Johannesburg The Elusive Metropolis

SARAH NUTTALL AND **ACHILLE MBEMBE,** EDITORS

WITH AN AFTERWORD BY Arjun Appadurai AND Carol A. Breckenridge

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Acknowledgments

In the early 1990s, Carol Breckenridge, then editor of *Public Culture,* suggested that the journal run a special issue on Africa. When we were asked to edit it, it quickly became clear to us that producing such an issue without a profound reinterrogation of Africa as a sign in modern formations of knowledge would have little value, both for *Public Culture*'s readers and for us as editors. Instead, we thought that what was needed was a gesture of defamiliarization capable of providing the reader with a sense of the worldliness of contemporary African life forms. To undertake this gesture of defamiliarization, there was no better scene or site than a late modern African metropolis. We believed that a critical rereading of Johannesburg could help to shift, if only partially, the center of gravity of traditional forms of analysis and interpretations of Africa in global scholarship. We also hoped to show that when it comes to "things African," it is possible to move away from the fascination with the horrors of a seemingly static world and to rehabilitate our curiosity while also insisting on this virtue as a necessary hallmark of a truly global academic project.

Beth Povinelli and Dilip Gaonkar not only vigorously endorsed the project but also helped in shaping it intellectually. In particular, discussions with Beth Povinelli in Johannesburg and New York enriched the overall rationale of what has now come to be a full-length book. To the original articles published in *Public Culture* have been added new contributions and an afterword by Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge. *Public Culture*'s editorial committee provided challenging comments on and criticisms about the original

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There is a manner about
Johannesburg, it makes the impression of a metropolis.
SARAH G. MILLIN, *The South Africans*

Introduction: Afropolis

ACHILLE MBEMBE AND SARAH NUTTALL

Johannesburg is the premier African metropolis, the symbol par excellence of the "African modern." It has been, over the last hundred years, along with São Paulo, Mumbai, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai, Seoul, and Sydney, one of the critical nodes of Southern Hemispheric capitalism and globalization. The African modern is a specific way of being in the world. As elsewhere in the global South, it has been shaped in the crucible of colonialism and by the labor of race. Worldliness, in this context, has had to do not only with the capacity to generate one's own cultural forms, institutions, and lifeways, but also with the ability to foreground, translate, fragment, and disrupt realities and imaginaries originating elsewhere, and in the process place these forms and processes in the service of one's own making. This is why modernity and worldliness, here, have been so intrinsically connected to various forms of circulation—of people, capital, finance, and images—and to overlapping spaces and times.

This book is therefore, above all, an exercise in writing the worldliness of a contemporary African city. To write an African metropolis into the world is a complex and compelling task. On the one hand, it requires a profound reinterrogation of Africa in general as a sign in modern formations of knowledge. On the other hand, it calls for a critical examination of some of the ways in which cities in general and African cities in particular have been read in recent global scholarship.

Over the last quarter of the twentieth century, the paradigm of "the global city" has dominated the study of the urban form. It has also been one of the cornerstones of studies of globalization. The starting point of the global city

1 View of inner city, Johannesburg, 2007. Courtesy of Constitution Hill

paradigm is the largely shared assumption that contemporary life paths and social structures are profoundly shaped by the global circuits of capital.[1] Most of the literature on the global city understands the city form to be the spatial expression of the shifts in the geography and structure of the international economy since the 1970s.

These shifts have been the object of many detailed and sometimes contradictory studies. In spite of their heterogeneity, these studies generally agree that in the countries of the global North, the passage from an industrial to an informational economy has led to a dramatic decentralization of production and the increased mobility of capital, as well as to an internationalization and expansion of the financial industry. Coupled with the geographical dispersal of manufacturing processes and sites has been the rising dominance of service production and various processes of immaterial labor that involve the manipulation of knowledge and information. Communication and control can now be exercised efficiently at a distance.

The territorial dispersal of economic activity has resulted, though, in a growing need for expanded central control, management, and planning. The

global city is, to a large extent, the result of this dialectic between the globalization of the economy and the need for the agglomeration of central functions of coordination, control, and management in a few leading financial centers. In Saskia Sassen's model, global cities are nodal points for the coordination of processes of production, innovation, and accumulation on a world scale. They are mainly defined by a number of key functions. First, they operate as highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy. Second, they are key locations for finance and for specialized service firms. Third, they are critical sites of production, including the production of innovation. Finally, they are major markets for the products and innovations produced. As Sassen (1991: 3–13) argues, a global city is therefore not simply a global marketplace for finance. It is a city that has developed a capability to produce and practice global control.

The global city paradigm is not simply a thick description of the changing functions of a few major northern cities in the context of new international, spatially dispersed, yet globally integrated forms of economic activity. It is also a highly functionalist theory of the city. It fails to consider that to declare a city to be truly global (including in its purely economistic sense), the latter has to be read against a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order of multiple centers, peripheries, and scapes of various scales, moving at various speeds (Appadurai 1996: 32). A truly global city, moreover, is composed not only of flows of money, skills, knowledge, security, machinery, and technology, but also of ideas, people, images, and imaginaries—a cultural economy. Many analysts have argued that the global city paradigm is a universalizing category that overlooks experiences of urban life in the South. The result has been belatedly to extend the category of the global city to incorporate what are now called the cities of the South (Sassen 2002). In this context, the repertory of sites has been expanded to include cities ranking "in the mid-range of the global hierarchy," where secondary networks of global economic flows can be identified (Krause and Petro 2003: 23). It has been argued, for instance, that major cities of the South share many of the characteristics of the global cities of the North, including cultural and ethnic heterogeneity, transnational flows of labor and capital, and uneven spatial and social development.

Noting that "it is futile to cling to the obsessive difference between here and there," others, such as Edward LiPuma and Thomas Koelbe (2004: 177), have tried to define global cities "through other lenses," such as "the cultures of global circulation" (Larkin 2004: 91–112). According to Ashley Dawson

(2004: 18), "like their counterparts in the North, the global cities of the South have also become increasingly connected with one another, transforming the exclusive links with the imperial metropolis that characterized colonial culture into a series of lateral connections with other sites in an emerging transnational urban system of the South." While some of these cities are operational hubs for the exchange of commodities and services, others are part of various transurban archipelagoes in highly pluralized spaces of connectivity. But it is not only the multiscalar, multitemporal, and multicentric nature of the global that critics are highlighting. With populations swelling above 20 million, Dawson claims, "the global cities of the South literally embody the future of humanity" (19).

Even more important than defining global cities through other lenses have been attempts at provincializing the global city model (Dawson and Edwards 2004; Bishop, Phillipps, and Yeo 2003). For instance, the contention is that with the shift of production to the South following the crisis in social reproduction of the 1970s, "a new urban order has begun to emerge," and megacities of the South are displacing the old urban centers of the North not only in terms of numbers, but "as the cutting edge of globalization." Ryan Bishop and his colleagues argue that many Southeast Asian cities can be read as perfect sites for an archeology of the future. These cities operate as a testing ground for techniques later applied to the global cities behind which they supposedly lag. Rem Koolhaas writes in his "Lagos: How It Works" (n.d.: 138), "We are resisting the notion that Lagos, Accra, and Abidjan represent African cities en route to becoming modern. Or, in the more politically correct idiom, that they are becoming modern through a valid, African way. Rather, we think it possible to argue that they represent a crystallized, extreme, paradigmatic set of case studies of cities at the forefront of globalizing modernity." He adds: "Many of the much-touted values of contemporary global capital and its prophetic organizational models of dispersal and discontinuity, federalism and flexibility, have been realized and perfected in West Africa. This is to say that Lagos is not catching up with us. Rather, we may be catching up with Lagos" (Koolhaus n.d.: 138, 85).[2]

Uncertainty, Spectrality, and Informality

This way of writing African cities into theory is in contrast with early urban studies (of labor migration, changing forms of marriage, the meaning of

"tribalism," legal change and informal social networks, changing forms of rural-urban connections) and established approaches to urbanization. The latter, according to James Ferguson (1999: 20), "have all depended, in different ways, on an underlying meta-narrative of modernization." Anthropology, history, and literature have long seen Africans as fundamentally and even essentially rural creatures, while the African city itself has been perceived as an emblem of irresolvable crisis. For a long time, the task of scholarship has been to measure the process of assimilation to the urban environment and to assess the various ways in which the relationship between the individual and the tribal community is corrupted, reinvented, or maintained. In spite of the existence of old commercial and urban precolonial cultures in the continent, the transition from a rural to an urban life has sometimes been studied as if urban ways of life were virtually unknown to those societies before European settlement.

Ways of seeing and reading contemporary African cities are still dominated by the metanarrative of urbanization, modernization, and crisis. Indeed, for many analysts, the defining feature of contemporary African cities is the slum. What is underestimated is the extent to which major African cities have been able to attract and seduce, in their own ways, certain forms of colonial and now global capital. That such forms of capital are, for the most part, predatory is without doubt. But it can be argued that this, at least partly, is what globalization is about: a set of processes that are refracted, splintered, and cracked—"a matter of highly selective and spatially encapsulated forms of connection combined with widespread disconnection and exclusion." These cities are therefore not simply made of social black holes. As Ferguson (2006: 24) explains, their geography reveals that indeed they are "globally connected," but in "a selective, discontinuous and point to point fashion." They are also cities of cash—if not quartz. The analysis Appadurai develops about Mumbai could clearly be extended to encompass Lagos, Nairobi, Abidjan, Dakar, or Kinshasa, where large pockets of privilege coexist with misery. These are "cities where the circulation of wealth in the form of cash is ostentatious and immense, but the sources of cash are always restricted, mysterious, or unpredictable . . . and the search for cash in order to make ends meet is endless" (Appadurai 2000: 628). Indeed, such fractured, colliding, and splintered orders of urban life can be seen to characterize, increasingly, many cities around the world today. Urban poverty itself is many things, some of which have to do with material deprivation; others with lack of security and dignity; others with what Appadurai calls the "exposure to

risk and high costs for thin comforts"; and others still with the "terms of recognition"—the ability and capacity of the poor to exercise voice, to debate, contest, and oppose vital directions for collective social life.

Over the last decade, there have been four major attempts at reading African cities into contemporary theory. These attempts are represented by the work of Jane Guyer, AbdouMaliq Simone, Filip de Boeck, and Rem Koolhaas. Underlying their respective projects have been a series of questions related to the place of cultural imagination in the making of cities, the role of calculation and rationality in the everyday tactics of those who inhabit them, and in the way they are made to work. These works have based their readings of the African city on the assumption that in the wake of the new circulations of the global economy, African urban social life is being reshaped in the midst of uncertainty. They have also sought to rehabilitate the informal and what they see as the spectral quality of African city life—that is, its constant interplay between what is "visible" and what is "invisible," between appearance and disappearance.

For Jane Guyer it is not simply that African cities are growing demographically without necessarily developing economically or politically. It is that they are growing along unknown pathways. For instance, they are generating quite new institutions and forms of social organization, practices of everyday life that encompass systems of employment, housing and urban transport, income earning opportunities, and meaning making—a creativity of practice of at times impressive magnitude and relentless resilience. These new pathways are routed via the organizations of what she calls "the popular economy"—a system with comprehensive reach into people's lives, but without coherent properties and recognizable boundaries (Guyer 2004; Guyer, Denzer, and Agbaje 2002).

In the midst of growing gradations of stratification, instability takes various forms. Chief among these is monetary instability. Less and less money is circulating. Formal sector employees are made redundant. There are acute shortages of goods that were once considered basic. It is not clear how countries manage world markets under conditions in which state capacity hardly exists, or is being eroded. Yet, in the midst of a greater social competition and velocity, new institutions and organizations are emerging, along with new templates for trust and transactions. Cities are still more or less fed. Cross-border trade is still going on. Locally made beer is always available. New possibilities emerge, at times in surprising places.

For AbdouMaliq Simone, forms of social collaboration and people's repertoires of action are constantly shifting. Civil life appears as an inchoate

mix of ruthlessness and kindness, cruelty and tenderness, indifference and generosity. Faint signals, flashes of creativity in otherwise desperate maneuvers, and small eruptions in the social fabric all provide texture to city life and are increasingly the norm. This is what Simone calls a micropolitics of alignment, interdependency, and exuberance. For him, a wide range of provisional, highly fluid, yet coordinated and collective actions are generated by African city residents that run parallel to, yet intersect with, a growing proliferation of decentralized local authorities, small-scale enterprises, community associations and civil society organizations. These practices make African cities "work" to a certain extent. The framing notions of his analysis are informality, invisibility, spectrality, and movement (Simone 2004a).

On the other hand, Filip de Boeck contends that, in ways that often leave the observer perplexed, the African city constantly undergoes the effervescent push and pull of destruction and regeneration. Focusing on Kinshasa, he argues that this is a city in which the spoken form seems to dominate the built form and in which the invisible constantly reconfigures the city's public and private spaces. In Kinshasa, it is not, or not primarily, the material infrastructure or the built form that make the city a city. The city, in a way, exists beyond its architecture. The built form is not, or is no longer, the product of a careful planning or engineering of the urban space. It is, rather, produced randomly as a living space more and more reduced to its most basic functions, that of a shelter, the heterogeneous conglomeration of truncated urban forms, fragments and reminders of material and mental urban elsewheres (de Boeck and Plissart 2006).

De Boeck describes a stunning material geography of failing infrastructure, a spectacular architecture of decay that constitutes the physical life of crisis. Simple material infrastructures and technologies, as well as their dysfunctioning and breakdown, thus create, define, and transform new sites of transportation, new configurations of entangled spatialities, new public spaces of work and relaxation, new itineraries and clusters of relations. The main infrastructural unit or building block is the human body. For de Boeck, too, Kinshasa is characterized by the first world of the day and the second world of the night—a second city, an occult city of the shadow, bathed in a constant overproduction of signs, an "overheating" or excess of the signifier that literally leads to a crisis of meaning. The struggle, therefore, is about how to reestablish control over an increasingly overflowing imaginary (ibid.).

In "Lagos: How It Works," Koolhaas takes the Nigerian economic capital to be an icon of "West African urbanity." The main assumption of this work is

that African cities represent a crystallized, extreme, paradigmatic set of case studies of cities at the forefront of "globalizing modernity." This project argues that "many of the much-touted values of contemporary global capital and its prophetic organizational models of dispersal and discontinuity, federalism and flexibility, have been realized and perfected in West Africa" (2007: 138). In this context, the city in West Africa is an inversion of every essential characteristic of the so-called modern city. It forces the reconceptualization of the city itself. Koolhaas's project is "to do away with the inherited notion of the 'city' once for all." In order to do so, he interrogates the binary around which Western discourses on the city have been built. Crucial to these discourses has been the opposition between the "formal" and the "unformed." His way of transcending these binaries is to "embellish a third term—the informal," as a way of accessing the specificity of African cities' operations. The "informal" he defines as that which "is neither formed nor unformed; alternately, it looks like both." He adds: "It is not identifiable as a pattern or morphology, but nonetheless manufactures the material reality of urban form. It is an alliance of transformative ingenuity and the tactical mobilization of resources, produced from conditions of need and in the almost complete absence of centralization" (139). Koolhaas shows how the mobilization of specific kinds of everyday human labor and infrastructures end up building specific city-forms and structures. The informal, here, is the ensemble of those categories that make up the inner structure of the African city and on which the other fundamentals rest and from which urbanism unfolds.

Lines of Flight

In our rendering of Johannesburg, we depart from the global city paradigm without necessarily espousing all aspects of the alternative analytical models highlighted above. A city (whether global or not) is not simply a string of infrastructures, technologies, and legal entities, however networked these are. It also comprises actual bodies, images, forms, footprints, and memories. The everyday human labor mobilized in building specific city forms is not only material. It is also artistic and aesthetic. Furthermore, rather than opposing the "formal" and the "informal," or the "visible" and the "invisible," we need a more complex anthropology of things, forms, and signs in order to account for the life of the city in Africa. Analytically as well as in people's daily experience, simplistic oppositions between the formal and the informal are

unhelpful. As Jane Guyer argues in her work on Nigerian cities, there is an entire "popular economy" comprising livelihood, employment, and capital asset creation. But to a large extent, this "popular economy" invests in, takes resources from, and generally runs up against regulated institutions. Indeed, the informal is not outside of the formal. It is related to formal regulatory institutions. The two processes of formalization and informalization work together. How they work together and how this working together ends up producing city forms and urban economies seems to be the question that we need to pursue.[3] Clearly, the "informal" itself expresses a "form." It simultaneously hides and reveals other rationalities. In African cities, forms can be thought of as conjoined with signs, and as a series of *operations* (ways of doing, of making). This book intends to capture these rhythms and operations via a rehabilitation of the concept of the "metropolis."

In addition, our aim in this book is neither to rely on a notion of Africa's difference from elsewhere, nor to assert its sameness. Africa, and by implication African cities, has so often been caught and imagined with a web of difference and otherness. The continent and its forms still frequently end up epitomizing the intractable, the mute, the abject, or the otherworldly. Africa is still seen as an object apart from the world, or as a failed or incomplete example of something else. So much so that it is tempting to revisit the frontiers of commonalities, of connectivity, with multiple elsewheres, of which the continent also speaks. Our aim is not so much to replace difference with sameness but to undercut a rigid distinction between these two terms—to allow space for the articulation of the originality of the African modern, its capacity to produce something new and singular, as yet unthought, and to find ways of accommodating this within our conceptual languages.

Finally, we have tried in what follows to identify sites within the continent, entry and exit points not usually dwelt upon in research and public discourse, that defamiliarize commonsense readings of Africa. Identifying such sites entails working with new archives—or even with old archives in new ways. One such archive is the metropolis itself. Moreover, identifying many such sites at times implies drawing on particular critical pedagogies—pedagogies of writing, talking, seeing, walking, telling, hearing, drawing, making—each of which pairs the subject and the object in novel ways to enliven the relationship between them and to better express life in motion. The above considerations explain the general economy of this book, which includes conventional academic articles, short and fragmentary essays and commentaries, interviews and images, paths into the fabric of city life—all aiming to

2 View of Mary Fitzgerald Square, central Johannesburg, 2007.
Courtesy of Constitution Hill

provide the reader with a sense of the worldliness of African life in general, and of the African metropolis as a compositional process requiring particular acts of deciphering.

The City of Gold

Although Johannesburg has historically been one of the most privileged sites of the emergence of the question of the subject in the modern African sense of the word, most studies of Johannesburg have interpreted the city as nothing but the spatial embodiment of unequal economic relations and coercive and segregationist policies. A survey of the literature on Johannesburg reveals a preoccupation with one thing: the rise, fall, and reconstruction of the segregated city. To be sure, it provides important details concerning the periodization of developments in urban policy, urbanization, and urban growth since the colonial era. It offers a range of explanations for the rise and consolidation of the segregated urban form. It documents the state's enforcement of racial privileges under the guise of public health and town planning legislation as well as public housing policies. It analyzes the politi-

cal consequences of black urbanization and comments on the desegregation process and its ambiguities since the end of apartheid. Finally, it provides important clues when it comes to reading the urban landscape and identifying the historical dimensions of contemporary "urban problems." In the process, it brilliantly illuminates the dialectics between dispossession, exploitation, and struggle so characteristic of South African history, while closely tying them to the race, labor, and capital triptych. In literary studies, the central figure has been the newly urban black man—his alienation, the transformation of his identity, the commodification of his past in the conflicting spaces of the city.

That the legibility of this extraordinary place has been reduced in much recent, and less recent, literature to an experience of the abnormal is not without parallels elsewhere.[4] After all, as Stella Dong points out, the swamp-ridden metropolis of Shanghai in China was, for a long time, "ranked as the most pleasure-mad, rapacious, corrupt, strife-ridden, licentious, squalid, and decadent city in the world."[5] The loathing of Johannesburg in the social sciences should be seen as part of an antiurban ideology that has consistently perceived the industrial city, in particular, as a cesspool of vice. Writing about the industrial revolution and the process of class struggle that engulfed the Witwatersrand at the turn of the twentieth century, the historian Charles van Onselen (2001: ix) describes Johannesburg as a "concrete encrustation on a set of rocky ridges," without "fertile soil, striking natural vegetation, a lake, a mountain, a valley, a river or even an attractive perennial stream." "It lacks," he says, "the landscape of affection or mystery easily appropriated by myth-makers and nation-builders."[6]

Van Onselen's views are widely shared. Unlike bodies of literature on other cities, few commentaries on Johannesburg have been preoccupied with city form and city life as keys to understanding its metropolitan modernity. Modernity has been perceived as nothing more than the development of the capitalist mode of production and the processes by which capitalism as a socioeconomic formation in turn transformed social relations and the consciousness of black urban dwellers. As a consequence, the city that emerges from these commentaries has until recently been populated by "proletarians": a generic term that encompasses slum dwellers, migrant workers, strikers, hawkers, prostitutes, domestic servants, squatters, criminal classes, and so on (Yudelman 1984; Bozzoli 1983, esp. 151–239). Its "real story," says van Onselen (2001: ix–x), revolves around "the contest between the narrowly-based economic self-interest of the mine owners" and a "seething mass of

struggling humanity" made up of a "relatively cosmopolitan labour" force that serves the industry. It is this "immediate clash of class interests around the principal industry" that does more "to excite the passions of the citizenry than any supposedly primordial yearning for cultural expression or strivings for a more encompassing identity." In fact, van Onselen concludes, Johannesburg's "shallowly-rooted, first-generation bourgeoisie and the crass *nouveau riche* of subsequent generations have always felt more comfortable in the bank, the stock exchange and the sports stadium than they have in attending a church, sitting in a concert hall, walking through an art gallery, reading in a library or even serving in the ranks of their city council."

This moral critique of early and late modern Johannesburg life as a nursery of cynicism (the pursuit of money) and a site of lack (in this case, lack of cultural compass) is widely shared across disciplines. Recognizing that Johannesburg is a product of the last quarter of the nineteenth century and as such filled with the contradictions of the laissez-faire age, the architect Clive Chipkin (1993: 10) nevertheless argues that the city's "sophistication and modernity" demonstrate "different qualities of creativity, cheek by jowl with slavish mimicry of overseas taste." Underestimating the degree to which the city always operates as a site of fantasy, desire, and imagination, recent South African historiography tends to privilege a reading of the urban as a theater of capitalist accumulation and exploitation. This scholarship constitutes an impressive body of work—albeit one that is sutured to a political agenda (the critique of the apartheid state), theoretically narrow (though empirically very strong), and almost entirely undeveloped in terms of comparative foci. These historiographical studies can be separated into three categories.

First is a long tradition of urban inquiry that focuses on the spatial dislocation, the class differentiation, and the racial polarization imprinted on the urban landscape by apartheid state-sanctioned segregation and planning.[7] Within these confines, much attention is given to the geographies of poverty, forced removals, and racially based slums and far less to the cartographies of affluence (Kallaway and Pearson 1986; Koch 1983; Hart and Pirie 1984; van Tonder 1993; Parnell 1988 and 1992). Such studies highlight the various forms of dispossession and spatial exclusion of the black population from the apartheid city. Seeing Johannesburg only in these terms also points to an important failure in most studies of the city—the failure to speak of the city on terms that warrant comparison with other cities in the world.[8] In their attempt to sort out the link between industrialization and urbanization, these accounts envision the city not as an aesthetic project but as a space of

division. Planning, in particular, is perceived as that which not only recasts notions of citizenship in the terrain of racial difference but also serves to delineate different city spaces separated by boundaries of class (Mabin and Smit 1997; Turok 1994). One such space is the township.[9] As the title of Nigel Mandy's book *A City Divided: Johannesburg and Soweto* (1984) suggests, the township is both of the city and not of the city (see also Beall et al. 2002). In such studies, the emphasis has been on marginality, and the township is privileged as a site of social struggles or of contestation over the allocation of public goods.[10] Far less attention has been paid to the imbrication of city and township and, in spite of unequal social relations, to township dwellers' practices and imaginations of city-ness or the place of the township in the making of the city's many identities.

This is despite the fact that people then and now perpetually moved between the city and the township either to make a living or to access forms of urban life that the township did not provide (see the article by Mbembe, Dlamini, and Khunou in this book; see also Wilson 1996; Marcuse 1998; O'Loughlin and Friedrichs 1996). In fact, life in contemporary middle-class Soweto more and more tends to be very similar to suburban life in other parts of Johannesburg, with almost identical practices of gentrification, respectability, and patterns of consumption being played out. In middle-class Soweto and Diepkloof, an urban and cosmopolitan world thrives on sociability, hybridity, and everyday informality.[11] Furthermore, the literature fails to situate the township in relation to other kinds of urban agglomerations elsewhere (the urban ghetto, the favela) or in South Africa itself (the inner city, the squatter camp, the homeland, recent government housing schemes for poor black South Africans) and to track the traffic between these places. Such is the case in relation to informal settlements on the urban fringes whose inhabitants commute to city work zones; concentrated settlements within cities; backyard dwellings in middle-class suburbs; disused buildings in inner-city areas (parts of Johannesburg's eastern downtown section) or hostels; or similar institutions whose inhabitants live very close to their places of work ("South Africa's 'Discarded People'" 1998).

Second are post-apartheid studies, most of which fall within the urban development paradigm so prevalent in the rest of Africa and the developing world (Mabogunje 2000). Many of these studies are more concerned with whether the city is changing along vectors of institutional governance, the deracialization of service provision, and local politics than about city-ness as such (Seekings 2003). Because they approach the city as a problem to be

solved, they are clearly prescriptive. They seek to contribute to policy formulation in fields as varied as community participation, housing, land tenure, service delivery (water, sanitation, roads, electricity, waste removal), local government, municipal finance and governance capacities, urban poverty, and decentralization. In most cases, these instrumentalist and functionalist accounts of the city are preoccupied with larger issues of social justice and social cohesion, equity and efficiency. Their aim is to redress the effects of inequality and past injustices through a better redistribution of public goods and the reversal of the system of spatial, economic, and social segregation inherited from apartheid (Mabin 1995). They end up mapping an urban social geography of needs, the crucial indexes of which are levels of deprivation. In the process, they underplay many other aspects of city life and city forms (e.g., see Bremner 2000; Crankshaw and Parnell 2000; Parnell et al. 2002; Cameron 1999).

Third are studies preoccupied with the spatial restructuring of the city per se. They note the sprawling, polycentric character of Johannesburg and lament the intensely privatized and quasi-anarchic vision of urban growth underlying this process. In this regard, they focus, primarily, on what the authors perceive as the "citadelization" of Johannesburg; that is, the increased barricading within the city through the constructions of office complexes and upper-class residences; the polarization of the city by income, occupation, and race; the limited public subsidies and the abdication of independent planning and regulatory action by government; the hyperconcentration of jobs in service center–oriented office buildings in the northern suburbs; and the increasing power of property developers to structure the evolution of the city (see Tomlinson et al. 2003; Judin and Vladislavić 1998). In many instances, the trope of a "city under siege" proves to be simply a juxtaposition of exclusive suburban enclaves, closed spaces, and simulated histories undergirded by a "fantasy urbanism" and odd lifestyles (see Bremner 2002; Beall 2002: 175–95; Tomlinson et al. 2003: 56–70).

Recent work on the edge city and the suburbs may signal new readings of the city. Lindsay Bremner (2004: 120), for example, describes the edge city of Midrand as a "contradictory space" inhabited by many of South Africa's new black elite, where "the color of one's money rapidly replaces skin color as the currency of showy success" and where "acquisitiveness goes hand in hand with that other must-have suburban attitude: lack of curiosity about everyone else." She argues that for these new monied classes, "middle class values and preoccupations—individual achievement, status, nuclear family

life, space, security and sport—are best satisfied within the infrastructure of the security suburb," yet a "relationship with the culture of township life is maintained."[12] Developments in the inner city show that "far from being the ultimate zoned, controlled and compartmentalized city," Johannesburg is now characterized by "messy intersections and overlapping realities. Ordinary, everyday lives, which were excluded from the city by western urban management practices, town planning codes or by the legal and administrative apparatus of apartheid, have brought distant geographical, social and cultural worlds into contact."

In general, though, while recognizing the density of the empirical work referred to above, it is necessary to highlight this literature's relative lack of comparative depth, the paucity of its theoretical reach, and its overall dependence on political economy. Such a critique has two dimensions. First is that we now need a more complex theorization of race, labor, and capital to properly account for the relation between injury and personhood or the extreme acts of violation perpetrated in the name of race in the history of South Africa's city forms. A second dimension of our critique has to do with the failure of this literature to explicitly deal with the city-ness of Johannesburg and to open itself up to a global literature on metropolitan experience. The historian Jon Hyslop observes that, by and large, interpretations of early Johannesburg have suffered from being confined within two related teleologies: that of the rise of the nation-state and that of the rise of apartheid. South African urban critics have tended to focus on explaining the tragic course of twentieth-century South African history in terms of factors internal to the country and to treat it as in some sense predestined. He then goes on to suggest that much of what was happening in early Johannesburg "can only be understood by placing it within a global flow of persons, ideas, and commodities." There were "possibilities and processes contained in the early city's existence which we miss out when we simply read apartheid back into it," he concludes (2003: 7).

The Underground, the Surface, and the Edges

In Africa, analyses of capitalist modernity have not fully apprehended the fact that it is not simply in the North that, as David Frisby (2001: 161) writes, "the culture of modernity became synonymous with the culture of the metropolis." Recently, the new urbanism of the end of the nineteenth and the

beginning of the twentieth century has been the main framework for explorations of modernity in places as varied as China or Brazil (Yeh 2000, esp. 31–230; Tang 2000, esp. chaps. 8 and 9; Schelling 2000: 75–126). Using the trope of "multiple modernities" or the "diversity of universals," this is indeed what a number of Asian scholars of the city have been attempting to do. Recent studies of two different yet equally cosmopolitan formations, Shanghai and Hong Kong, have helped a lot to redraw the map of the metropolis outside the box of European intellectual history. Shanghai in particular was long vilified in ways similar to Johannesburg but, as Leo Ou-fan Lee, Ackbar Abbas, and others have recently shown, it has been a "cosmopolitan metropolis" all along. A receptor of modern technological development, Shanghai was also known early on for its cultural sophistication, its prosperity in literature and the fine arts; modern media and the press; its movie studios and theaters, which earned the city the appellation "Hollywood of the East"; and its leading role in design and fashion innovation (Lu 1999). Lee (1999) has also shown how the foreign presence in Shanghai produced new kinds of public and social spaces such as cinemas, department stores, coffeehouses, dance halls, parks, and racecourses. He has argued that these spaces were appropriated by the Chinese themselves and used to construct a Chinese version of modern cosmopolitan culture. Ackbar Abbas (2000: 775) compares Shanghai and Hong Kong, two cities where splendor and squalor existed side by side. He argues that in the 1920s and 1930s, Shanghai developed a "cosmopolitanism of extraterritoriality" while, from the 1980s onward, Hong Kong developed a "cosmopolitanism of dependency."

Our rendition of Johannesburg proceeds from a different analytical vantage point. Without the gold-bearing beds of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg would not have existed. That the city started in 1886 as a series of uncontrolled mining camps is due precisely to the presence and discovery of gold near the surface of the reef. But, as the geographer Keith Beavon indicates (2004: 5), "because of the steep dip to the strata it soon became necessary to sink shafts from positions well south of the original outcrop mines and to reach the ore-bearing seams by complex systems of tunnels and passageways, drives and stopes." It is at these deeper levels and in the way the world below interacted with the surface and the edges that the origins of the city as a metropolis are to be located. Beneath the central business district and the environs of Johannesburg lie thousands of boreholes and drilling footages of varying depths—a testimony to the way in which, in the production of this Southern Hemispheric modernity, the world of race

and systematized human degradation became part of the calculus of capital and dispossession, technology, labor, and the unequal distribution of wealth (Haughton 1964: 3). In our view, this dialectic between the underground, the surface and the edges is, more than any other feature, the main characteristic of the African modern of which Johannesburg is the epitome, and perhaps even of the late modern metropolis itself.

Such a characterization relies upon, while attempting to go beyond, canonical definitions of the metropolitan form. Indeed, since Werner Sombart, the concept of the metropolis functions as a key device to problematize the relation between urban existence and crucial features of modernity, chief among which are the quantitative expansion of urban population, the corresponding increase in the quantity of commodities in circulation and their consumption, and the attendant transformations in all spheres of social and mental life. For Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, or Max Weber, processes of abstraction, circulation, movement, representation, and the responses of the emotions and the mind to these processes, constitute the main features of metropolitan life. To a large extent, metropolitan existence is less about the city as such or how the latter is made and by whom than how it is exhibited, displayed, and represented, its colorfulness, its aura, and its aesthetics. But what is being displayed is first and foremost a "culture of things" (*Sachkultur*) in a money economy, the world of commodities and the built structures (architecture) that metaphorize them—in short, the "mental life" of the city. That the essence of the things exhibited, their quantities, weight, scale, and size lies in the fortuitous, the superficial, and the transitory does not preclude their becoming objects of artistic representation. Nor does it dedramatize the rush experienced by the city dweller to compress together the largest possible sum of acquisitions, interests, and enjoyments. There isn't, therefore, a metropolis without this aesthetic dimension. Linked to this is the ceaseless birth, destruction, and reconstruction of forms, the aim of which is, on the one hand, to distinguish nature and landscape, and on the other hand to testify to the presentness of the past while making way for the "new."

Most of these features can be found, to varying degrees, in Johannesburg, at different phases of its history. They are all the more significant because Johannesburg emerged as an instant city of strangers, aliens, and foreigners (*uitlanders*)—a city with no former history. Its urban infrastructure (its parks, its streets, the engineering of its water supply, storm-water drainage, and sewers, its monuments, its electric tramway and electric lighting, its

structures of consumption and spectacle), its cultural life, and economy had to be built from scratch, without any of the constraints that usually bind other cities so tightly to their ancient past (see Spit 1976; Grant and Flinn 1992). The sole reason for its creation was the pursuit of material wealth. On the Parktown ridge, and following the high rococo style of Europe's belle époque, Randlords built huge mansions and expensive properties on the model of English country architecture and landscaping (Barry and Law 1985). The city's ascent to industrial capitalism was accompanied by human misery, degradation, disease, crime, and prostitution. But perhaps one of the most striking dimensions of the metropolitan nature of Johannesburg has been its ceaseless metamorphosis. A trajectory that in the West took ages to unfold and to mature was here compressed into under a century. The speed and velocity with which the city has experienced modernity has been in itself dizzying. Less than fifteen years after its creation, all its functional zones and residential patterns had been firmly established. It was already struggling to experience time not as fundamentally transitory, and space not as eminently fleeting. Compensating for the lack of advantages of a striking natural setting, the city planted the biggest manmade forest in the world and, through its built environment, labored to create a sense of splendor and sensory stimuli.

In fact, the entire history of Johannesburg's built structures testifies not only to its inscription into the canons of modern Western urban aesthetics, but also to the originary tension virtually built into its morphology and geological structure between the life below the surface, what is above, and the edges. After all, until very recently, Johannesburg described itself as the largest and most modern European city in Africa. As amply demonstrated by Clive Chipkin, this meant that Johannesburg was the progeny of nineteenth-century European industrial society. This inland city developed as an industrial metropolis supported by gold mining. A breeding ground for modernism, it grew as a frontier city closely tied to the global market economy and the world of consumption and at the same time was mired in bigotry and prejudice, constantly caught between what it could be (potentiality) and what it ended up being (actuality). The city's fabric and cultural styles borrowed from the major trends of the time and from an assortment of sometimes disconnected sources—from Victorian and Edwardian architecture; from the provincial versions of the French Second Empire to modernized (or neo-) classicism and futurism to Manhattan-style stunted skyscrapers; and from art nouveau to the rigid symmetry of the beaux arts, art deco, modernism,

and Le Corbusier's *esprit nouveau.* Chipkin (1993: 22) explains that most technological innovations were experimented with at one point or the other in Johannesburg: "Prefabricated iron-fronted shop buildings, barrel-vaulted arcades with prismatic glass skylights, cast-iron gas lamps, electric lighting, telephone wires linking the finance houses and emporia to the central telephone exchange, horse-drawn trams with their destination signs to distant suburbs, and after 1892 the presence of the railroad linking the interior with the maritime systems of the seaboard."

But official or commercial architecture did not take its lead simply from overseas paradigms and precedents. If Johannesburg's ideas of the metropolis did filter in from overseas, cultural traffic with New Delhi, with the sister dominions (Canada, New Zealand, Australia), the East African triangle (Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, and Zanzibar), and Brazil also shaped them. A substantial city of the empire in the African Southern Hemisphere during the first half of the twentieth century, Johannesburg also created a metropolitan style of its own. The shifts from one style to another were themselves a testimony to its history of opulence. Right from the beginning, one of the defining features of the city was its trading square and its commercial streets. Banks, finance houses, offices, clubs, and mining company headquarters dominated the streetscapes. Everywhere in the commercial streets, Chipkin argues, "a new consumer world and new building technology had sprung up side by side virtually ready-made on this remote piece of the veld." There was evidence of contact with high fashion in London, Paris, and New York (main shopping streets, latest American automobiles, fancy lingerie, department stores, jewelry designs, polished gems, and so on), "together with the latest imported *fin de siècle* decoration from the Continent, up-to-date fabrics and wallpapers from London's West End emporia, latest lines in Manchester cotton goods and a flood of commercial products ready to clutter up colonial interiors with exotic bric-à-brac from the world market" (18).

Another crucial dimension of the history of Southern Hemispheric metropolitanism is the way in which the city was planned, governed, and in the process, came to be imagined as a body politic. This entailed specific techniques of managing difference and heterogeneity. In the modern West, urban difference was fundamentally read either in terms of class (the war between rich and poor) or in terms of the autonomy of individual existence. As David Harvey (2003: 75) shows in the case of Paris, differentiated interests, particularly those resulting from the social division of labor or from the hierarchies within the body politic, came to be organized as associations expressive of

those interests. The formation of the metropolis was all along determined by the question of how much heterogeneity a city could accommodate without ceasing to imagine itself as a moral community. In Johannesburg, the question of work and labor was fundamental both to the critique of existing social arrangements and to dreams of the city that might be. Not only class, but also race (two mutually constitutive categories) was brought to bear on the ways difference and heterogeneity were negotiated. The complex social structures of the city as well as its spatial economy are, to a large extent, the result of the conflict between, on the one hand, the unconditional demand for racial justice and equality, and on the other, the imperative of white self-preservation.

In Southern Hemispheric conditions, the metropolis is formed through a process of segregation and elimination. Although swift and brutal, this process took almost a century in Johannesburg and underwent many phases. Created in 1886, the city already exhibited, by 1900, almost all the aspects that until the 1990s were to characterize the apartheid city. Beavon (2004: 67–68) explains:

> Africans had to carry passes, they were prohibited from walking on the pavements, they were excluded from public places, they rode in cattle trucks behind the Rand tram and its main line replacement, they were not permitted to use the regular intra-urban public transport, and they were largely confined to the single-sex "barracks" of the mines, the "Kaffir Location," and the servants' quarters of the opulent whites. Their access to liquor had been constrained, they laboured long and hard for very low wages, and they had no political rights.

Moreover, until 1927, the administration of Africans fell under the same municipal committee that dealt with the zoological gardens (Maud 1938).

The spatial framing of race and the fixing of social forms in space aimed at creating an essentially white suburban city. In this process, the discourse of race transmutated into a discourse of health and urban sanitation (1900–1940). To address the perceived blights of deviance and perversion and to clean the city of its poor and undesirable while subjecting them to the raw reality of exploitation first required that the city's inner area be rid of its slums, with their concentration of poor white Afrikaners and its multiracial underclass. Poor whites, working-class and lower-middle-class white families (as well as waves of impoverished Afrikaners) were forced toward peripheral townships in the western corridors of Vrededorp and Burgersdorp or in Brickfields. An improvement scheme known as the Insanitary Area Im-

provement Scheme and a Slums Clearance Act were adopted (Parnell 1988, 1991, 1992; Trump 1979; van Tonder 1993). In the context of the panic caused by the outbreak of plague in 1903, the "Coolie Location" was "surrounded by a detachment of troops, evacuated in its entirety, and immediately burnt to the ground. Two weeks later, in a follow-up operation . . . , the fire brigade was assigned to incinerate the remainder of the insanitary area. The whole zone was surrounded with a corrugated-iron fence, six street blocks were saturated with paraffin then set alight, and [1,600] 'buildings,' including a temple, were destroyed" (Beavon 2004: 77).

The city that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century was made up of functional zones. It was articulated around an east-west axis separating lower-middle-class English and Afrikaans-speaking white residents. A distinct arc of mining land divided the southern suburbs from the lower-density and upper-income northern ones. African people and other dark-skinned minorities were confined in racial ghettoes or locked up in mine compounds, hostels, barracks, or in the servants' quarters of white householders. It was a city with various boundaries—less spatial facts with sociological consequences than racial enclaves that were formed spatially. It was also a city regulated according to the principle of proximity and social distance. This principle, in turn, governed the logic of movement through urban space. The idea was that every space possessed an exclusiveness or uniqueness, and that interactions between races should be closely identified with specifically demarcated territories. Between different racial enclaves, pieces of vacant ground and empty wastelands were used for various purposes, including the building of the slops pump station where the night soil collected in buckets, and other liquid sewage would be dumped. Another configuration was the system of squatting rights with limited tenure, or the compounds, barracks, domestic servant's quarters, and camps in which the African labor employed by the mines was housed.

In many senses, there is no metropolis without a necropolis. Just as the metropolis is closely linked to monuments, artifacts, technological novelty, an architecture of light and advertising, the phantasmagoria of selling, and a cornucopia of commodities, so is it produced by what lies below the surface. In the case of Johannesburg, the underground is not simply a technological space emptied of social relations. It does not exist only in an abstract realm of instrumentality and efficiency. In fact, it always was a space of suffering and alienation as well as of rebellion and insurrection. As evidenced by the lives and times of Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, the underground of

the metropolis is the repository of possibilities for invention and utopian dreams. In Johannesburg, the underground was the symbol of the powerful forces contained in the depths of the city. The French equation between underground space and revolution or insurrection (the dream of radical equality evidenced in the signifier of the Catacombs) holds in the case of Johannesburg (Mandela 1995; Sisulu 2002). David Pike writes, "The Catacombs gave material form to the principle of fundamental equality, although they did so in the brutal manner of millions of bones stacked upon and interlaced with one another" (2005: 110). The work of apartheid was to make sure that these lower depths of the city, without which its modernity was unreadable, were made to appear as strangers to the city, apart from the city.

The figure of the black migrant worker, a temporary sojourner in the city, also marks one of the limits of classical theories of the metropolis, which hold that the most revelatory facets of modern metropolitan life lie on the *surface,* in the ephemeral and the visible (shop fronts, shop windows, café terraces, street cars, automobiles), in the display of the commodity with or without its aesthetic veil (Kracauer 1995; Ward 2001; Hanak 1999; Bucks-Morss 1989). The privileging of surfaces and visuality can conceal the ubiquity of the metropolitan form. Johannesburg clearly shows that one of the characteristic features of a metropolis is an *underneath.* As the name Igoli (City of Gold) indicates, this is a city born out of a ruthless, extractive, mining economy. As such, it is one incarnation of "the actual world of human labor, of grubby production, of toil, exploitation, and minimum wage work" that Andy Merrifield so eloquently spoke about in his description of Marx's ideology (Merrifield 2002: 63). In other words, beneath the visible landscape and the surface of the metropolis, its objects and social relations, are concealed or embedded other orders of visibility, other scripts that are not reducible to the built form, the house facade, or simply the street experience of the metaphorical figure of the flâneur.

Recent work suggests that there is no surface without an underground (Pike 2005: 7). The underground is not to be understood simply in terms of an infrastructure and various subterranean spaces (sewers and drainage systems, underground railways, utility tunnels, storage vaults and so on). The world below (the underworld) is also made up of lower classes, the trash heap of the world above, and subterranean utopias. Like the nineteenth-century European city, the vertical and racial segmentation of the Johannesburg urban world was given structure and order by what it relegated beneath. As far as Johannesburg is concerned, more than the surfaces of the vertical city

with its skyscrapers, the underground seems to hold the keys to unlocking the secrets of its modernity.

Living in places and circumstances not of his or her choosing, the black migrant worker is constrained to experience the metropolis as a site of radical uncertainty, unpredictability, and insecurity. Under those conditions, culture and aesthetics become an open-ended construction structurally built in existing and often misused infrastructures. Made up of stranded affiliations, the metropolis in the southern part of the African continent emerged out of complex structures—including psychic ones—that far exceed the possibilities of the apartheid grid. In fact, seen from beneath, the migrant worker more than the flâneur is the paradoxical cultural figure of African modernity—the one who is both beneath the city and outside of its orders of visibility.

Post-apartheid South Africa has given a new centrality to the figure of the migrant in general and that of the stranger in particular. Indeed, over the last quarter of the twentieth century, substantial shifts have taken place in the urban social division of labor and in the corporate organization of industrial production in the city. The process of globalization and its associated consequences—the casualization of labor, the privatization of most basic services—have fostered the emergence of multiple economies not limited to the corporate form. The inequality in the concentration of strategic resources and activities between the different segments of the city has sharpened since the 1990s. A parallel economy—informal and transnational—has emerged. As we have seen above, a socioeconomic fragmentation is also visible in the built environment of the city: a geography of fortifications and enclosures; increasing demand for spatial and social insulation; and reliance on technologies of security, control, and surveillance.[13] In this context, the *stranger* and the *criminal* now assume, more than ever, greater prominence in most cities' imaginations (see Mpe 2001; Nuttall ch. 7 of this volume). The criminal, we could say, moves between the surface and the underneath. Striking at the everyday—the woman leaving her garage, the man asleep in his bed, the young girl on her way to the shop—he navigates the ordinary surfaces of life by attacking from a darker, more underneath place. He partakes of the vocabulary of the stranger but also of the familiar: many crimes occur between people who are known to each other. Thus the man who performs this inhuman and therefore strange act is also an uncle, a father, a neighbor, a workman most of the time.

Although no single chapter in the book deals with crime, its specter hovers over the text like a shadow, raising its head in essays by Nuttall, Odhiambo

and Muponde, Hornberger, de Vries and Prabhala. It is this shadowy aspect that works the way that crime itself does, along an axis that is visible sometimes and at other times invisible. As a result, the experience of fear and at times panic lies at the deepest roots of life in the metropolis. The history of Johannesburg's experience with violence is also central to Mbembe's chapter. Whether during the early period of industrialization or in the post-apartheid context, crime is more than just an index of itself. Today, homocides, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults are indicative of the extent to which the apartheid state and its successor, the democratic state, have failed to exercise a monopoly over the means of violence. If under apartheid the distinction between private violence, state violence, and the violence of unrest was thin, today it is the equation of democracy with the urge for armed protection that is one of the main features of metropolitan mental life. This might have something to do with the fact that the racial state in South Africa was built on the fear of the black man with a gun. But it might also have something to do with the fact that political struggles aimed at copossessing the monopoly of force instead of destroying it. Democratization, that is, has not coincided with the disarmament of the urban citizenry, and crime today has become the other side, the underneath, perhaps, of the rise of a culture of consumption.

These forms of fortification and criminality need to be counterbalanced by attention to other, varied responses to the city's transformations, but all of them together reflect the complexities of class, race, generation, and culture.

Afropolitanism

Johannesburg is a metropolis in every sense of the word. It is a thoroughly African capitalist formation closely tied to the world economy. Metropolitan existence here is "displayed" not necessarily through exhibitions or parks, but via an enticing array of consumer labels and products, highways and luminous flows, store windows and huge advertising billboards, new architecture and, more generally, technophilia. To a large extent, this is what Simmel (1950a: 45) meant by a "culture of things." For him, the representation of the metropolis occurred through the lavish display of a plethora of objects "crowded together in close proximity," which paralyzed the senses and hypnotized the spectator. From this perspective, what passes in the eyes of Johannesburg's fiercest critics as crass material trappings could very well be understood as an aesthetic of plenty.

Contemporary Johannesburg is the premier metropolis in Africa in terms of technology, wealth, and racial complexity, as well as cultural practices and formal institutions—apparent through the sheer quantification of the world of goods, of production and consumption. It is a thoroughly polyglot urban formation whose influence, connections, and identifications extend beyond its locality and well beyond South Africa (see Nixon 1994). It is also an engine of art, architecture, music, fashion, theater, literature, and religious life. Johannesburg is peopled not just by workers, the poor, criminals, and illegal immigrants, but also by artists, playwrights, craftspeople, investigative journalists, poets, writers, musicians, and civic-minded public intellectuals of all races, as well as highly skilled migrants and jet setters. It is a home to corporate headquarters, finance houses, legal services, accounting firms, media outlets, entertainment industries, and information technology ventures.

The city has become the great shopping mall for most of sub-Saharan Africa. New geographies of retailing and consumption are redefining the economic and cultural horizons of contemporary Johannesburg (Beavon 2000). Its consumer spaces (the department store, the mall, and the casino) can be read, as elsewhere, as "symbolic and metaphoric territories," in the words of Louise Crewe (2000: 275). Finally, it is a city where historical structures of racial inequity are simultaneously being sedimented and unbundled; in which conceptions of race are being reinterrogated and remade; and in which cosmopolitanism resides, flourishes, or lies dormant—an "unfinished city" thrust by the force of circumstances into a conversation between the past and the future, between Africa and the world (Bender 2002). There is no question that Johannesburg is a city that, from its origins, has symbolized novelty, exuberance, adventurism, and, to a large extent, the possibility of a kind of freedom.[14]

We have called this book "Johannesburg—the Elusive Metropolis." To assert the elusiveness of Johannesburg is to unfix rather than to fix the meanings of the African modern. We have wished to point to the gap between the way things actually are and the way they appear in theory and discourse. Cities are subjects *en fuite*. They always outpace the capacity of analysts to name them. This gap constitutes the elusiveness referred to in our title. Johannesburg is an elusive metropolis because of the multiplicity of registers in which it is African (or perhaps not at all, or not enough); European (or perhaps not, or no longer), or even American (by virtue of its embeddedness in commodity exchange and its culture of consumption). Its very elusiveness makes

it especially compelling as an object of study, and the theoretical work of this introduction has been to draw its metropolitan charge into being. While the project of this book has been to work with this elusiveness (as seen in the individual chapters and the shape the book has taken), there are further questions that this book opens onto. The way in which Johannesburg relates to, and helps us to, understand other African cities requires further studies. The degree to which it invokes a Southern Hemispheric modernity more widely is still to be properly probed in comparative work. To capture the elusiveness of this city would not be to simply invoke the anthropological and developmental narratives that have dominated its representation in favor of the magic and shine of capital. Nor is it our intention to take European modernity in its literary and cultural forms as the vector of Johannesburg's contemporary life. Neither of these propositions is enacted in the essays that follow. Rather, the complexity of their imbrication is articulated by the contributors, and this is what speaks most forcefully to the elusiveness we have sought to capture.

The Structure of the Book

To a large extent, this book is a gesture of defamiliarization. In part, this implies that when it comes to things "African," it is possible to move away from the fascination with the horrors of a seemingly static world and to rehabilitate our curiosity while also insisting on this virtue as a necessary hallmark of a truly global academic project. The book is composed of two parts. The first section comprises essays written largely in an academic mode. Taken together, they generate a set of concepts for reading the contemporary metropolis, including notions of superfluity, self-stylization, and the African modern. Many work with the notions of surface and depth discussed above, adding new theoretical rigor to this set of imaginaries so redolent of the Johannesburg metropolis. Each concentrates on life worlds that signal what is emerging across the interfaces of the city, revealing its heterogeneous archive.

Working with and against Georg Simmel, Achille Mbembe uses the two notions of superfluity and surface/depth to reorder both well-known and new material into a complex theoretical argument. For him, *superfluity* refers not only to the aesthetics of surfaces and quantities but also to the dialectics of indispensability and expendability of both people and things.

More specifically, he describes two examples of the new public theaters of consumption in which space and images are both figural forms and aestheticized commodities: Melrose Arch and Montecasino. In the process, he revisits the biopolitics of Johannesburg as a "racial city" and its transition to a metropolitan form. He also explores what he calls the "city unconscious." He shows that the new political economy of this metropolis develops in and through cultural and aesthetic tastes, the main feature of which is to create surfaces and images. The creative éclat of these images and surfaces, in turn, functions to override historical memory and to replace it with the common sense of consumption and fantasy. This he interprets as foundational to "the psychic life of the city" after the dark period of apartheid. As elsewhere in the world, cultural sensitivities, aesthetics, and urban subjectivities in contemporary Johannesburg metropolitan life draw their energy from thoroughly commodified and marketed cityscapes (Vincenzo 2000). To a large extent, the commodity form becomes *the* form of existence, Mbembe argues.

AbdouMaliq Simone argues that the boundaries of Johannesburg are constantly mediated through an infrastructure. For Simone, urban infrastructure in the friction zones of the metropolis is made up of not only wires, ducts, tunnels, highways, electricity, and automobiles. It is in the first instance made up of what he calls "people," "bodies," "intersections," and "networks." These entities form the topological connections that give meaning to practices of social reproduction across city time and space. These very practices, almost of necessity, are contingent, uncertain, and unpredictable. At the same time, these people, bodies, intersections, and networks structure and delineate the material culture of the city. They constitute the fabric—or infrastructure—of contemporary African metropolises.

Sarah Nuttall focuses on the negotiation of the surface in contemporary cultural forms in Johannesburg. The city, she argues, is studied with texts—billboards, newsprints, magazine covers, road signs, and even entire surfaces of buildings constitute a stream of signs of Johannesburg representation. As surfaces, they are sometimes just that, but they also at times suggest a deeper diagnostic, a layering in which the apparent fixity of race so often privileged in accounts of Johannesburg is underwritten by the potential unfixing of the commodity-form, or in which the past resurfaces in the present. The chapter discusses two phenomena of the now. The first is the emergence in the city of a youth culture widely known as Y culture. Y culture is a "compositional remixing" that signals the supercession of an earlier era's resistance politics by an alternative politics of style and accessorization

while simultaneously gesturing in various ways toward the past. Nuttall describes it as a culture of the hip bucolic that works across a series of surfaces, requiring what Gilroy calls "technological analogies" in order to produce enigmatic and divergent styles of self-making. In the second part of her essay, she discusses a series of recent advertisements that have appeared in the wake of Y culture. The ads can simultaneously be seen to work beyond, while still unwittingly reconfirming, the power of race in the contemporary public sphere of the city. She shows, too, how the market becomes an important place for projecting forms of racial conviviality and therefore a space in which the idea of living together across race is experimented with.

Jonathan Hyslop inserts Johannesburg into the narrative of modernity and modernist culture. He shows how, in the fiercely segregated years of the early twentieth century, the city became a haven of nonracial creative energies and the gathering point for activists, artists, intellectuals, writers, musicians, bohemians, and various kinds of strangers. As a modernist city, he writes, Johannesburg was a place of uncertainty and disintegration, but also "a place that stimulated the search for the possibilities of freedom. It was a city of ideas." Focusing particularly on the figures of Gandhi and Mandela, he shows that a particular role was played in the intellectual ferment of the city by the stranger. Moreover, it was the very extremity of Johannesburg's history that made its experience of modernity productive of political creativity. Hyslop takes Gandhi and Mandela as the two most globally significant and famous individuals to move on the Johannesburg stage in the twentieth century. He looks at how they were, in an important sense, the product of the peculiarly modern milieu that Johannesburg created. Both can be understood, he argues, to present us with the problem of the relation between the metropolis and nationalism, since both owed their fame to their success as leaders of nationalist movements, yet their global appeal is rooted in their transcendence of narrow nationalism. Hyslop attributes this transcendence to their markedly metropolitan and cosmopolitan experiences in Johannesburg.

David Bunn, in his chapter on the "visual city," also works with the problematic of the surface. While metropolitan modernism everywhere, from Baudelaire to Robert Frank, built an aesthetics around the idea of surfaces and reflection, Johannesburg's surfaces, he shows, and as we argue above, are based around a particular act of historical repression: the buried life of the black body, "instrumentalized and bent into contact with the coal face, or ore seam, at the stopes far below." The inability to come to terms with the actually existing life of the metropolis emerges as a particular problem in

theory, Bunn argues: the problem of the incoherence of surface signs—of mediation between levels. This incoherence was long blamed on capitalist brashness, but Marxist accounts revealed little about the desires of those who inhabited the city, thus pushing the articulation of metropolitan aesthetic experience "over the horizon," after the crisis of apartheid had been "cured." It is in this context that Bunn discusses the work of contemporary Johannesburg artists, paying close attention to the texture and status of the surface explored in their work. The surface tracery of an emerging urban aesthetic, flexible affiliations which result in representational acts constitutive of a migrant modernism, collaborations between urban renewal and public art, an aesthetic of frottage and of flatness, and painted surfaces of skin indicating epitomes of both trauma and loveliness emerge from Bunn's chapter to constitute a specific and striking city aesthetic.

Writing on AIDS in Johannesburg, Frédéric Le Marcis begins on the margins of the city (in the outskirts of the township of Alexandra, next to Sandton) and follows the movement of AIDS sufferers from there to the various locations in the city where they might find relief. His is not a reading of the storefronts and windows, café terraces, streetcars, and automobiles that form the letters of Benjamin or de Certeau's alphabet of the city. The essay reveals a network and nodes of circulation, tracing a geography of the city that is very different from the visible forms of circulation we see on its highways. In the process, he shows that the city is not simply a place of mobility. It can be read from different vantage points: from above, from below, or from in between its very surfaces. It can remain largely hidden, opaque, and invisible, especially when seen from the point of view of the itinerant body of the sufferer. Its boundaries are permeable and stretched. They can be mapped only if we take seriously nonconventional urban itineraries.

Sarah Nuttall studies the emergence of Johannesburg as an idea and a form in contemporary literatures of the city, drawing out the literary infrastructures giving the city a shape. The infrastructures (or nodes of metropolitan life) she examines are the street, the café, the suburb, and the campus. From these infrastructures or nodes of city-ness, certain figures emerge, among them the stranger, walking Hillbrow's streets, recasting its conventional pathways, and negotiating its hyperreality; the aging white man and his "ecologies of ignorance"—gaps, blind spots, mistakes, paradoxes—which lead at various points to closure and to the tenuous beginnings of racial friendship; and the hustler, operating with energetic and often underhand activity, turning the codes and conventions of a newly forming human-rights culture to his

own advantage. In her chapter, Nuttall explores vocabularies of separation and connectedness that surface only to recede again, and ways in which fictional characters move through and across long-established representational forms. City-ness in Johannesburg, its fiction reveals, is an intricate entanglement of éclat and somberness, lightness and darkness, comprehension and bewilderment, polis and necropolis, desegregation and resegregation.

These chapters show that Johannesburg has all along been a polycentric and international city that has developed its own brand of cosmopolitan culture. As in many metropoli of the Southern Hemisphere, it is a city where splendor and squalor exist side by side, and in which technologies of speed are dramatically changing people's experience of time, of space, and of self (Appadurai 2002; Sansone 2003). Just as in Mumbai or Rio de Janeiro, each cultural stratum has brought an intricate system of interconnections to bear upon a hybrid history that continually permeates the present. Over the last quarter of a century, its boundaries have become so geographically and socially permeable and stretched that the city seems to have no fixed parts, no completeness, and almost no unique center. Like the continent itself, it is an amalgam of often disjointed circulatory processes. Turning its back on the rigid rationalities of planning and racial separation, it has become, in spite of itself, a place of intermingling and improvisation. Its very porosity means that, released from the iron cage of apartheid, it can now continually fashion and refashion itself.

Voice Lines

The second section we have called "Voice Lines." It consists of shorter pieces and interviews. Indeed, one way of invoking the city, of bringing Johannesburg into being as a metropolis, is to make it talk. To generate the voices of the city itself is to venture into the realm of sensory intimation (Amin and Thrift 2003: 9). It is—as we have found in the process of putting together this book—not only to interpret monuments, images, built forms, and self-histories. It is also to draw on wider styles of writing, vocabularies that are not always academic, and nonconventional itineraries and mappings, such as those of journalists, artists, architects, and young people.

These voice lines point to themes and realities that have very often outpaced academic research. Mindful of what we wanted to do in this book, and of the relative poverty of the available literature on the city-ness of Jo-

hannesburg and the modernity of African life forms, we revisited the essay form and the interview form—both critical pedagogies with a long history, though often discarded in mainstream academic practice. The interventions in this section are united not only by form and style but also by theme: each concerns the remapping of physical and imaginary public spaces of the city of Johannesburg.

John Matshikiza writes about Johannesburg as the "unfinished city" of his birth and now return after many years in exile, of the "humming terminus" between South Africa and cities on the rest of the continent—Lagos, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Lusaka, Luanda. Two young South Africans, Grace Khunou and Nsizwa Dlamini, create personal maps of the postapartheid township in "Soweto Now." The "Arrivants" is an e-mail exchange between Tom Odhiambo, from Nairobi (Kenya), and Robert Muponde, from Harare (Zimbabwe), about living in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. They talk in ironic ways about intra-African cell phone cultures and modes of self-making in the city. Stefan Helgesson reflects on Johannesburg as seen from Maputo, via a lens of what some see as integration and others as hegemony and domination.

Music has been central to Johannesburg's metropolitan formation. Through a series of *situations* written in the first person, Xavier Livermon explores the city through its cultures of sound, and the ways in which bodies literally move through the city, in pursuit of music. Julia Hornberger reflects on the electric illumination of the night—its reenchantment—by situating contemporary nocturnal Johannesburg within its history of electric lighting. Fred de Vries writes about Sandton City, Johannesburg's largest shopping mall, and a prominent part of its dual city center, exploring it as an intriguing barometer of contemporary South Africa. Achal Prabhala writes an account of living in Yeoville, Johannesburg, once known as a bohemian, cross-racial home to the antiapartheid left, now an "Afropolitan," vibrant, and dangerous neighborhood.

The final two interventions engage with the built spaces of the city. Mark Gevisser examines how four city prisons are forming the site of South Africa's new Constitutional Court in Hillbrow. The struggle to find a form to express the new city is one that Lindsay Bremner vividly engages with in her short essay. Bremner discusses the final designs in an architectural competition for the remaking of a historical public space in Kliptown, Soweto. In an afterword to the book, Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge write of the risk of Johannesburg and of the writing of it.

Conclusion

In what follows, then, we present a city in formation, a metropolis in the making, a moment, captured in print, in the life of a city overwritten with possibility, underwritten by anxiety. As we write, a crime wave crests across the city. We have sought here to disentangle the contemporary fact of crime from a tendency to read this city in that manner—the manner of the criminological. As we write, too, citizens protest to government about crime, out of concern for the hard-won democracy from which the city is being wrought. We end this introduction, then, on a note of fragility, suffusing the achieved force, life, and political freedom of which this city undoubtedly speaks. Johannesburg, elusive as ever, in thrall to its future, speaks of a quite unprecedented African cosmopolitanism: the Afropolitan, as we have invoked it here. It is an original city, speaking in an original voice. Even in its most self-destructive moments, it is a place where a new and singular metropolitan vocabulary is being born.

Notes

1 Such characterizations are typical of the secondary literature on global cities rather than of Saskia Sassen's original formulations. For an exception, see Appadurai 1996, esp. chap. 2. Otherwise, the same assumption underlies many approaches to global cultural formations. Read Fredric Jameson's theory of the global postmodern in *Postmodernism* (1991), David Harvey's considerations of flexible accumulation in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), or Manuel Castell's study of the ways in which information technology structures a space of flows of information, technology, and finance.

2 The results of the research gathered in this unpublished report were later published in a book by Koolhaus and Edgar Cleijne under the same title (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2007).

3 Jane Guyer (2004) shows that in many countries, formalization has not produced predictable systemic conditions at any level: "The policy monitoring, institutional reworking, and ever more detailed synchronization in economic life that are the hallmarks of modern rationalization have been extremely partial and changeable" (98). For urban citizens who make their livelihood in the so-called informal sector, formal policies and institutions have often lacked coherence and have hardly been empowering. "What has occurred in many places is that one formal policy has undone the conditions on which another depended, producing complex 'Catch-22' circumstances that people have had to navigate as best as they could" (98). African