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# From liberation to liberalization: Newtown, the Market Theatre, and Johannesburg's relics of meaning

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## From Liberation to Liberalization: Newtown, the Market Theatre, and Johannesburg's Relics of Meaning

### Abstract:

Under first colonial and then apartheid rule, Johannesburg has long endeavored to deny the traces of its own geopolitical development. Promoting itself as the “ultimate city of the present” (Palestrant 1986, 7), incessant cycles of urban renewal have ensured it has always boasted the latest in Western metropolitan design, all the while dismissing any concern for the conservation of its past. The district of Newtown, situated in a liminal space on the margin of the city, offers an unlikely exception to this rule. Tracing the history of its deterioration as much as its development, this article will make example of the district’s ruination as a vital contest to Johannesburg’s governing rationality. Initially, it draws out a critical link between this spatial decay, Newtown’s tradition as a site of dissent and the particular accomplishments of the Market Theatre, which was established in the district in 1976. With Newtown’s renovation in 2001 as part of the Johannesburg’s broader rebranding as a world city, however, the district’s industrial ruins have come under increasing threat. The collective memories that once circulated on the streets of Newtown have now been fixed within new archival institutions and its material relics gentrified to make way for new commercial investment. Making example of the Market Theatre’s recent revival of *Woza Albert!*, which was staged originally just as apartheid’s ultimate authority was beginning to fracture in 1981, this article concludes by assessing the perilous impact of these recent developments on Newtown’s spatial and material configuration as a site of disorder and dissent on the margins of the metropolis.

Keywords:

alterity, apartheid, globalization, Johannesburg, workshop theatre.

“Johannesburg is proud that history and beauty and all that bunk  
aren’t a significant feature of its landscape.”

John Matshikiza. “Instant City.”

In accounting for the “aesthetics of superfluity” that have long patterned Johannesburg’s built environment, Achille Mbembe (2008, 37, 41) not only draws attention to the manifest “luxury, rarity and vanity” that overwrites the city’s visible surface, but he adduces, too, the furtive exploitation that underwrites it. Johannesburg’s façade of excess and immoderation, Mbembe suggests, derives as much from the “obfuscation of any use value black labor might have had” in its production as it does from its brazen display of wealth (42). It is a city of repression, a space that, as David Bunn (2008, 137) argues, has forcibly forgotten its most “scandalous signifier”. For Bunn, as for Mbembe, any attempt to discover in Johannesburg the type of “scattered semantic[s]” that the theorist Michel de Certeau (2011, 107) seeks out in his voyeuristic walks around the streets of Paris or New York seem certain to fail. Johannesburg is a city void of the “relics of meaning” (105) that, in de Certeau’s assessment, ordinarily “haunt the urban space like superfluous or additional inhabitants” (107). It is, in short, an amnesiac surface cut loose from the debris of its own exploitative foundation.

Intent on disturbing the authority of the city's abstracted surface, this article endeavors to model an alternative map of Johannesburg, one that locates in the historical depths of the city the suffering and exploitation long denied articulation. Where Mbembe laments the visible marks of the past lost to the city's incessant "production, circulation, and reproduction of capital" (2008, 37), I attempt to envision Johannesburg, and specifically the industrial district of Newtown, as a type of palimpsest of "historical experience, in which underlying strata disconcertingly erupt into those above" (Shepherd and Murray 2007, 1). As a site enthralled by typically "modernist fantasies of *creatio ex nihilo*" (Huysen 2003, 7) when it was formalized in the early 1900s, Newtown appears, at first sight, an unlikely site in which to discover a challenge to Johannesburg's principal schema. But where the avaricious "needs of corporate, property-holding elites with no time for history" (Murray 2011, 63) wrenched the rest of the central cityscape through periodic cycles of urban dissolution and renewal, eviscerating in the process any sense of the "past or poetic realm" imagined by de Certeau (2011, 106) to prosper elsewhere, Newtown was left to a process of slow ruination during much of the twentieth century. Largely excluded from the logic of capital investment that governed the rationality of the rest of the city, the district was permitted to degenerate and decompose in the years following its foundation.

This article proposes, in the first instance, to read through the district's ruined surface in an effort to recover the uncommon relics of meaning written into the depths of its past. Aimed toward an appraisal of the renowned Market Theatre, which was established in the district's former market building in June 1976 and made prominent by its many acclaimed anti-apartheid productions, this article begins by unraveling the correlation that developed between Newtown's material decay and its status as a site of political dissent. What follows

considers, most particularly, the significance of this alliance in fostering the celebrated theatre of resistance that emerged at the Market under apartheid.

As an unforeseen but, disconcertingly, not unwelcomed consequence of its material and spatial alterity, Newtown has been placed more recently at the centre of an ongoing effort to secure for Johannesburg as new global status. The district's nomination as the official cultural precinct of the city in 2001 along with its formal connection, by way of the recently constructed Nelson Mandela Bridge, to other heritage sites across city have transformed Newtown's industrial ruins into icons of a lucrative metropolitan memoryscape. It is against this backdrop of economic liberalization, which has swiftly overtaken the promise of political liberation, that this article concludes. Making example of the Market Theatre and its return to the most strident and, now, most profitable of anti-apartheid plays, *Woza Abert!*, I evaluate the broader ability of Newtown's dissident past to withstand the present threat posed by Johannesburg's increasingly globalized, neoliberal character.<sup>i</sup>

To trace the distinctive history of Newtown, however, is to return to Johannesburg's very foundation and the purchase by the Boer state of the Randjeslaagte triangle as the location for a permanent mining camp in December 1886. Positioned on the camp's westerly border, the site known at the time as Burgersdorp was a largely unremarkable one (See Figure 1). It sat not on any of the payable deposits of gold that attracted scores of national and international prospectors to the Transvaal but upon a more insipid alluvial residue: red clay. For those poor white Afrikaners and black migrants unable to secure work in the goldfields or upon the commercial farms in the area, however, these deposits were not without a certain allure. A number of small-scale brickyards, each employing up to three or four black workers, were quickly established on the site to service the demands of the burgeoning mining town on its doorstep. As Johannesburg's formal boundaries began to

expand beyond the original Randjeslaagte triangle, however, the brickfields soon became an attractive site for municipal planners wishing to secure a convenient location for the town's first marshalling yard. By 1896, less than a decade after they had first materialized, the brickyards had all but disappeared, their swift eradication indicative of a process of incessant transformation that would come soon to typify the rest of the city.

The ensuing decade did much to cement the paradigm, for just eight years on from the construction of the marshalling yard, the former brickfields were nominated again as the site for a fresh commercial venture. The clearance and burning in 1904 of the area's "Coolie" and "Kaffir" locations as well as the extensive white slum that had since seeded itself in the area were cleared to make way for an ornate new produce market, complete with an Edwardian gabled front and an impressive internal three-pin arch shipped over from Britain.<sup>ii</sup> A new tramway was subsequently installed to encourage the wealthy, white residents from the northern and eastern suburbs to travel across the city and make use of the new provision. Commissioned, too, for the district in 1906 was a new electrical plant, with a second, even larger power station added the following year. It was during these years that Newtown, as the district was subsequently designated, was transformed into a type of entrepôt for the rest of Johannesburg, coming both to feed the city's "new consumer world" and to give expression to its "new building technologies" (Chipkin 1993, 18).

Predictably, perhaps, this explosion in Johannesburg's built environment brought with it an equally notable eruption in its social one, with Newtown similarly at its heart. Unsettling the district's veneer of urban order with the reality of its repressed civic disorder, a series of volatile and regularly violent workers revolts were staged at the district's large ox-wagon square during the early 1910s. This included a succession of South African Labour Party rallies and a unilateral mineworkers' strike in 1913, the latter of which concluded with the

torching of the nearby central railway station and the offices of the *Star* newspaper. By the time of the notorious Rand Revolt of 1922, Newtown's standing as the primary centre of commerce and modern industry in the city had been all but overhauled by its reputation as a site of radical dissent. As such, the district was selected, along with the adjacent suburb of Fordsburg, as the primary stronghold for the thousands of white mineworkers striking in protest at the extreme wage reductions proposed by the Chambers of Mines. Recorded since as "the single most violent labour uprising in the history of Britain's white Dominions" (Hyslop 2007, 92), the Rand Revolt left some 150 workers dead and did much to effect the defeat of Jan Smuts' United Party at the forthcoming 1924 election.

These instances of violent rebellion served to challenge much more than the stability of the ruling political elite; they contested with equal force the particular fantasies of urban progress and civic discipline that went hand in glove with Newtown's modernist design. The result was Newtown's exclusion from the delirium of urban development that swept across the rest of the city. Other than the construction of the Jeppe Street Power Station in 1927, the district was pressed into a period of protracted decline. Its numerous electrical plants were decommissioned in the 1940s and the tramway closed in 1961. Newtown's absolute dissolution was eventually confirmed in 1974 with the closure of the once-thriving market building.

Far from silencing the district's dissension, however, this formal abandonment effected a type of preservation. Intrinsicly bound up with the decaying and dilapidated material remains were the relics of meaning written into the space by its radical social past. Even as the terrain of the struggle shifted, with the demands of the Rand's white workers overtaken by the plight of the black majority wholly excluded from the political economy, Newtown's status as a space from which to contest the exploitative logic of the rest of the

city endured. In particular, its ox-wagon square, which was renamed in 1939 in honor of the union official, Mary Fitzgerald, who led many of the earliest protests in the district, continued to serve as a principal rallying point for the recently established African Mine Workers' Union during the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>iii</sup> In its state of dissolution, Newtown continued to contest the transitory nature of the city around it. Like the rare heterotopias that Michel Foucault (1986, 24) identifies as resisting the urban order by "indefinitely accumulating time", the memories of Newtown's unruly past were left to accrue amidst its abandoned material remains, their potency augmented by their survival outside the incessant cycles of redevelopment that pervaded the rest of the city.<sup>iv</sup>

Set amidst the district's relics of meaning, the recently abandoned market building presented prospective new tenants with an exceptional opportunity when the tender for leasehold of the building was issued to theatre groups by the municipal council in November 1974.<sup>v</sup> Not only did the arrangement allow for fruitful engagement with the district's spatial and material alterity but the market building's designation as site of trade and industry also permitted its legitimate use by every race. The tender was secured in April 1975 by the Market Theatre Foundation, a newly formed collective of white trustees managed by Mannie Manim, the former Head of the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal, and Barney Simon, a theatre director well-renowned for his productions in the city's Rehearsal Rooms at Dorkay House. Their plans for the building included the construction of a main stage in former Indian fruit market along with a smaller studio space upstairs in the building's Edwardian frontage. Donations from the Foundation's liberal chairman, Murray McLean, saw the studio space completed early and allowed Simon to stage a version of Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* in June 1976 in order to raise funds for the remainder of the project.



Simon's choice of play was not without political inflection. Like a great number of the European dramas that would come to be performed at the Market Theatre, the content of Chekhov's play was thought thematically relevant enough to engender a degree of critical reflection amidst the theatre's predominantly white audience members. Crucially, however, it was also deemed far enough removed from the immediacies of apartheid to avoid raising the ire of potential sponsors and donors.<sup>vi</sup> While critics such as Anne Fuchs (2002, 56) have been eager to commend this balance, the mass revolts that erupted on the streets of Soweto just as the play was due to open also set the choice into stark relief. Even for Simon, such oblique an approach to the inequities that pervaded the apartheid city could not be sustained indefinitely and he sought soon after to develop a more committed, conscientizing model of theatre making.

The first significant productions to be yielded by Simon's turn away from the formal, European dramatic canon were two workshop plays staged at the Market in 1979. Both *Cincinatti: Scenes from City Life*, devised with a mix of black, Indian and white actors on the closure of a non-racial nightclub, and *Call Me Woman*, prepared with a black, all female cast as rejoinder to their treatment as domestic servants in the city's white suburban homes, sought to uncover the regimes of oppression operative beneath the city's visible surface. Prioritizing the everyday knowledge of the actors themselves, this workshop theatre-making process rooted itself, as the director Mark Fleishman (1990, 89) stresses, "in the urban experience of South Africa". As such, it sought to engage its audience not at the level of the individual psyche but rather in terms of the city's "collective consciousness", drawing out from the urban space meanings and resonances common to all (Fleishman 1990, 109). The mixed notices received by Simon's earliest efforts, particularly *Call Me Woman*, marked above all else the inherent complexity of this process in Johannesburg, a city conditioned by

repression and destructive denial. It took the success of *Woza Albert!*, a new workshop production devised over the course nearly two years by two black actors, Percy Mtwa and Mbongeni Ngema in collaboration with Simon, to discover the full, radical potential of this practice.

*Woza Albert!* was conceived originally following a heated debate on the Second Coming whilst Mtwa and Ngema were on tour with Gibson Kente's township musical *Mama and the Load* in 1979. Intent on ironizing the Christian principles that supposedly underwrote the Nationalist government's policy of separate but equal development, the pair imagined what might happen should Morena (the seSotho word for Christ) ever rise again in South Africa. Mtwa and Ngema moved to the Transkei for three months to work on this basic plot structure before returning to Johannesburg for a further nine months of rehearsals, working initially at a newly created black arts centre close by to the Market Theatre (see Fuchs 2002, 108). They were especially eager to emulate the successful "Poor Theatre" format that underwrote Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Nthsona's renowned *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) and *The Island* (1973). As such, they approached Simon, who had first furnished Fugard with a copy of Jerzy Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968), sent by the director to his friend from New York in 1969.<sup>vii</sup> Excited by the potential of Mtwa and Ngema's various sketches, Simon responded by challenging the actors to take daily to the streets around the Market and implant within their various characterizations, what Mbembe (2008, 51) elsewhere describes as, "the experience of transience and juxtaposition, displacement and precariousness" that epitomized life for black migrants in the city. The drama which emerged after this imaginative turn to the unconscious depths of the city was to garner remarkable critical acclaim during its showing at the Market and again while on tour to Edinburgh, London and New York. In its recuperation of the repressed psyche of the

apartheid city, this latest play also proved itself to be a compelling rejoinder to carefully structured surface through which Johannesburg sought to maintain its authority.

*Woza Albert!* begins in wry, self-reflexive terms with the arrest of a musician found performing outside the Market Theatre without the corresponding stamp in his passbook. It serves as an edifying echo of the precarious conditions under which Mtwana and Ngema are, too, forced to enact their play. A prompt shift to the site of the musician's incarceration in Modder-B prison, a notorious jail adjacent to the Modderfontein goldmine, precipitates a succession of largely comic vignettes as the play traces rumors of Morena's Second Coming through a network of transitory urban spaces. Moving from an overcrowded commuter train that brings black workers into the city from the distant townships, to an informal meat-vendor's stall, and on to an open-air barbershop, anticipation of Morena's arrival ferments with increasing intensity.

Morena makes his eventual appearance before the harried queues of unemployed workers lined up outside Johannesburg's Pass Office on Albert Street.<sup>viii</sup> Despite the swell of expectancy, it is an underwhelming entrance. Rather than envisioning his miraculous revival as a potentially radical intercession, the workers see Morena as yet another prospective employer. Ngema and Mtwana immediately thrust their passbooks in front of him, assuring him that "temporary or permanent is okay, Morena!" (Mtwana, Ngema and Simon 1983, 24). Beneath its outward absurdity, the scene offers an unsettling expression of the internalized authority of apartheid. Even with Morena's subsequent call for the men to throw away their passbooks and follow him to Soweto, any sense of prevailment is short-lived. As Mtwana explains to Ngema in the subsequent scene aboard the commuter train:

There will be days of joy. Auntie Ouda will find chicken legs in her rubbish bin, and whole cabbages. And amadoda—our men—will be offered work in the Pass Office. The barber will be surrounded by white tiles. The young meat-seller will wear a nice new uniform and go to school, and we will all go to Morena for our blessings. And then the government will begin to take courage again. The police and the army will assemble from all parts... There will be roadblocks at every entrance to Soweto, and Regina Mundi Church will be full of tear-gas smoke. Then life will go on as before. (Mtwa, Ngema an Simon 1983, 26-7)

For the black inhabitants of Johannesburg, even the miracle of Morena's return cannot guarantee liberation from the hegemony of apartheid. Only in the play's very denouement, with its turn to the force of history, does a decisive challenge emerge.

Following on from the South African Defence Force's nihilistic attempt to eliminate Morena using atomic weaponry, the play makes one final scenic shift, on this occasion to a cemetery in the centre of Johannesburg. It proves an especially compelling space in which to conclude the play and fulfill the Messiah's prophesized resurrection of the righteous, for beneath the cemetery's headstones and gravesides are buried the remains of a number of iconic black South African leaders. Toyi-toying around the stage, Ngema escorts Morena in the revival first of Albert Luthuli, Nobel Prize winner and former leader of the African National Congress (ANC) after whom the play takes its name. Luthuli is followed by Robert Sobukwe, the founding member of the Pan Africanist Congress, then Lilian Ngoyi, an anti-apartheid activist and the first woman to be elected to the ANC executive, and finally the Black Consciousness Movement leader Steve Biko, who was killed whilst detained by security police in 1977. It is a stirring finale that not only advances thoughts of revolt but stimulates, too, sobering reflection on all that has been sacrificed in the struggle against

apartheid. Most crucially, however, in its appeal to these prominent figures of the past, this climax lays a blueprint for the Market Theatre's own future strategy for resistance. In exhuming the symbolic force of these leaders' remains, *Woza Albert!* rehearses for the Market Theatre a vital strategy through which it, too, could come to contest Johannesburg's determined disregard for history. The play draws upon the relics of meaning stored up within the "heterotopic" enclave that is the cemetery, but which could just as readily be Newtown itself, enlisting the remains of its remembered past as a means to disrupt the authority maintained elsewhere across the city by its persistent, disconnected present.

The significance of *Woza Albert!*, both in the history of non-racial theatre in South Africa and in the burgeoning success of the Market Theatre cannot be understated. Not only did the play precipitate a striking shift in the audience demographic at the Theatre—Mtwala estimates the percentage of black patrons in the audience changed from around ten to fifty percent by the time *Woza Albert!* completed its initial run (see Fuchs 2002, 116)—but it convinced Simon of the efficacy of this situated model of theatre making. Further such workshop plays equally embedded within the collective consciousness of the city, such as *Black Dog—Inj'emnyama* (1984) and *Born in the RSA* (1985), followed soon after, along with productions from other independent black and multi-racial workshop theatre groups. Of particular note was the Junction Avenue Theatre Company's *Sophiatown* (1986), developed in response to the State of Emergency that gripped the Transvaal in 1985. Like Simon's productions, the play attempted its own recuperation of the city's history, specifically of the relics of meaning attached to the fêted, if wildly mythologized, non-racial district of Sophiatown. It is as a result of this long succession of trenchant, highly popular workshop dramas, each bearing down upon the forgotten depths of the city, that the Market Theatre

came to establish itself under apartheid as the pre-eminent site from which to contest the city's repressive and, as such, oppressive logic.

Writing in the immediate aftermath of the South Africa's first democratic elections, theatre critic Loren Kruger (1995, 62) sought to make strategic use of the Market Theatre's restaging of *Sophiatown* as part of an effort to engage the present, indeterminate "threshold between past and future". For Kruger, the 1994 revival of the play threatened in its admixture of nostalgic retrospection and utopian aspiration to "dissolve the violence and dislocation" predominant in the years since its original staging (Kruger 1995, 60). A recent revival of *Woza Albert!* at the Market Theatre in early 2012 presents an equally apposite occasion to reflect on the profound changes that have taken hold of the city since Mtwana and Ngema first conceived of their drama. Tied less to the subjunctive mood that Kruger discovers in the revival *Sophiatown*, however, and more to the extant structural changes that have overtaken Johannesburg in recent decades, I endeavor in concluding this article to assess the value, creative and economic, of the Market's return to dramas such as *Woza Albert!* within the pattern of profiteering that has prevailed in the shift from the liberated to the liberalized city.

In a break from the incessant cycles of improvement characteristic of Johannesburg for much of the twentieth century, the city's most recent phase of urban redevelopment began in the early-1990s with an exodus of the majority of its major businesses and of its white residents from the centre of the city to new developments in its northern suburbs. This "*laissez-faire* greying process" (Beavon 2004, 244) saw many abandoned shop-fronts become resident to informal street traders and former high-modernist apartment blocks in districts such as Hillbrow claimed by an influx of poor, black migrant workers. It was not, as might otherwise be thought, a purposeful requisition of the formerly white metropolitan centre. Rather, as Patrick Bond (2000, 10-11) delineates, Johannesburg's "extensification" during

these years was tied to the “creative destruction” demanded by capitalist investors in the build-up to “a new long-term round of accumulation”. This interregnum in the city’s vitality was felt keenly in Newtown, where some 400 impoverished families moved into the area to establish a sprawling slum close to the site of the original nineteenth-century “Coolie” location (Beavon 2004, 245). The Market, meanwhile, found itself at the centre of a creative vacuum following Simon’s untimely death in 1995 and, despite a newly awarded government grant, was forced to run itself as a going-concern.

By 2001, however, with city planners preparing to reinvent Johannesburg as a world-class city, a new round of capital investment had begun to take hold. Integral to this latest renaissance were the services of the consultancy Interbrand Sampson who were directed to market globally the commercial value of the city. Tagging official material with the line “Jo’burg—A Sensational City,” this marketing campaign sought speculatively to write over the ruins of the former apartheid city and bring the metropolitan “community together under one brand” (Kin 2010). The newly invested City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality council began to operate in terms more appropriate to a limited company, adopting free-market principles to dictate its policy decisions and establishing corporatized entities to run its public services. The council’s flagship Blue IQ growth strategy, for instance, which saw a public investment of R1.7 billion into ten key infrastructural developments and tourist attractions, was underwritten by the prospect of a further R100 billion in direct foreign investment (see Tomlinson, et al. 2003, 18). Newtown, newly nominated as the city’s official cultural precinct, was one of the earliest targets with many of its ruined industrial buildings subject to extensive gentrification. The former workers’ compounds were converted into a library and museum space, while the turbine building attached to the Jeppe Street Power Station was completely remodeled to serve as a conference centre and headquarters for the

mining conglomerate AngloGold Ashanti. Mary Fitzgerald Square was also repaved and relit in 2001 at a cost of R14 million, with many of the district's streets since renamed in honor of its most notable artistic residents.

At the centre of this remodeling process have been, what theorist Andreas Huyssen (2003, 20) dubs as, “memory’s mass marketeers.” Inspired by the self-same profit motive that Huyssen identifies at the heart post-industrial metropolitan redevelopments throughout Western Europe and North America, their turn to the dilapidated ruins of Newtown was aimed primarily to bolster the city’s global appeal. The district’s rare relics of meaning, as Lindsay Bremner (2010, 248) describes of the history of the struggle more generally, have as a result been “effectively depoliticized and turned into a sign, reading ‘FOR SALE’ ”. Like the equally contentious Apartheid Museum, constructed as part of a new casino complex to the south of the city, and Nelson Mandela Square, which lies at the heart of the new financial centre in Sandton, Newtown has been co-opted into the process of selling “the new South Africa to tourists and visitors” (Bremner 2010, 248). And unlike newly constructed spaces such as Melrose Park, fabricated, as Mbembe (2008, 62) argues, “as an empty placeholder for meanings that have been eroded by time rather than remembered by it”, the renovation of Newtown’s ruins has been to fix and formalize the meanings that once conditioned the district. Under the cloak of memorialization, all sense of the district’s spatial and material alterity appears to have been secured and, thereby, made impotent.

As a notable beneficiary of Newtown’s past, poetic realm, the Market Theatre has also thrived under the district’s recent renovation, beginning to turn a significant profit again in 2004 (Market Theatre 2007, 1). This financial security has come at a cost, however, attenuating to a significant degree the Market’s creative output. Amongst the handful of distinguished new works from the likes of Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom, John Kani, Yael



Farber, and Craig Higginson, revivals of apartheid-era productions, including yet another staging of *Sophiatown* in 2005 and *Black Dog—Inj'emnyama* in 2006, are now remarkably commonplace. Like all commercial theatres, the Market Theatre relies on its box-office receipts and revivals from the Theatre's own tradition of resistance maintain an unrivalled popular appeal. Indeed, the most recent showing of *Woza Albert!* twice extended its initial four week run in January 2012 to satisfy the demand for a play promoted as a "classic" in the nation's canon. But with every revival comes a further retreat from the complex renegotiation required if the Market is to attend creatively to the city's latest effort to efface its own oppressive logic.

The resurrection of such notable figures as Luthuli and Biko serve well to remind an audience that the facts of apartheid are far from over. Ultimately, however, like the canonical European dramas with which the Market Theatre first began, these anti-apartheid revivals are unable to offer any express critique of present social conditions entrenched by "Johannesburg PLC," which denies many of its residents a basic right to water and electricity. Only in a prophetic aside from Fidel Castro, solicited during a series of early news reports on Morena's alleged return, does *Woza Albert!* present anything resembling a critique of the insidious economic liberalization precipitated by the nation's political liberation. The former Cuban President laughs off the arrival of Morena in South Africa by asking sardonically with a swipe at the progenitor of the neo-liberal doctrine, "Who's playing the part? Ronald Reagan?" (Mtwa, Ngema and Simon 1983, 12). With new productions of *The Island*, Ngema's musical drama *Asinamali*, and Fugard's *Nongogo* following up on the profitable success of *Woza Albert!*, however, the relics of meaning that once circulated with potent force on the stage at the Market are sliding towards a complicity with Johannesburg's logic of excess and superfluity from which they may never be reclaimed.

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Figures:

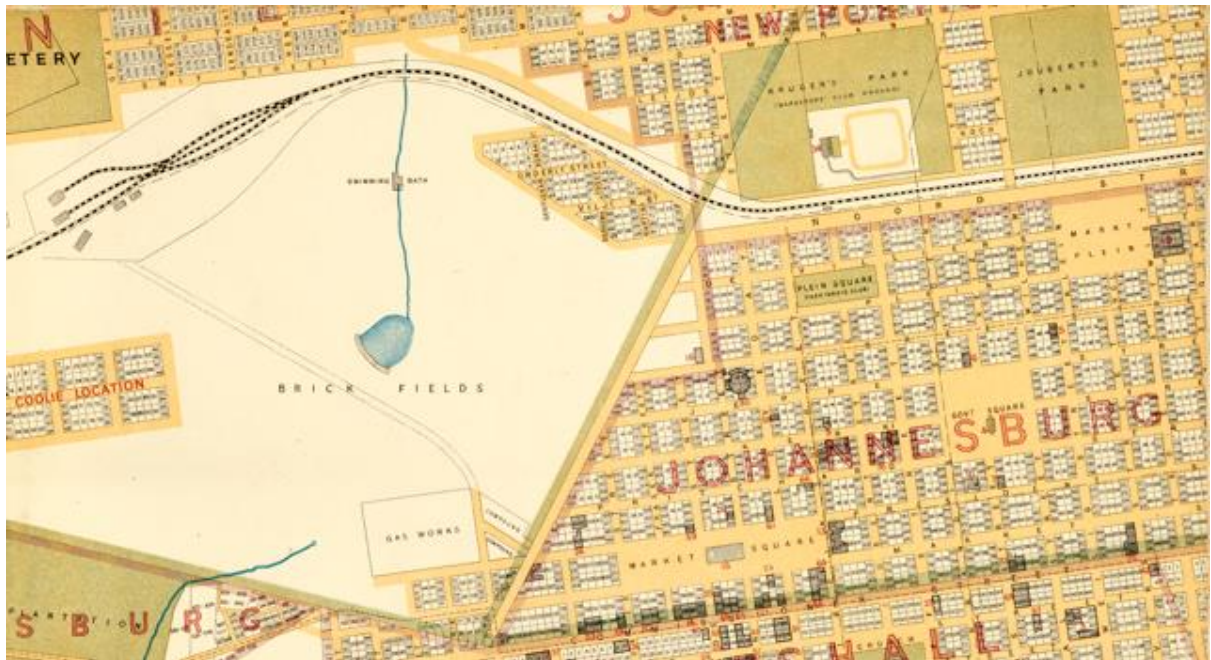


Figure 1. Map of Johannesburg (1890), courtesy of A. P. Tompkins, London. This extract of the city shows the anomalous brick fields upon which Newtown was subsequently constructed.

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Endnotes:

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<sup>i</sup> For more on the shift from political liberation to economic liberalization, see Jean Comaroff in Shipley (2010, 667).

<sup>ii</sup> These forced removals are often cited as the primary antecedent to the large-scale removals enacted as part of both the Native Urban Areas Act (1923) and the Group Areas Act (1950). For more, see Beavon (2004, 75-82); Bremner (2010, 172-186).

<sup>iii</sup> Fitzgerald also served as the first woman on the Johannesburg municipal council in 1915, and was voted to the role of deputy mayor and acting mayor of the city in 1921.

<sup>iv</sup> For a brief engagement with Foucault's heterotopic spaces in relation to the process of South African urbanization, see Head (1994, 29-31).

<sup>v</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the tendering process, see Schwartz (1988, 23); Fuchs (2002, 53-56).

<sup>vi</sup> Other notable European dramas performed at the Market Theatre in its opening year included Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade*, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

<sup>vii</sup> For more on the impact of Grotowski's "Poor Theatre" on Mtwana and Ngema, see Fuchs (2002, 108-110).

<sup>viii</sup> The Central Pass Office on Albert Street controlled the movement of black migrant workers in the city, issuing passbooks that determined where and for how long an individual was permitted to work.