed” but where neither critical debate nor critical reasoning takes place (Boyer 2001: 417). It could further be argued that post-apartheid commercial architecture constitutes a mode of erasure all the more dramatic because it is accomplished with painstaking care against the duties to memory ritualized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But what mode of effacement is this? What is the mark of the past in these architectural forms?

In the South African context, surfaces such as Montecasino and, to a lesser extent, Melrose Arch represent new genres of writing time. But this new inscription of time is paradoxical. For it to be possible at all, the built form has to be construed as an empty placeholder for meanings that have been eroded by time rather than remembered by it. That is why they are largely the manifestation of the failure of the racial city to assimilate the passage of time. While bearing witness to a demand that the past be forgotten, this architecture asks the spectator to forget that it is itself a sign of forgetting. But in so doing, it reiterates the pathological structure and hysteria inherited from the racial city. This is an architecture of hysteria.

Hysteria, as we know, is a form of suffering. As Elissa Marder (2001: 117–22) argues, hysterics suffer mainly from “reminiscences,” repressed memories that fail to be integrated into the psyche. In the process, they develop a form of *regressive forgetting*, itself an attempt to ward off the movement of time. In this sense, hysteria partakes of a backward movement through time. The architecture of hysteria in contemporary South Africa is the result of a painful, shocking encounter with a radical alterity set loose by the collapse of the racial city. Faced with the sudden estrangement from the familiar resulting from the collapse of the racial city, this architecture aims to return to the “archaic” as a way of freezing rapid changes in the temporal and political structures of the surrounding world. It is an architecture characterized by the attachment to a lost object that used to provide comfort. A magic mirror and a specular moment, it allows the white subject to hallucinate the presence of what has been irretrievably lost. This is why it is also an architecture of conjuration. In the new metropolitan psychic and aesthetic economy, the attempt to maintain oneself in “the cocoon of familiar comforts” goes hand in hand with new and reckless models of pleasure: the ultimate intoxication the bacchanal dance of consumption has become (Von Mücke 2003: 91).

But if the hallucination has its origins in a form of white nostalgia, this is not without its own ironies. Many of those who frequent Montecasino or inhabit it as consumers are white people who have never been to Europe or members of a large black middle and lower-middle class. Spaces such as these are without doubt interracial spaces.

From this perspective, the architecture of hysteria is a constitutive but unconscious aspect of the psychic life of the racial city that resists change and challenges time itself by producing a set of fantasies. As Hubert Damisch notes (2001: 18), “The unconscious can easily accommodate the survival of archaic formations beside others that have supplanted them, even on the same site.”<sup>28</sup> It bears witness to an irretrievable loss—the loss of the racial city. This is a case of traumatic amnesia and not of forgetting, of the disavowal of time as opposed to memorialization: an active screen between the subject and the external world that filters out unwanted realities. This is not to imply that there is no mark of the past in these stories masquerading as objects. But the mark of the past here is only a trace, not a literal recollection. At times, it takes the form of borrowed elements graphed onto another context. At other times, it is but a condensation point where various “incompatible images collide and coalesce.” Indeed, for Christine Boyer (2001: 373–74), this can be explained by the fact that the present is indeterminate and undecidable: “No metaphors of origins or belief in past covenants guide the present and no subject controls the future or determines the meaning of the past” in an uncontested way. Displacement is the norm. We “pass from one image to another, shifting focus and meaning, for the very definition of place is composed of fragmented strata and moving layers.”

Despite all appearances to the contrary, the fabric of the racial city is in the process of being destroyed. Only its vestiges and debris remain. Blacks and whites have become wanderers among its ruins. But the play of intervals enables everyone to construct his or her own story of Johannesburg and form memories of place. This is an experience of fragmentation and of permutations that may never achieve coherence. The rupture between the racist past and the metropolitan present, between here and there and between memories of things and events, renders possible the production of new figurative forms and calls into play a chain of substitutions. Johannesburg becomes the city of deconstructed images. “We are no longer offered a synthetic order that we can readily grasp, nor a reconstruction of a history we can collectively assume. Our sense of an urban totality has been fractured”—hence the juxtaposition of different images, memories of a past rejected or fantasized

(Boyer 2001: 374). Specific historical objects are ripped out of their contexts even as the state busily tries to memorialize and museumize, to build new monuments and historic landscapes that are supposed to bring together the different fragments of the nation.

## Conclusion

If there is anything the history of the metropolitan form in Africa brings to the critique of modern urbanism, it is that the metropolis is neither a finite nor a static form. In fact, it is almost always a site of excess, of hysteria and exclusions. The metropolis, just like the modern city, reveals itself first and foremost through its discontinuities, its provisionality and fugitiveness, its superfluosity. Particularly in Africa, the blurring of the distinctions between what is public and what is private, the transformation and deformation of inherited urban shapes, is one of the ways by which urban citizens generate meaning and memory. To reveal the unconscious of a city, we need to track the visible marks of the passage of time and the various lines of flight that symbolize the culture of a place.

But as Johannesburg demonstrates, the unconscious of a city is made up of different layers of historical time superimposed on one another, different architectural strata or residues from earlier times. In times of transition, these layers and strata become elusive and precarious. Architecture and urban design then tend to become acts of repression, separation, and fantasy. Frequently these fantasies concern the mesmeric power of race and its relation to the surreal supplement represented by the world of things. This study has argued that the aesthetic phenomenality of things resides not so much in their surfaces but in their substitutability and in the various ways they come to life. In an age when desire is inculcated even in those who have nothing to buy, the metropolis becomes the place where the superfluity of objects is converted into a value in and of itself.

## Notes

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1 See Simmel 1971. For a critique, read Cacciari 1993.

2 This is not a peculiarly South African condition. Commenting on the connections between recollection and loss and what she calls the "archeology of metropolis" and "local cosmopolitanism" in Prague, St. Petersburg, and Moscow, Svetlana Boyrn writes (2001: 75–77), "The urban renewal taking place in the present is no longer futuristic but nostalgic; the city imagines its future by improvising on its past. . . . In some cases, such as Prague or St. Petersburg, urban cosmopolitanism is not a feature of the present but rather an element of nostalgia. . . . Places in the city are not merely architectural metaphors; they are also screen memories for urban dwellers, projections of contested remembrances." On nostalgia, mourning, melancholia, and disavowal in the aftermath of the collapse of state socialism in the former Eastern Germany, see Scribner 2003.

3 For a further discussion, see Poovey 1998.

4 According to Jon Hyslop (e-mail communication, May 12, 2004), some periods in the life of Johannesburg were more metropolitan than others. The more metropolitan periods tended to coincide with periods of opening to the world (1886–1914 and 1990 to the present). The external linkages of the city from 1914 to the 1950s tended to be more narrowly with the British Empire. A strong element of autarky and isolation characterized the apartheid years.

5 Thus, while recognizing that in Johannesburg, "there is the controlled civilization of Europe on the surface [and] the primitive unrestraint of Africa beneath," Sarah Gertrude Millin could nevertheless declare that "for all its individuality, Johannesburg is English" (1926: 95).

6 We should understand the modern not so much as a rejection of tradition or uprootedness but as both *techné* and sensibility. See, along similar lines, Harvey 2003: 18.

7 This despite the fact that the pre-1900 Transvaal state took a hands-off approach to the city. The dominant financial interests had too much of a short-term and self-interested orientation to initiate any coordinated modernist organization. Between 1886 and 1900, other than the rectangular street grid, there was little sign of modernist planning in Johannesburg. The first attempts at modernist planning were in relation to issues of race and labor under the period of direct British rule.

8 The mine dumps, Millin adds (1926: 81), "are a monument of servitude, power, the vanity of vanities and death."



9 On the Jews, in particular, see Kaplan and Robertson 1986, esp. 45–92.

10 Emphasis original. Their consumption grows, he adds, “in proportion with the growth of general wealth, since their use specifically represents wealth, excess, luxury, because they themselves represent wealth in general.”

11 See, in another context, Anagnost 2004 and Best 2004.

12 Writing, for instance, about the white diamond digger in Kimberley, Millin (1926: 63) noted: “He sits, most of the day, on his heap of ground, watching his Kafir work. He does here and there a little odd job. Once or twice a week he spends an hour or so sorting gravel for diamonds. When he feels bored, he walks over to the bar and has a drink.”

13 But labor itself was just as wastefully and inefficiently used: “The large turnover of workers involved high recruiting and supervisory costs. Every new batch of peasants had to learn mining techniques and undergo the painful process of adapting themselves to a strange environment,” Simons and Simons write (1983: 52).

14 On this and on what follows, see Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 90–130.

15 See testimonies of terror and cruelty in *Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa Report* 2003. Also see de Kock and Gordin 1998.

16 On the political side of the repression, see Webster and Friedman 1989.

17 See MacCrone 1937 and Barnes 1930: 232, 302. On sexual resentment and the old practice of white men having black mistresses, see Plaattje 1921 and Nicholls 1923.

18 As evidenced in John Coetzee’s fiction and William Kentridge’s art. “What I am interested in is a kind of multilayered highway of consciousness, where one lane has one thought but driving up behind and overtaking it is a completely different thought,” writes Kentridge. “It’s a particularly South African phenomenon of the late 1980s and 1990s to have contradictory thoughts running in tandem. You had people rebuilding their homes while simultaneously planning to emigrate. These contradictions work at an internal level in terms of the different views one has of oneself from one moment to the next. . . . I question the cost and pain engendered by self-multiplicity. . . . There is a kind of madness that arises from living in two worlds. Life becomes a collection of contradictory elements” (Cameron, Kentridge, and Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 30–31).

19 See Cock and Nathan 1989. See, in particular, the studies on troops in the townships (67–78), on the militarization of urban controls, and on the Bantustans (159–201).

20 See van Onselen 2001: 232; an extensive sociology of the figure of the nanny can be found in this book. Also see Cock 1980.

21 See Koch 1983, especially the considerations on Marabi, pp. 158–66.

22 See the description of the Melrose Arch Hotel at [www.africanpridehotels.com](http://www.africanpridehotels.com).

23 See [www.melrosesearch.co.za/public/restaurants.html](http://www.melrosesearch.co.za/public/restaurants.html).

24 Over the past decade, South Africa has embraced legal gambling. Montecasino is one of five licenses held by Tsogo Sun. The other licenses include Ernotweni Casino (in Nelspruit), the Ridge Casino and Entertainment Resort (in Witbank), Hemingway’s Casino (in East London), and the Suncoast Casino and Entertainment

World (in Durban). Casinos are opening in every large South African city. In 2003, South Africa’s casino and gambling industry supplied 14 percent of provincial government revenues. In order to win licenses, casino operators “are obliged to create jobs in poor areas, to hire black subcontractors, and to offer shares in the business to . . . trade unions or black-owned firms.” See “A Tuscan Village in South Africa.”

25 “A Tuscan Village in South Africa” explains: “Most casinos in South Africa aim for Las Vegas-style razzle-dazzle. Caesar’s, also in Johannesburg, boasts faux-classical statues and a restaurant on an ancient Egyptian barge. Hemingway’s, now being built in East London, promises an experience that will bring back the great man’s novels.”

26 See [www.dedicatedmicros.com](http://www.dedicatedmicros.com).

27 “Everywhere you look,” writes Bongani Madondo, “there are badly parked cars, and the remaining spaces are occupied by hawkers. It’s raining hawkers in Jozi. They bring a dash of exotic; the legendary African marketplace attitude that in Jozi has turned into pavement capitalism.” Entire neighborhoods have been renamed. “Turning off Bree Street into Von Brandis, I enter an area not named Addis Ababa for nothing. Here, Ethiopian hawkers sell anything from bandanas adorned with Stars and Stripes (made in Bombay) to toothbrushes and pesticides. The inner city is divided into United Nation–esque chunks—little Lagos, Beijing, Karachi, Kinshasa, Dakar, Mogadishu—and pockets of hip-hop loving township hawkers with their stew of Soweto-meets-the-Bronx-slang” (Madondo 2004).

28 Damisch shows that the city is no stranger to the operations of the unconscious. The latter retains traces of all the successive stages of psychic life. But it can only be known through scraps and figures. Its “emergence into light eludes all conscious control” (2001: 17–18).