Apartheid's Endless Itineraries

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APARTHEID'S ENDLESS ITINERARIES

REMAINS OF THE SOCIAL: DESIRING THE POST-APARTHEID
EDITED BY MAURITS VAN BEVER DONKER, ROSS TRUSCOTT,
GARY MINKLEY, AND PREMESH LALU.
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For many decades now South Africa has worn the mantle of global exemplarity. During the 1980s, South Africa was, in Derrida's phrase, "racism's last word" *(le dernier mot du racisme)*, a place where European racial thinking had reached its apogee (and, one hoped, its culminating endpoint). Following the collapse of the apartheid regime and the democratic elections of 1994, it became, under the sign of Nelson Mandela, the "rainbow nation": a concrete illustration of the quasi-miraculous overcoming of racial oppression through empathy and forgiveness and a beacon for other nations struggling with violent histories. In recent years, however, even as the burnished image of Mandela has been iconized around the world, South Africans themselves have come to suspect, with some discomfort, that their country means something else: a disappointment by or betrayal of political ideals. Promises made—regarding jobs, land, housing—have not been kept; an endemic corruption has set in to consolidate an elite political class; coarse and explicit varieties of racism, after strategically keeping their heads down, have resurfaced; and the country has found itself in the thrall of economic and social disparities often greater than those of the apartheid era. In this new configuration, as Andrew van der Vlies has put it, it is not so much that South Africa is becoming more like the rest of the world, but rather that the world is increasingly becoming more like South Africa, "more unequal, but also concerned

with the legacies—and in some cases the resurgence—of restrictive and exclusionary ideologies, and at the whim of non-state actors and speculative capital" (ix).

Remains of the Social grapples with two crucial issues that emerge from the above sketch. First, the book addresses the question of where exactly South Africa is now. This is not a simple question to answer, as is attested to by the range of hyphenated periodizations that have proliferated in academic scholarship: the post-post-apartheid, the post-anti-apartheid, the post-transitional—all attempts to come to terms with the nation's inability to move beyond its apartheid past. Certainly, the South Africa of today can no longer be called in good faith the rainbow nation, although occasional lip service is still paid to ideals of nonracial harmony and nation building. But neither is it simply an extension of the apartheid nation, although many aspects of apartheid persist, often in unaltered form.

The key term in *Remains of the Social,* the unhyphenated "postapartheid," marks an unwillingness to accede to clean delineations of historical periods. The postapartheid, as the editors indicate, does not name a historical period so much as a *condition* in which apartheid cannot be disavowed. This is more than a lexical gimmick: it methodologically opens the scope of the study to an archive that straddles the nation's pre-1994 and post-1994 histories. It also signals the collection's break from a powerful tradition in South African cultural studies that has aimed to move beyond the apartheid episteme. In an influential 2004 article, Sarah Nuttall argued that South African studies had been "over-determined by the reality of apartheid" (732) and proposed that the fixation on apartheid had led critics to overlook the emergence of new cultural and temporal formations—forms of what she called, in a later work, "entanglement." By contrast, *Remains of the Social* repeatedly insists that apartheid cannot be imaginatively outmaneuvered but must instead be "worked through" (this psychoanalytic term recurs throughout this collection). I take the broad argument of this collection to be that the "post-apartheid" focus on new instantiations of the social as such has led to a dangerous blindness to the present-day mutations of apartheid, which, it is implied, is always already lodged within global modernity. Rather, therefore, than asking their contributors to take the social as an end in itself—that is, to imagine ways in which the social realm might be transformed, repaired, unified, or

rethought—the editors have asked them to treat the social as a prob-lematic: to attend not to the social but to what the social occludes. The "remains" of the title refers not only to what persists of the social in the fragmented arena of contemporary South Africa, but also, and even more strongly, to the idea of the *remainder*. What is it, they ask, that is "remaindered" or left out in the production of the social (ix)?

In shifting focus from the "post-apartheid" as the historical period succeeding apartheid to the "postapartheid" as abiding psychic con-dition, the collection also opens itself to the global sphere. (This review will alternate between the conventional spelling "post-apartheid" and the more specific "postapartheid" to denote these two discrete mean-ings). The easy answer to the question of why South Africa remains mired in apartheid would be to say that the legacy of apartheid sim-ply persists in structural form: white South Africans continue to hold on to land and capital, while a politically connected Black elite has merely furthered its own economic interests. The gambit of this col-lection is to suggest that the deeper reason is that apartheid is lodged in the structure of global (Enlightenment) modernity. As the editors argue in the introductory chapter, the global image of South Africa as a model for overcoming the racial logic that has plagued the mod-ern world is based on circular reasoning. South Africa, from this per-spective, never left apartheid behind because apartheid was always already there, circulating in the currents of global modernity. In 1994, then, South Africa left behind a local apartheid only to reenter a global apartheid.

This important conceptual move leads to the collection's second major theme. At the start of this review, I suggested that South Africa is bound up in the logic of the exemplar. Any attempt to grapple with its struggles, its tensions, and its paradoxes is immediately caught within the powerful forcefield of a desire for global meaning, a desire that tends to squeeze local complexities into a predetermined shape. *Remains* is animated by this fraught relationship between the particu-larities of South African apartheid and a wider view of apartheid as one iteration of a global logic. How does one negotiate the differential between the global deployment of apartheid (seen, for example, in the term "apartheid Israel") and the local South African instantiation? It is worth mentioning that this is in many ways a reprise of the fractious

argument engendered by Derrida's 1985 essay "Racism's Last Word." Here, Derrida fixed his attention on the valences of the actual word "apartheid." For Derrida, the word itself "concentrates separation" into a "quasi-ontological segregation." The word takes on a global force because it "remains the only [racism] on the scene that dares say its name and present itself for what it is" (292). In a response to this essay, the South African scholars Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon accused Derrida of ignoring the complex, embedded histories of apartheid, of in effect fetishizing the term apartheid, "removing the word from its place in the discourse of South African racism, raising it to another power, and setting separation itself apart" (141). Derrida, for his part, shot back by accusing McClintock and Nixon of misreading his ethical appeal for a historical description and of wanting to neuter the diagnostic and political power of the term apartheid by "tak[ing] seriously all the substitutes and pseudonyms, the periphrases and metonymies that the official discourse from Pretoria keeps coming up with" (159).

What was at stake in this debate—the tension between apartheid's indexical usefulness as a global clarion call and apartheid's denotative pointing to a set of painful, complex, and irredeemable South African histories—remains vital. The translation of the term "apartheid" into the global sphere has almost always entailed a loss of specificity. "Global apartheid"—as employed by everyone from Hardt and Negri to the BDS movement—has flattened out the particular struggles and contradictions of South African history, most of all in the way in which these movements have tended to see in South Africa the exemplar of a successful transcendence of apartheid. In the nomenclature of this collection, the myth of the *"post-apartheid"* (that which comes after apartheid) has tended to efface the condition of the *post-apartheid* (the state of continuing to live with and work through apartheid). A second intervention this collection makes, then, is to engineer a way through the impasse by, in effect, inhabiting it: by tracking the itineraries of apartheid, from local to global, in all its metamorphosing complexity.

This is best illustrated in concrete examples, so let me proceed to an overview of the chapters in the collection. I will not do this sequentially but rather by tracing what I see as four key critical concepts that this collection places under scrutiny.

THE NATION

I begin with a pair of essays that trouble easy understandings of the South African nation (which I take to be one key form of the "social" alluded to in the collection's title) as it appears in the global imagination. Derek Hook's brilliant anatomization of the "Mandela imaginary" looks skeptically at the almost hagiographic veneration of Mandela that dominated the "rainbow" period. Using a Lacanian framework, Hook argues that Mandela functioned in the national imaginary as a master signifier that served to stabilize an anxious era. However, Mandela's prominence in the national imaginary has a number of potentially sinister functions: it is a way of masking the shame of the post-apartheid nation; it enables a "saviour discourse" that allows individuals to abrogate their own agency and responsibility; and, most troublingly, it might constitute an "obsessional neurosis, ensuring nothing new can ever emerge" (45). Hook goes on to suggest that Jacob Zuma (in power from 2009 to 2018) might also function as a signifier. Corrupt, factional, rapacious, and amoral, Zuma is usually seen as the anti-Mandela, a sign of just how far the political ideals of Mandela have fallen. But for Hook, the image of Zuma works in tandem with Mandela's. If Mandela is the image of how South Africans would like to see themselves, then Zuma represents their fears of what they really are. Both images in the Mandela-Zuma dyad stem "from the same, self-conflicted, narcissistic and yet also self-hating source, namely, the images South Africans have of themselves" (58).

If Hook shows the spurious glue that binds the nation together, Gary Minkley and Helena Pohlandt-McCormick's study of the town of Dimbaza shows what the construct of South Africa necessarily leaves out. Dimbaza was initially an apartheid resettlement location in the Bantustan of the Ciskei; after international outcry when the degree of its immiseration was exposed on film, both the apartheid state and local Ciskei authorities conspired to develop it into a global model for separate development, forging ties with international industry—as a consequence of which its inhabitants entered into a different modality of exploitation. After the fall of the apartheid regime and the Bantustan system, industry vacated and Dimbaza sank once more into obscure impoverishment. Because they do not fit into the progressive telos of oppression-struggle-emancipation, places like Dimbaza are

left out of the narrative of South Africa: subjects of neither apartheid nor liberation, they "lack indexicality" (220). Synthesizing this with Hook's psychoanalytic insights, one can infer that places like Dimbeza *must* be forgotten because they threaten the coherence of a fragile national narrative.

THE HUMAN

Because they situate the roots of apartheid within Enlightenment modernity, a conceptual lens that runs through many of these essays is "the human," or at least the version of it bequeathed to us by Enlightenment thought. As the editors, leaning on Fanon and Biko, note in their introduction, it is the conception of "Man" as self-sovereign subject that ultimately produces race: "The white man is produced as Man through the objectification of the black man" (5). This construction of "Man" on a Cartesian model of the subject leads to the installation of sovereignty as a transcendental principle of being—"one of the tragedies of the crisis of modernity" (18). It is thus that they look to forms of relational rather than sovereign being: forms of being in which the self is preceded by the other.

At least two of the contributions engage directly with these alternate models of the subject. Mari Ruti's lucid and tough-minded essay tackles some of the problems and pitfalls within Judith Butler's theorization of "precarious life." Precarity topples the myth of the sovereign and self-sufficient subject, presenting a subject continually "interrupted by otherness" (93). Furthermore, it has the advantage of being a universal *at the same time* as being particular. We all struggle; we all die. At the same time, degrees of precarity—of subjection to violence, poverty, dislocation, discrimination—are unequally distributed. Ruti therefore usefully labels Butler's a "reluctant" universalism. Ruti's essay levels two critiques at Butler's model of the precarious subject. First, Ruti asks whether the troping of non-Westerners as uniquely precarious turns them into objects of pity, further disempowering them. Second, she raises a crucial political question: can an antihumanist, anti-Enlightenment ethics still support political struggles (such as the antiapartheid struggle, or the Palestinian cause) that are based on a fight for sovereignty? These are not new arguments within postcolonial

studies, yet they are worked through with unusual clarity. Ruti seems to advocate a compromise position: to a certain degree, we need Enlightenment norms (although these must always be subject to revision); to a certain degree, different experiences of global suffering need to be linked in the interests of solidarity, even if this involves a flattening of individual experiences.

The other contribution working fruitfully on this theme is Maurits van Bever Donker's work, which draws on Maurice Blanchot's writings on the "unavowable community." Blanchot's idea was to imagine a form of community that could not be conscripted by the state: this community would free its members from subjective self-certainty and release them into the infinite openness of "insufficiency"—a key term for Bever Donker. It is this community of insufficiency that he sees in a reading one of the key texts of postapartheid South Africa, Phaswane Mpe's short novel *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (a novel that has traditionally been read as a quintessential representation of the post-apartheid social in its most inclusive form). Bever Donker's contrarian reading, with its privileging of moments of the loss of self, is a provocative one. But I wonder to what extent it might illustrate some of Ruti's worries about the universalization of precarity. Blanchot's quest for a principle of insufficiency emerged in opposition to a bourgeois postwar Europe that had disavowed its history of fascism. To transpose Blanchot to postapartheid Hillbrow—a community that is already deeply precarious—raises tough questions. Among them: can such a community not also be permitted to desire some degree of sovereignty and certainty in the midst of an insufficiency that is very real and material?

EMPATHY

A bedrock of liberal thought, empathy, as Ross Truscott notes, is a form of relation imagined to have "exceeded or escaped relations of domination" (66). It has been, accordingly, the affective structure through which Black Africa is generally engaged. The two essays I discuss below are both critical of empathy's claim to a kind of transhistorical innocence, but they approach it in very different—almost opposing—ways. Truscott's essay proposes that empathy in fact has

an insalubrious "colonial genealogy" (66). Empathy, he reminds us, is an element of hunting: the successful hunter understands and inhabits his prey. (It is also, by the same token, an essential psychological strategy for those escaping to be able to empathize with their pursuer). Truscott reads this logic back through Freud's famous analysis of Dora, and laterally through Pumla Goboda-Madikizela's recent writings on Eugene de Kock (head of the infamous Vlakplaas unit that tracked down and tortured antiapartheid operatives). While Goboda-Madikizela writes of the ostensible awakening of De Kock's "human" capacity for empathy, Truscott acidly points out that De Kock "already had empathy for his victims when he was tracking them down" (81). Truscott's point is not that we discard empathy but that we recognize its "predatory, penetrating, narcissistic" potentials (86). At the center of this argument is a series of reimaginings of Ovidian myths by the South African artist Nandipha Mntambo that "queer" the empathetic gaze. Truscott's reading of Mntambo's "Rape of Europa" illustrates this well: the viewer's gaze is drawn to the minotaur's eyes (Mntambo replaces Ovid's bull with the more aggressive and humanoid minotaur), which in turn gaze into the face of the suppliant Europa, whose outstretched hand then reflects this "empathic" gaze back at the viewer. Truscott suggests that Mntambo's artwork foregrounds a latent violence in the empathetic gaze, that it lays bare "the predatory elements of empathy" (74).

Annemarie Lawless takes up the question in a different key, pursuing the worry Ruti feels over the distribution and consumption of global precarity. What, she asks, can we make of the American philosopher Alphonso Lingis, who developed a habit of photographing impoverished locals during his travels, in an act he thought of as a gift and even as love? Lawless surprisingly defends Lingis, arguing that a certain reflexive guilt among Western intellectuals can become a "protective device" that at the same closes down the possibility of sorrow, pity, or love as self-indulgent and morally narcissistic. "In the ultimate extension of this thought," she argues, "empathy itself becomes an ethical transgression" (148). While Truscott wants to dismantle empathy, Lawless wants in some manner to reinvent it. Lawless's question is this: can an intellectualized critique of the intersubjective attunements that we schematize as love, pity, and empathy sometimes be invidious and counterproductive? Is there a basis on which what

she calls "the dominated fraction of the dominant class" (147)—in other words first-world artists and intellectuals—can relate, as human to human, to those on the abject side of global apartheid? The question is vital, but what Lawless proposes is somewhat nebulous: a kind of "creaturely" contact occurring in moments of mutual vulnerability that to my mind sidesteps the problems of history and structural positionality.

The concern with empathy seems to me to derive in large part from the nature of the academic humanities in Africa. Anyone who has spent any time in the African academy is aware of the asymmetrical power dynamic between white academics—both local and those from the Global North—and Black Africa. It is often the case that Africa becomes the raw material to be excavated, articulated, and theorized, while the white theorist climbs the rungs of academe. (The dynamic is often gendered: for male academics, Africa is often a space of romantic danger; for female academics, it is the child who must be loved, spoken for, and protected). I am exaggerating somewhat for rhetorical effect, but my point is that scholarly and intellectual interventions fall squarely and uncomfortably within it. Truscott's rigorous challenging of empathy and Lawless's attempt to think a way through the obstacles to relation both gnaw productively at this discomfort. At the same time, I suspect that in the long run a more robust model of how this asymmetrical global dynamic might be reimagined and restructured is also necessary.

THE BREAK

A final concern in this volume—its central but perhaps the most intractable problem—is what one might term (in a phrase I borrow from the African American scholar Fred Moten) the break: that is, the problem of how (or indeed whether) to move beyond a dark past. The editors suggest that an insistence on breaking away from apartheid rather than "working through" it risks simply recapitulating apartheid in another key. In trying to think both with and beyond apartheid, they refer more than once to what they call "a difference that is not apartheid's difference" (14, 20), marshaling Achille Mbembe's concern, in reference to the decolonization movements that ran through

South African universities in 2015 and 2016, that unreflective assertions of Blackness might fetishize or even mirror the narcissistic pathologies of whiteness: that "one form of damaged life" is "simply to be replaced by another" ("On the State of South African Political Life"). Several of the essays in this volume offer metaphorically rich and generative conceptualizations of this problem.

One suggestive approach is mapped out by Premesh Lalu, who goes back into the apartheid period to excavate imaginings of a break from it, focusing on the "schools boycott" of 1985 in Athlone, a traditionally "Coloured" suburb in Cape Town. (In apartheid terminology, Coloured denominated people of mixed-race ancestry. The term is still very much current and not pejorative.) Lalu recounts how the boycotts were ended by the "Trojan Horse" tactics of the apartheid state, in which a truck loaded with crates drove to the center of a student protest before armed police hiding in the back jumped out and opened fire, killing three students. The key term in this essay is the "interval," which Lalu borrows from the Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov. For Vertov, the interval—the gap between frames and between scenes— offered a more open-ended version of the coming into being of a new people than that of Stalinization, the "becoming-steel" of the nation. Lalu puts this idea to work in his reading of the bioscopes of Athlone, which, filled with Chinese martial arts films and American Westerns, offered "a substitute horizon for the geographies of apartheid" (261). Like Stalinist Russia, apartheid South Africa offered an iron trajectory for young Coloured and Black students, who were destined to become "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (254). In memorializing the events of 1985 as a school boycott, Lalu argues that we miss its essence: the students were driven not by a desire to reject the apartheid school but by a "desire for a return to the interval" (270).

I conclude my overview with Aidan Erasmus's reading of the cover version in the music of the post-apartheid rock band Van Coke Cartel. The cover versions Erasmus examines are reinterpretations of Afrikaans apartheid-era songs, and they lay out the problem in a fresh way, for "the cover cannot escape that which it is covering, nor can it transcend it" (181). For Erasmus, however, the VCC (surely a parodic echo of the VOC, the Dutch East India Company that founded the first European settlement on the Cape of Good Hope) find themselves in the paradox of punk rock in general: punk's struggles to reject whiteness

often end up reaffirming it, as punk often becomes the chosen genre for white supremacists and fascists of other stripes. The cover serves as a powerful metaphor for the dilemma underpinning this entire collection. What this collection suggests, after all, is that what we unthinkingly call the post-apartheid (hyphenated) is always at some level doomed to be a cover of apartheid's "original," and that any moving on from the apartheid cannot simply take the form of a clean and simple break but involves rearranging, reinhabiting, reenvisioning, and making new terms with the past.

THINKING FROM THE SOUTH / THINKING GLOBALLY

As a whole, the collection is rich, provocative, and intellectually stimulating, bringing incisive theoretical models into generative conversation with powerful, troubling, and often overlooked elements of both the South African and the global archive. In making urgent and powerful interventions on topics of urgent relevance to contemporary global conversations—the human, the structural asymmetry of global knowledge, the racialized nature of the global present—the collection implicitly situates South Africa as a site at the vanguard of global dynamics, indeed, as a privileged vantage point from which to think through global issues.

It is worth situating this collection within the context of a number of recent pushes toward global thinking from South Africa. *Remains of the Social* is a product of a particular institutional formation in the contemporary South African academy: the proliferation of the academic research institute. Although research institutes have a long history in the country, stretching back at least to the early years of apartheid, a number of new institutes, most of them focused on the humanities and social sciences (and almost all interdisciplinary in methodology) have sprung up since 1994. To name a few: the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WiSER), the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study (JIAS), and the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Research (JIAS). *Remains* is a product of the Centre for the Humanities Research (CHR) at the University of the Western Cape, traditionally the radical counterpart to the politically liberal University of Cape Town. There are several forces shaping the contemporary South African research

institute, and they are often at odds with one another. The first is the quantification and economization of academic scholarship in the South African and the global academy: research "outputs" and "impacts" have become weapons with which universities battle one another for state funding and global rankings. This is of course well outside the control of the authors, although they are certainly to be commended for producing a polished, deeply considered, and carefully curated collection in an academic landscape that rewards brute quantity. A second shaping force is that the research institute is generally exempt from teaching duties in the university (and is indeed sometimes physically separated from the university campus). The result of this is often a type of heady "ivory-tower" theorizing detached from local idioms of thought—a mode into which this collection occasionally lapses.

The final force, on which I will comment in some detail, is the powerful drive in the South African academy to produce what John and Jean Comaroff have called "theory from the South," or what others, drawing on Latin American debates, have called "decolonized" knowledge. The basic principle is simple: there exists a global flow of knowledge in which raw material is harvested from the Global South by academics based in the North, who then "theorize" it into an intellectual product. As a general guiding principle, theory from the South aims to counterbalance this asymmetrical (and frankly predatory) arrangement. "Theory from the South" is far from a monolithic intellectual position, and many of its basic tenets (should it draw from a global intellectual toolbox or should it "delink" from the Global North? What exactly constitutes "the South"? What constitutes "theory" in the Southern context?) are still up for grabs. Yet a consensus running through these debates is that the Global South, more exposed to the extremes of global capitalism, is a privileged locale that both tells us more about the current global trajectory than the Global North does and, in its intellectual resources of "indigenous knowledge" and "border thinking," offers more generative lines of flight from it.

Where does *Remains* fit into these debates? At first glance, despite its Capetonian provenance, it strikes me as less an instance of "theory from the South" than an ambitious experiment in global thinking that aims to privilege neither North nor South. In fact, I would go further: in many ways, the work on display here suggests to my mind a postcolonially inflected version of the Frankfurt School. Like the

Frankfurt School, the collection methodologically yokes together psychoanalysis, sociology, and aesthetics. Also like the Frankfurt School, it exhibits a troubled and ambivalent relationship to the European Enlightenment, which on the one hand provides the concepts of freedom, sovereignty, and self-determination that have driven liberation struggles across the world and on the other hand has consolidated an instrumentalist version of "Man" over "Nature" (the editors locate the origins of apartheid in the Cartesian division between mind and body). Unlike the Frankfurt School, however, with its relatively uniform core of German-Jewish thinkers working from the common Germanophone intellectual foundation of Hegel, Freud, and Marx, the contributors to this collection, based in South Africa, the UK, and the United States, are from a variety of intellectual and cultural backgrounds. The positive upshot of this is a scope that moves well beyond the nation or even the continent, shuttling fluidly from Ovidian myth to the South African township, from Dziga Vertov's cinematic experiments in the early Soviet Union to the world of post-apartheid Afrikaans punk rock. However, for all its geographical and cultural breadth, there is surprisingly little in the way of South-South connections (exceptions are Lalu's piece, which brings Chinese martial arts films and Soviet cinema to bear on a discussion of the township bioscope, and a brief nod to Fanon in the introductory chapter). A study of apartheid's global itineraries and the forms of sociality it engenders (and/or forecloses) could surely say more about crucial links with India, Cuba, Israel/Palestine—and indeed the rest of the African continent. Despite casting itself as a theoretically savvy rejoinder to an edited collection from 2009, *Re-imagining the Social in South Africa* (eds. Peter Vale and Heather Jacklin)—which the editors of this collection take to task for its uncritical championing of a Kantian form of Enlightenment rationality—*Remains*, in orienting itself along a North-South axis, does not quite escape the Eurocentrism it critiques.

Two more points. First, the heavy use of psychoanalytic discourse and psychoanalytic theoretical lenses marks a number of these essays. Putting psychoanalysis in conversation with decolonization prizes open uncomfortable ambiguities and in some ways places this collection at loggerheads with the dominant strands of decolonial politics. While decolonization demands answers, imaginaries, and programs, the discourse of psychoanalysis is fundamentally pessimistic

and ambiguous. This is an important aspect of the collection's aim of resisting easy closure in the interests of more complex workings through. It does, however, also raise the question of what to do after complexity. What is the endgame of a potentially endless working through of a trauma that stretches back to at least the dawn of modernity and persists into the present?

My final point concerns the question of the language of African criticism. As an experiment in a form of global critique that takes Africa as its point of departure, this collection can be profitably read alongside Achille Mbembe's *Critique of Black Reason*. Published in the same year as *Remains* (2017), Mbembe's study investigates the global discourses of Blackness and the figure of the "black man" (*le nègre*) as both an Other created by Enlightenment reason and as the origin of counter-discourses to it.[1] Both works aspire to think globally and critically across intellectual impasses; both works take Africa as a privileged vantage point for intellection reflection, and both works, crucially, see a becoming-global of the South African predicament. Yet, in reading Mbembe's work, one is immediately struck by the sense that Mbembe has invented a new language that fully matches his subject matter: visceral, musical, and theoretical at the same time, his prose conjures into being the world of mutual belonging that has been effaced by racial thinking. Mbembe's style is informed by what he calls the "metamorphic" thinking of Fanon: a "situated thinking, born of a lived experience that was always in progress, unstable, and changing," a thinking that "aimed at smashing, puncturing, and transforming the mineral and rocky wall and interosseous membrane of colonialism" (161–62). To be sure, a single author may develop a unique critical idiom in a way that is perhaps impossible for a geographically dispersed collective. Yet critical to the success of a project of "working through" the postapartheid at a global level is surely developing a critical language (or critical languages) that break the stranglehold of European high theory. What is to my mind missing from *Remains of the Social* is this presence of a "metamorphic thinking" that might develop into an outside or an otherwise to European thought. This probing, challenging, provocative collection poses many powerful questions that emerge from the threading of European modernity with apartheid South Africa. It leaves open for others the question of what a critical language of the postapartheid might look like.

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Notes

1. The original French edition was published in 2013.

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