Remains of the Social

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This chapter takes as its starting point a formulation of liberation, read as inaugurating the non-racial as constitutive of the postapartheid social. Or perhaps, stated somewhat differently, liberation (as the ‘after’ of 1994) is understood as having seemingly prepared the ground for the capacity to move beyond the always already racial individuation of the social (see Van Bever Donker).

Yet liberation also holds within it the folds of a particular materialism and framing discourses of both class and of socialism,1 as well as how these conceptualisations are sutured to those of race and nation. Materialism and concepts of class also of course function internal to the logic of capitalism, although they are there repressed even as capitalism imagines itself as antithetical to the politics of socialism and the Left. A central proposition to emerge from this is how race and class are stitched together in various formations of disciplinary (history, psychology) and instrumental reasonings (systems of governance), and in a politics of resistance, and are seen to define apartheid (and anticipate the postapartheid), ranging from the Native Republic Thesis and Colonialism of a Special Type (CST), to those of racial capitalism.

In these formulations, often bracketed as the ‘race–class debate’, three central suppositions for defining the apartheid social can be discerned: (i) race is always already individuated by the imperatives of class; (ii) race is read as irrational and ‘false consciousness’, and its false irrationalities
Remains of the Social

can be disclosed through class struggle and resistance; and (iii) class will enable the disappearance of race through the modern figure of the worker (and a non-racial modernity). Read from a different vantage point, what remains of the social of apartheid – of race – are fragments, legacies and inheritances that continue to refuse or withhold this non-racial modernity even as the promise of a socialist answer has dissipated.

We wish to add another provocation to this assemblage through a recent engagement seeking to refigure the South African bantustan as constitutive of a South African ‘empire’, thought simultaneously as a dependent space in which the South African state commanded sovereignty, (despite its ‘independence’), and as a theoretical concept to re-examine the unexpected wider, global trajectories of race. This has two components. If, as Jacques Derrida has suggested, apartheid is the ‘last word’ in the text of racism, the ‘most racist of racisms’ (291), then, following the logic of South African historiography, it is the bantustan that is its most extreme form of expression. Secondly, how might we interrupt, yet simultaneously extend, these readings through an invocation of an empire of liberation, assembled here through the social itineraries of Dimbaza’s remains?

Thinking South Africa as empire brings to mind various imperial histories: British Dominion, Afrikaner nationalism or an increasing conflation of the interests of (British) capital and the (Afrikaner) nationalist and ethnic project of separate development structured around racial capitalism. When thinking about the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), the notion of CST, articulated first by the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in 1962, emerged as a way to explain the peculiarities of the South African colonial situation.² Revisiting the early documents of the CPSA and the Communist International, it is evident that they reflect a certain understanding of empire and the colonial subject through which the native and the racial spatial command of the sovereign reverberated. This raises the spectre that the Communist Party and radical positions in South Africa were informed by (and reflective of) uncritical notions of empire that returned to the figure of the backward and tribal subject and reaffirmed this as the racial and
 racist figure of the native. Stated differently, this means that seemingly antagonistic historical formulations, particularly CST, Africanism and the politics of exile and liberation, which claim anti- and non-racism as their foundations, ironically continue to structure and suture the binary terms of race within their articulations. In tracing the itinerary of CST and the NDR we were prompted to consider that ‘time does not pass ... it accumulates’ (Baucom 34) and that race, the native subject and empire as the dependent space to command sovereignty may yet continue to inform what we call the ‘empire of liberation’: a dependent space of anticolonialism and postcolonialism that continues to command sovereignty within the ‘native question’.

At the core of this chapter lies a question about the tenacity of racial formations. Given the predicaments of the postapartheid present and the troubling legacies of the past, the concern over the failure or limitations of the transition remains an urgent question. How and why does the ‘native’ subject continue to be given form through disciplinary categories inherited from the racialised past and through the instrumental reason of a developmental postapartheid state that is concerned with defining and enabling progress and modernity by overturning poverty and creating sustainable livelihoods? How and why does the subject that has been invoked in historical formulations seemingly opposed to apartheid continue to be constituted through concepts and archives that remain racially read?

Our attempt to trace the lines along which the postapartheid fold of time and space, read through Dimbaza, hinges on the concept of race as global apartheid requires that we attend to the various expressions of this fold. Drawing on formulations of montage and imagination, we assemble our arguments through the overdetermined, socially concentrated extreme of Dimbaza to draw on the unstable lines of thought that dominate explanations from different, contradictory angles in order to unsettle, activate and amplify their fissures. In seeking to make apparent the ‘materialist undercurrents’ of the wager that was apartheid, and in thinking about how this persists into the postapartheid, it is apparent that this rethinking cannot be a return to a reading of race as class.
Rather, we want to think how race might be read through an extended version of global apartheid.

Before we turn to the graves and the ruinous history of Dimbaza, we want to consider a clear cold night on the banks of the Liesbeek River in the Mother City, Cape Town as a possible starting point. The story – one of perhaps many such stories of the socialist Left – begins on Alfred Street in the suburb of Observatory. There, on some nights during the 1980s, young members of a secret cell of the Communist Party produced, on a mimeograph copy machine hidden at the back of the house, thousands of fliers advocating the ‘national democratic revolution’ (NDR) on behalf of the African National Congress (ANC) and its Alliance partners, which included the Communist Party. The reams of A4 paper fitted perfectly and miraculously into Omo washing-powder boxes emptied of their soapy contents. Resealed, they were in turn, 20 boxes at a time, driven all over the city for distribution at the darkest hour of the night.

But Observatory had eyes, real and imagined, everywhere and even youthful zeal could not dispel mounting anxieties. When it became too much, the young communists dug a large deep hole, again in the small hours of the night, and buried the mimeograph machine on the banks of the Liesbeek River, watched over only by the dark and empty windows of Valkenberg psychiatric hospital.

What we can imagine as a kind of madness, fuelled by the anxiety of discovery, had taken hold of these young communists and abruptly cast the clarity of political conviction and action into doubt. Today, those covert efforts of a minor Communist Party cell on behalf of the ANC and the Alliance might seem clumsy, tenuous and unclear in their distinctions. And yet, in ‘re: working’ the remains of the apartheid social, and in thinking the work that the remainder of race does, we return to the boxes of Omo washing powder and the machine that lies buried on the banks of the Liesbeek River and the thoughts it reproduced.

Walter Benjamin reminds us that ‘the historical index of ... images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, that they attain to legibility [Lesbarkeit] only at a particular time’ (The Arcades Project 463; Didi-Huberman 89). The scene at the Liesbeek River,
covered over by time and thought, becomes legible now in the context of postapartheid anxieties. Returning to that scene, and the memory of those events, made legible a concealed or buried dimension of the question of race: the thought that ‘the socialist State, socialism, is marked by racism’ and that racism is at work ‘in the various forms of socialist analysis, or of the socialist project’ (Foucault 261–262) and that this had begun to haunt those who buried the printing press, as it did Michel Foucault.

A further expression of this argument can be attended to by considering global apartheid as an ordering of desire, not only its structuring, and as something that must, yet cannot, be detached from South Africa. An iconic image by Santu Mofokeng, entitled ‘Winter in Thembisa, ca. 1991 (Figure 8.1), illuminates the ‘non-photographed of apartheid’ and the ‘invisible of the everyday’ (Hayes 42). It features a box-shaped Omo washing-powder billboard tilted precariously towards the figure of a man striding beneath it, head bowed.

Figure 8.1. Winter in Tembisa, ca 1991.
Photographer: Santu Mofokeng.
© Santu Mofokeng Foundation, courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery and Lunetta Bartz, MAKER, Johannesburg.
It serves as a reminder of a 1950s advertising slogan, which claimed that Omo ‘adds brightness to cleanliness and whiteness’ and permits us to locate unanticipated racial anxieties within the very small acts of political liberation described above. By the late 1980s, the Omo slogan had changed, but in the context of apartheid South Africa the play on racial anxieties in the original slogan is not exactly subtle and perhaps offers another linking of race and class. Here, an emphasis on the purification of the social body reveals not only the way race was encrypted in class struggle, but also the possibility that this encryption occurred through its container: the text itself and the fliers advocating the NDR on behalf of the ANC. The image or scene that encloses pamphlets of desire hidden in boxes of washing powder, which themselves played on anxieties about cleanliness and racial degeneracy, about the labour of washing and of racial subjectification, locates the subject ‘outside itself as a constellation of singularities resistant to its ordering within subjective certainty’ (Deleuze and Guattari 448; Van Bever Donker). The disciplinary categories inherited from the racialised colonial past and the instrumental reason of a developmental, postapartheid state are the stolen wheelbarrows of liberation through which race has been smuggled into the postapartheid – here as race’s Omo box.4

**Dimbaza**

Dimbaza can be ambiguously evoked as a homeland resettlement village, a betterment rural township, a decentralised industrialisation showcase, a site of political banishment, an international symbol of apartheid difference and as a graveyard of the racially discarded, among other things. Dimbaza was first established as a resettlement village in the Ciskei bantustan, now part of the Eastern Cape, by the apartheid state in 1967. Like other similar settlements, it formed part of the massive social engineering project of apartheid that has come to be called ‘forced removals’. It was but one such village in the attempted consolidation of the bantustans as racial ethnic homelands into which apartheid could relocate and separate out African sovereignty and citizenship and consolidate a ‘decolonised’ white settler nation-state. Conditions in these
resettlement villages, including Dimbaza, were dire, a form of what Giorgio Agamben has called ‘bare life’ (13), marked most tragically by the deaths of hundreds of children from malnutrition and tuberculosis in the first few years of their establishment.

One of the first film critiques of apartheid, released internationally in 1974, chose to title its depiction of the policy of separate development and the accompanying forced removals of people *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, although Dimbaza features only briefly, in the film’s conclusion. In direct response to both local and international criticism, both the apartheid government and the soon-to-be ‘independent’ Ciskei rulers (under the leadership of Lennox Sebe and his Ciskei National Independence Party) implemented a strategy of decentralised industrialisation in the homelands and in particular in Dimbaza. The intention was to make Dimbaza into the showcase industrial centre of the Ciskei, which became ‘independent’ in 1981. More than 50 largely foreign (particularly Taiwanese) factories were established here on the back of massive power, labour, tax, service, transport and import subsidies offered by the state. As a result Dimbaza was rapidly industrialised and a resident working class emerged in a significant process of rapid forced urbanisation and development. After 1994, with the reincorporation of the bantustans and thus of the Ciskei into South Africa, these subsidised forms of protection for industry located in Dimbaza were withdrawn, and an equally rapid process of de-industrialisation took place. Today, there are only three remaining factories in Dimbaza, all local, small-scale food-processing plants. Alongside this, the ‘urban’ place and population of Dimbaza remain and continue to expand in the supposedly non-racial liberated space of postapartheid South Africa. Dimbaza is now the object of state-led development, and its problems of poverty, unemployment and need are being addressed by vacant attempts to revitalise its industrial past.

Dimbaza, also thought here as landscape, as place, as an archive, as a concept and a history, provides a particular way of thinking about the historical relationship between the bantustans and the apartheid state, the periphery and the core, that reaches into the global present. It allows
REMAINS OF THE SOCIAL

us to think about the relationship of historical memory, archives and anti-apartheid nationalist renditions of the past, about the relationship between anticolonial struggle and postcolonial realities, and about the accretions, persistence and compulsion of colonial routines and constituents in the postapartheid present. And it allows us to think about new ways in which to think about 'the native', race, racism and antiracism and the non-racial, and about the recurring relationships between the subject, subjectivity and subject formation, on the one hand, and the socials of apartheid and the postapartheid, on the other.

Through a reading of different 'texts' in and of the archive of Dimbaza, we bring together an assemblage of folds. We draw on several forms of knowledge amenable to being assembled by historical imagination – written documents, letters, contemporary testimonies and visual sources – concentrating primarily on the letter collection in the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF)5 archive and on the film Last Grave at Dimbaza. In both there is a literal articulation of apartheid to the global context.

For 35 years, IDAF, an organisation that began in South Africa but was forced to move to England, secretly funded the legal defence of those persecuted by the apartheid state and supported victims' families. IDAF also established a cottage industry of primarily British correspondents, recruited mostly by word of mouth from among anti-apartheid and resistance movement family and friends, trade unions, and school and church organisations (over 700 people were involved by 1991). They exchanged letters in secret every two months or so with thousands of families in South Africa, sending £3 million per year in small postal orders to the dependants of prisoners and ex-prisoners. Across 30 years, over 400 000 letters crossed the globe and tied recipients and senders into lasting relationships. Many of the letters came from and were sent to political prisoners or their families in Dimbaza. They reflect the experience of those who endured Dimbaza primarily as a site of political banishment, hardship and resettled ‘bare life’ (Agamben 13).

In 1944 the South African liberal Leo Marquard, writing under the pseudonym of John Burger (‘John Citizen’) in The Black Man’s Burden, could
still argue, ‘The ruling class in Britain is thus able to enjoy the financial benefits of association with South Africa while discarding all responsibility for the welfare of the mass of the inhabitants’ (251, emphasis added). But increasingly, and certainly after 1974 in the aftermath of Last Grave at Dimbaza, and with the burgeoning of the international anti-apartheid struggle, this was no longer possible, and – at least for some – Britain could no longer disavow responsibility. This ‘responsibility’ translated into a system of support and welfare, and appealed to the liberal sensibilities of a certain sector of the British public, who made use of the structures inherited from empire (literacy in English, the art of letter writing and the institution of the post office) to counter some of the worst legacies of British colonial exploitation in South Africa and to turn, as it were, against the South African successor state, now arguably itself an ‘empire’. The ANC, which, of all the exiled resistance movements, stood to gain the most from an invigorated anti-apartheid struggle, therefore turned to the British empire and its networks of solidarity, of which IDAF was one, to muster material support.

More or less contemporaneously with IDAF’s letter campaign, the film Last Grave at Dimbaza was made in 1974. Shot in secret, the documentary was released internationally (being banned in South Africa). It attempted to turn Dimbaza into an international symbol of apartheid difference and mobilised Dimbaza, through its imagery, as a metaphor for the graveyard of the racially discarded. According to one of the producers, Nana Mahomo, the intention was to ‘show what it is like for the black people of South Africa to be on the receiving end of the white government’s apartheid policy’ (in O’Meara 7–8). The film ends in Dimbaza, and in the concluding sequences the camera lingers on the graves marked with baby bottles and small hand-lettered crosses, and on a line of small open graves extending in one shot to the horizon.

The film struck at South Africa’s secret heart. Because they were situated in remote rural areas, often unmarked on maps and difficult to access, resettlement villages like Dimbaza were almost unknown to the public at large; being out of sight, they were also out of mind, which was convenient to the apartheid state. But once exposed, the desolation
of Dimbaza became the international symbol of apartheid’s criminality and enormity, and the prompt for a politics that turned this hidden corner. The film also clearly got under the skin of the authorities. By the late 1970s, the beginning of industrial development in Dimbaza was apparent. The Ciskei homeland administration, in collaboration with the apartheid state, responded to local and international pressure with attempts to make Dimbaza, and the Ciskei bantustan in particular, a showcase of the homeland system. Fuelled by incentives such as cheap financing – subsidised loans, tax concessions and direct subsidies – and the attraction of a cheap and stable captive labour force, Dimbaza was turned into a bizarre model of decentralised industrialisation and the economic viability of ‘separate development’ and separate sovereignty (attaining putative ‘independence’ in 1981).  

Both IDAF letters and the film, as political discourses of anti-apartheid, mark apartheid Dimbaza’s isolated place within the global assemblage. In so doing, they identify not only Dimbaza but apartheid itself as an ‘untranslatable idiom’ (Derrida 292), set apart from world history. In this frame, these materials (the letters and the film) can be read both as resisting the native subject, and as exemplifying the racial spatial – and, we would argue, the temporal – command of the sovereign, located outside the particular or what is read as the ‘unique’ of apartheid and within ‘the global’ of the anti-apartheid moment. Yet we wish to argue that the letters and the film – and the events they inaugurate and conserve – lay the ground from which we might extricate the persistence of the native subject in the postapartheid. What is read as primarily a process of apartheid deterritorialisation was in fact also a reterritorialisation. Last Grave at Dimbaza, through the response it provoked on the part of the apartheid government, ironically ended up encouraging industrialisation and super-exploitation. It enabled the discourse of labour to be reterritorialised in the Ciskei homeland – in the very place the film (and radical historiography and liberation politics more broadly) portrayed as its ‘graveyard’ and where it located its critique of global industrialisation and international capitalism and their complicity in shoring up apartheid capitalist accumulation and
force – through its displacement of the ‘worthless and the disposable’ (Hardt & Negri 167). The IDAF letters also increasingly give expression to a process of ‘hierarchical inclusion’ (167), as distinct from ‘compartmentalisation’ (125), as the ‘letter subjects’ of anti-apartheid aid increasingly began to identify themselves as workers, with wages and prices and the factory as their pressing problems. This narrative formed part of an emerging ‘economic body defined by global divisions of labour and power’ (167), which not only new South African but also primarily Taiwanese, American and other multinational firms exemplified. In the process, the question of apartheid seems to disappear, or at least to dissolve back into the frames that, as we argued above, marked the race–class debate, which came to define apartheid and resistance. The remainder of this chapter seeks to return to this question through the idea of an ‘empire of liberation’.

The empire of liberation

In a parallel essay, we have argued that the archive of Dimbaza authorises a space, one of montage and repetition that simultaneously contains the South African empire and an imaginary of the postapartheid (see Pohlandt-McCormick & Minkley). It is an imaginary of the exteriority of liberation (an elsewhere, a time beyond apartheid) that holds its dominant frame (of class and socialism) in view, but also anticipates its fold into what we have proposed as the ‘empire’ of this liberation, which is marked by what always already remains there: the conjugated subject of the axiomatic ‘native’.

In essence, South African empire can be read into Dimbaza through territory and what we have named as the deterritorialisations and reterritorialisations of the pre-1994 South African state. For this South African nation-state (and its constitution of ‘empire’), space was the dimension on which politics and violence were grounded and waged. Space dominated its racial political vision, determining the nature and positioning of the ‘other’. In this sense it was about geopolitics (and thus within empire) all along, but it was also caught within the redistributions of territorial sovereignty – between home and homeland. However,
once ‘countryside industrialisation’ and the factories of Dimbaza became deterritorialised objects and marked this homeland territory with a line of flight into class, the political imaginary was opened to the dimension of time over that of space. But – and here is the related fold – the temporality of class (and struggle) is an already overdetermined and dominated terrain whose trajectories are imagined as a particular path to socialist society, with national liberation located as the required advance in time, where historical progress will assure certain victory and where the sovereign body with the legitimacy to wage class struggle is the national liberation party situated in time as the vanguard of history (Buck-Morss). The significant fold of this vanguard is the formulation, by the ANC alliance, of national liberation as liberation from South Africa’s form of colonialism – CST.

More generally, in the context of the Soviet Union, Susan Buck-Morss points to the ways that the discourse of time became a field for the exercise of sovereign power. In particular, she points to the ways that the spatial struggle between city and country was translated into the temporal discourse of class struggle, which cast the rural as ‘people from the past’ (38). The national question was also transposed into a discourse of time, as ‘backward cultures and ethnic groups came under attack as vestiges of an earlier era’ (39), or were understood to be hostile to revolution and to historical progress, and against revolutionary time, which was equated with industrialisation, modernisation, the urban and the party.

Read from the vantage point of Dimbaza, CST and the form and nature of the articulations of national liberation and class struggle in relation to the spatial and the temporal are significant. In effect, the theory of CST and its antecedents, as well as its determining formulations within ANC and Communist Party politics, prioritised and made class, and the black working class, the ‘concrete’ determinant of liberation. In so doing, whether through phases, stages, coincidence or a single revolution, achieved through armed struggle and mass struggle, it established the ANC–Communist Party ‘alliance’ as the sovereign body of the struggle and situated it in time as the vanguard of history. Its legitimacy lay in apparently mobilising this industrial working class on the one hand and,
on the other, holding the interest of this working class (where not yet ready or able) in trust for the future through the territory of the nation.

What this entailed in Dimbaza was that those who had been removed to the bantustans as unwanted people, reterritorialised as ‘surplus’ to the efficient workings of racial capitalism or as threats to the political stability of the state, such as the former political prisoner Moses Twebe (Figure 8.2) and others, were figured as recipients of this trust, beneficiaries of this vanguard, yet still located in this earlier time, essentially in the time of the native. After 1994, bantustan politics is seen to disappear, as much a ghost of the area as the ghostly industrial remains of de-industrialisation that accompanied ‘democracy’ (see Pohlandt-McCormick & Minkley). The nation-state founded in 1994, which reterritorialised the Ciskei and Dimbaza as part of the new South Africa, holds the promise of a different sovereignty – no longer ‘discarded’; its graves no longer in ‘foreign’ soil. Rather, in the post-1994 era, the politics of race is equally ‘seen to
REMAINS OF THE SOCIAL

disappear’ as it ‘moves’ beyond territory itself, which has been overcome by national liberation. Race then, like apartheid, is stitched to space in these particular ways.

And yet Dimbaza cannot enter the discourse of liberation, and cannot constitute the field for the exercise of sovereign power. The spatial struggle between city and countryside is relocated, or more accurately retemporalised, as the ‘not-yet’, as a future held in trust. Because, what also always already accumulates here – in this ‘empire of liberation’ – is the figure of the ‘native’. This is not to suggest that what is needed in the postapartheid is a return to the historical role of the vanguard, or a resumption of the revolutionary process, to complete the not-yet. Instead, what is needed is a response to the provocation of what the not-yet holds: the spectre of race and its articulations to global apartheid, which must be, yet cannot be, detached from Dimbaza or from South Africa more broadly.

The social and social acts
Spectres of race continue to haunt the postapartheid present of Dimbaza. Here we turn to photographic and sound archives and their ‘outside’, brought together through research and projects concerned with ‘liberation heritage’ and through the encounter with a collection of black and white photographs from Dimbaza – scratched, marked, blurred and haunting – recently located in Bishop David Russell’s papers. Our argument can be illuminated by considering two images of Moses Twebe, a communist member of the ANC imprisoned on Robben Island in 1963 for underground activities, released in 1969 and deported to the misery of Dimbaza (see Pohlandt-McCormick & Minkley). In the photographs he becomes the exemplary subject of postapartheid freedom, now invoked as the rights-bearing sovereign citizen subject of the new South Africa, hypothetically beyond race (because of his opposition to racism and its effects), who is celebrated in the naming of Dimbaza’s new community centre as the Moses Twebe Great Hall. One is an image of postapartheid subjective certainty: Twebe is seated, alongside other elderly political statesmen, publicly recognised and named in the liberated space of the ‘community’ (Figure 8.2).
But, in the other photograph, where he stands with his family and his goat in front of his house, this subjective certainty slips (Figure 8.3). In part our reading is informed by our conversations with Twebe, his family and other residents of Dimbaza, in part also by the photograph itself: its self-staging at the corner of the house and the presence of the foregrounded goat, tethered to Twebe with rough rope while facing him, but, where the rope tangles the feet of the family, halting movement and progress and tying the family to a former ‘homeland’ place evoked by the goat. There are other signifiers – the flaking paint, single window and the edge of a zinc roof resonant of bantustan ‘surplus’ architecture; Twebe’s ill-fitting jersey; the bearing of the family; and Twebe’s own posture, that of a lonely, isolated, resigned man, set apart from even while alongside his family, literally and physically more attached to his goat than to the ties (here, of the looped rope) that bind him to his family. Narrative and visual knots, they bind Twebe ‘into the interstices of bigger or older apparatuses, which then undergo a mutation’, and return Twebe, and us, to the ‘native’ peasant, the ‘native’ worker, the ‘native’
former political prisoner – the racial subject (Deleuze xi). Liberation, seen through the coupling of these images, conjures the presence of an always native subject, permanently displaced out of sovereign time. In this way, liberation hinges on the colonial representational repertoires of the ‘native’ subject, where the spectral lines of race are retraced through a genealogy of the concept of anthropology, as well as of the concept of trusteeship and of postapartheid modernist development.

The goat in this image – tugged into the photograph at the insistence of Moses Twebe – provokes yet another line of flight. From the vantage point of Dimbaza’s margins, ‘the social’ of apartheid and the postapartheid performs, and is performed, in several kinds of space in which different operations take place: what we might call ‘other socials’. One such social space is that of regions, in which ‘objects are clustered together and boundaries drawn around each cluster. Another is the network in which distance is a function of the relations between the elements and difference a matter of relational variety’ (Mol & Law 643, emphasis added). These are the two topologies with which social theory is familiar and which have come to define the bantustan in the postapartheid. The first is old and secure (less so now because the bantustans have been incorporated into the new South Africa and have been replaced by regional definitions of progress and development), while the second, being newer, is still proud of its abilities to cross boundaries, just as Dimbaza’s distance and difference are staged in zones, corridors, nodes and proximities to markets, jobs and services.

However, as Mol and Law argue, there are other kinds of space, too:

Sometimes neither boundaries nor relations mark the difference between one place and another. Instead, sometimes boundaries come and go, allow leakage or disappear altogether, while relations transform themselves without fracture … Entities may be similar and dissimilar at different locations, or in the same location and may transform themselves without creating difference. Sometimes then, social space behaves like a fluid (643).

Space enacts a more heterogeneous social; other socials. Thus, in locating ‘the social’ as a problem – marked by the heterogeneous and venturing
into other or many socials – rather than as a given, we are concerned to
examine the ways in which the social itself no longer invokes a common
set of assumptions about society, culture, representation or methods
by which we write and produce history or understanding. Rather, ‘the
social’ and ‘other socials’ are constituted and, as importantly, *enacted*
categories with various itineraries, agencies, actions and actors, modes
of performativity and effects of subjectivation that need to be explored.

Following Hannah Arendt’s conceptualisation of ‘acts’ as both ‘gov-
erning and beginning’ (177), we propose that to socially (en)act is to realise
a rupture in the givenness of the social and to attend to the unexpected,
unpredictable and unknown of the social. Moreover, following Engin Isin,
social acts may also be read against habitus, practice, discipline and routine
as the ordering qualities of how humans form and conduct the social.
Social acts set actualisations in motion, but also a being that acts – within
shifting forms of responsibility and answerability to changing affiliations,
solidarities or hostilities – to ‘begin itself’ as subject. Social acts, then,
articulate social agents both as object and as subject of history. Read as an
act that constitutes the image, Moses Twebe’s tugging of the goat into the
frame is an act that is not in the image but is rather located there as a trace.
Reading this as an act (as opposed to a staging or even crafting) fractures
the social through which that image would usually be read. In Roland
Barthes’s terms, it goes beyond the *studium* (the social), beyond the *punctum*
(perhaps recognising the ambiguity of Twebe’s status), to the *spectrum* (that
which haunts and thereby stays with us – the fracturing and interruption or
unsettling of the social through such an act).

Thought in this way, Moses Twebe, in summoning the goat, becomes
the ‘being that acts’, that begins itself as itself, as a subject. To consider
such acts is to call into question a dominant cluster of issues in social and
political thought that we can define as problems of orders and practices,
and how they have become objects of social thought. What does Twebe’s
act mean? And what does it mean to consider it alongside rupture,
disorder and deviation? Following Isin, what might it mean to consider
it as ‘a rupture in the given’ (25)? Moses Twebe’s act of summoning the
goat, then, as evocative of the stubbornness of the fragments of race that
adhere to the postapartheid social, has enabled the rupture in the given of that social, which in turn has enabled our ‘re: working’ of race and our consideration of how race – in the figure of the native, peasant, rural, poor – and racism endure in the developmental postapartheid state.

The Moses Twebe Great Hall is the most visible monumental, indeed reterritorialised, ‘object’ of the legacy of struggle, liberation and the inheritance of 1994. But more significantly, the hall is a monument to the completed time of the struggle. It is a retemporalisation as well as a detemporalisation, marked between Twebe himself and the Great Hall he becomes. It is the legacy as well as the public history not only of an empire but of a single simple history, that of the inheritance of struggle. At the same time, Twebe is one of those who, despite their proximity to the struggle, were forgotten after 1990; the edifice that is the Moses Twebe Great Hall makes a claim on him in the name of an ‘empire of liberation’, and in the process once again forgets the real Moses Twebe. In the photograph with the goat (Figure 8.3), what is suddenly emergent, ‘what comes together in a flash with the now’ (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 642), forms a constellation of the subject of freedom, the native subject, the peasant, the worker, and the ‘ex prison politicians’.

In this constellation, Dimbaza is always the dumping ground for prisoner politicians; Moses Twebe becomes the hall even as the actual body of Moses Twebe, ragged and with its goat, always remains displaced, the ‘before’ and, simultaneously, the embodied ‘here’ and ‘after’ of this inheritance. He is the figure who accepts what is given – the hall – and returns to what can only remain – the ‘rural native’. Here, then, are the two folds that we invoke in the ‘empire of liberation’: the paradigm of empire, in which the responsibility of the sovereign is given effect in the form of the Great Hall; and the paradigm of the will or testament, in which liberation is bequeathed to the heirs of the hall. The empire seemingly returns liberation in the form of newly built material space yet, ironically and simultaneously, holds Twebe’s body and other veteran bodies of Dimbaza – the native ‘worker-peasant’ family with a goat – at a remove from its very empty, unoccupied and fenced structures, as if awaiting the ritual temporalities of Freedom Day celebrations. It is a
THE GRAVES OF DIMBAZA

fraught act: one of erasure that becomes clear with reference to Twebe’s actual life and to a Dimbaza that does not ‘hold’ or inherit a politics of liberation in the new time of freedom. What this entails in Dimbaza is that Moses Twebe and others, in order to be figured as recipients of this trust and beneficiaries of the new empire, have to be repetitively located in an earlier time, essentially in the time of the native.

image/archive/testimony

What we have tried to do is to reread the peculiarity of South Africa’s history of ‘internal colonialism’ or CST ‘no longer as [only] a matter of territory and the economy’, but instead as ‘a way of understanding the distinct and yet coinciding folding temporalities lived by South Africa’s communities as they have journeyed together, belatedly but relatively rapidly, towards modernity’ (Pechey 155). What coincides in Dimbaza ‘are not two “superstructural” spheres on one “infrastructure” but rather so many “nows” lived alongside each other’. With Graham Pechey, we want to place discourse, language, image, imagination – and the concept of empire – at the centre of this ‘re: working’. The ‘internality’ of this form of colonialism can then be understood metaphorically as a redescription of ‘South Africa’ that bypasses the grand categories of the geopolitical and the world-historical in a new emphasis upon the dialogue that underlies all antagonism, the competing utopias that speak to each other inwardly even as their narrators outwardly turn laws and guns on each other.

While we are wary of Pechey’s ‘positive tone’, we have been intrigued by the concept of ‘so many “nows” liv[ing] alongside each other’ in Dimbaza and have tried to think through – by way of a kind of interpretative montage – the assemblage, the multiplicity of folds, that can be pieced together out of the always already fragmentary archive of image, text and testimony.

There is another meaning of ‘legacy’ that explains the multiplicity of the archive of Dimbaza. ‘Legacy’, as John Mowitt has pointed out, is also associated with the Latin verb lego – to choose, select, appoint, collect, gather, bring together, take, steal, traverse, pass through, read (aloud),
REMAINS OF THE SOCIAL

recite, and, coupled with lēx (‘a formal motion for a law’), to dispatch, send an ambassador, deputise. It is this choosing, collecting, bringing together, this reading aloud and passing through that constitutes the ‘archive’ of Dimbaza. But the way in which dispatching and deputising these fragments reveal them as themselves constellations without subjective certainty has also informed our ‘re: working’ of spatial and temporal acts through the concept of empire. Even the small selection of photographs in this chapter evokes the possibilities held within them. Benjamin has alerted us to the force of image and language and to the dialectical relationship between them and the past and present:

It’s not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression, but image, suddenly emergent. Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language. [N2a,3] (The Arcades Project 462).

In the dialectical image, what has been within a particular epoch is always, simultaneously, ‘what has been from time immemorial’. As such, however, it is manifest, on each occasion, only to a quite specific epoch – namely, the one in which humanity, rubbing its eyes, recognizes just this particular dream image as such. It is at this moment that the historian takes up, with regard to that image, the task of dream interpretation [N4, 1] … The realization of dream elements in the course of waking up is the canon of dialectics. It is paradigmatic for the thinker and binding for the historian [N4, 4].

If Benjamin’s Arcades Project ‘deals with awakening from the nineteenth century’ (464), the images of Dimbaza (in text, film, letters, photographs) urge an awakening from the somnambulant dark dreams of the long twentieth century (Baucom).
In the interviews that form part of the Dimbaza archive, most of them recorded in the early 2000s, the political prisoners (or ‘prisoner politicians’, as Moses Twebe named them) reinserted and reterritorialised themselves into the liberation movement, as always ‘in struggle’, always protesting, always marking themselves as political. In this way, these interviews reproduce a postapartheid heroic liberation discourse. But the letters that are part of the IDAF collection call this into question, especially those written at the time of the ‘cut’, in 1991, the moment when national liberation seemed to have been realised. Their authors, like Moses Twebe, realised that they would remain displaced, would be unable to enter the discourse or the ‘real’ of liberation time or reconstitute for themselves the field for the exercise of sovereign power. ‘What do we do now, now we are left once more desolate and abandoned, with the germ of destruction among us?’ That ‘germ of destruction’ in the form of tuberculosis, as Randall Packard reminded us years ago, originates in the political economy of racial health practices.

For those proximate to the territory of liberation but also reterritorialised, relocated and reinserted in the space of Dimbaza, the limits of historical political change were readily apparent. Ironically, political prisoners released in 1991 would receive more attention than this ‘old guard’, who had basically been banished to the periphery of South Africa and its politics. For them, the weighty changes of 1990 would mean only further marginalisation and loss, including the loss of a vital lifeline – IDAF – to the outside world.

It’s not that one doesn’t want to work, we used not to be employed and now the trouble is when you seek work you are told you are too old for work at the same time [sic] too young to qualify for old age pension.
We are truly going to suffer as we have already started now because we don’t know who is really going to be responsible for us i.e. EX PRISON POLITICIANS.10

Suffering, responsibility, anticipation, failure, future? Multiple temporalities and so many uncertain nows that are held together in the dream
images of the ghost town of Dimbaza. Metaphorically represented as the seeds/germ of destruction in the last letter (in a series of 120) from MMS, and in the context of latter-day ANC/nationalism, there is a certain irony in the fact that the support of IDAF ended right at the time of direst need, when the enduring liberal-radical elements of a colonial empire were being replaced by one of liberation:

It hurts to think that we won’t be hearing from you anymore. Above all when now Khanyiso is becoming an invalid yesterday he was given or rather done T.B. Tests which showed he has a Tuberculosis germ in his blood and is to receive treatment for 6 months.

Oh! Carma you have no idea how we feel to part with you just at the time of difficulties ’cos Khanyiso is on drugs for epilepsy now its T.B.11

This letter, like many others, resonates with the possibility that one of the features of the postapartheid is that liberation may no longer be territorialised but is instead retemporalised, in the body of the subject of liberation, in the remaking of dependence within different structures of empire.

If ‘liberation’ is the absence or ending of subjection, then, in the moment of liberation, of the subject being made free, the externalisation, the-having-been-made-extensive (outside, dependent) of the subject is clear to the knowing returning subject who has experienced the being made external and dependent. As the letters and the postapartheid realities of Dimbaza show, liberation as the ending of subjection does not end externalisation or dependency. In this flash, empire and liberation rub up against each other, are folded into each other – raising the spectre of the continuation of empire relations in the time of liberation, a permanent future in which the subject remains forever native and displaced.

Image and letter, montaged together here, constitute a moment ‘wherein what has been comes together in a flash with now to form a constellation’ (Benjamin, The Arcades Project 642). Something is opened
up between the spatiality of the South African colonial ‘empire’ and the temporal ‘empire’ of liberation. To return to Pechey one more time, ‘in South Africa colony and metropolis are co-extensive – not separated geographically, but (as it were) one on top of the other in the same territory’ (154). But, as we have tried to show, ‘empire’ – thought of as relations of unequal power that involve the imposition and externalisation of the subject (thought also as practice and meaning) – is also, at certain points in time, coincident and marked by temporalities that are entangled, enmeshed, folded into each other.

Thinking ‘empire’ as both spatial and temporal opens up the post-(postapartheid, postcolonial, post-empire), and calls into question the distancing from things past. It demands a contemplation of the complexity of ‘empire’ (of colonial relations of externality that continue to mark out and seep through the social and its infinite, tenacious, enduring legacies and inheritances). It summons us to the urgent task of understanding, imagining, approaching and rendering intelligible (and the present continuous is chosen deliberately here) the question, the problem and the ‘moral and epistemic contours’ (Scott 3) ‘of racial hate, humiliation [and] cruelty’ (Didi-Huberman 154) in Dimbaza’s global present.

The film *Last Grave at Dimbaza* resonates not only with the montaged readability of temporal and spatial connections, but also with significant discontinuities in respect of its stated intent. While it is perhaps easy to read the film – in its simple shots, omniscient narration, its articulation of separateness and territoriality – as an exposé, it is also pervaded by an unintended sense of relative apathy and the depiction of its documented subjects as passive victims needing empire (the global anti-apartheid) to save them. In a different sense, though, the film attempts to mark the unique, particular territory of South Africa (as both urban apartheid capitalist state and rural impoverished bantustan) through signposts, maps, journeys, movement and interiors, to signify the central role of black labour in producing white privilege and to open it to global intervention. Read positively, the film globalises apartheid, interpellating the complicity of an ‘empire’ of capitalist interests with apartheid (through
its multiple shots of major international companies ‘doing business’ in South Africa – globalisation in the 1960s and 1970s) and foreshadowing the overdue stirrings of a global anti-apartheid movement.

But in montaging random, non-indexical film footage and images from all over South Africa (East London, Langa, Durban, Johannesburg, Soweto, Dimbaza, to name but a few), it literally de-deterioralises its own setting, loses place, loses its place, and unintentionally ‘unmarks’ the territory of South Africa in order to open it to the global. In effect, the film reterritorialises Dimbaza (effectively through its naming and in its ending) as not just or simply South Africa, but as in and of the global. For there to be the ‘last grave’, it is this kind of global externalisation, this making extensive of a dependency in sovereign ‘liberated’ time, that is required. As such, the film marks the prelude to the empire of liberation.

More compelling and occasioning further disturbances is the music. Composed by Philip Tabane and Malombo, the soundtrack is like a lament that marks the graves and desolation, and anticipates something different. It is a requiem, a mass for the deceased. It is also, in its dirge-like soundings and phrasings, a command (to political action), and a guide to direct another possible deterrioralisation. In some senses, it refuses to be contained in either the film’s appeal to American or British empire or by South African empire (it was smuggled overseas on a South African Airways flight, a symbol of South African modernity).12 In its slow sadness, though, the music directs a listening, and a sounding of a premature burial or laying to rest, and anticipates an ongoing soundtrack to the empire of liberation. There is no last grave under the sign of apartheid in Dimbaza, and the funeral is the defining temporality enacted in its postapartheid social.

When Last Grave at Dimbaza was rescreened on South African television as part of the so-called Unbanned series in 1995, the film was introduced and framed both by one of its producers, Nana Mahomo, and by the cultural commentator Sandile Dikeni, and self-consciously retemporalised, not into the postapartheid discourse of reconciliation, which was the intent of the Unbanned series, but as part of ‘the search for truth about South Africa, [and] the past [that] isn’t dead, it isn’t even past’.

218
Interpretative montage: Imagination and history

In ‘re: working’ ‘empire’ and ‘liberation’ through the metaphor and the archive of Dimbaza, we have returned to trying to think that which haunts the ‘perilous critical moment’ of the postapartheid. No matter how prodigious the archive, in the face of the violence contained in it, what remains of Dimbaza is fragmentary and illusive, flawed and disjunctive, ghostly and brittle. The fragment, or the ‘vestige’, as Georges Didi-Huberman reminds us, presupposes destruction at the same time as resisting or surviving destruction. Race was always enfolded into the class struggle to which the mimeograph machine was set. What has become legible for us in the postapartheid is not that discovery or capture motivated the burial of the machine, but rather ‘the question of race’ or, more particularly, the ‘spectre of race’. Abiding by Dimbaza allows us to think the meaning of this spectre through the montage of the mimeograph’s burial here. The tracings of the act of its burial – read as a performed repression of a reproductive machine – name what the undercurrents of the tropes of race and class were working to guarantee: the reproduction of a particular kind of subject. Read imaginatively back to this performed act, it is not the vanguard, but the rearguard for the reproduction of formations of race within the empire of liberation.

To sift through the debris and the ruins that remain (of history, of the archive) is to create a type of (interpretative) montage that folds into and over each other the haunting memories, the testimony, the letters, the images of Dimbaza. It is a montage that, like Tabane and Malombo’s dirge or lament, moves slowly, repeats concepts, accumulates wrongs, accretes meaning, syncopates doubt and redemption, and thereby addresses itself to the ‘ethics of the relation created … between the image [text, concepts] [and imagination] and history’ (Didi-Huberman 125).

Montage is valuable only when it doesn’t hasten to conclude or to close: it is valuable when it opens up our apprehension of history and makes it more complex, not when it falsely schematizes; when it gives us access to the singularities of time and hence to its essential multiplicity (121).
Benjamin argued that when an era ends, 'history decays into images, not into stories' (The Arcades Project 476). As Buck-Morss has noted, 'Without the narration of continuous progress, the images of the past resemble night dreams, the “first mark” of which, Freud tells us, is their emancipation from “the spatial and temporal order of events”' (68). What might the night dreams of Dimbaza resemble, as its spatial (South African empire) and temporal (empire of liberation) orders break down? The images, burning in the David Russell archive, discarded for their lack of indexicality, become both prophetic and dream images. As such, they refuse the conjugated ‘empire’ subjects of apartheid and liberation, and show absence from the ‘not all there is to see’ that they provoke (Didi-Huberman 124). To paraphrase Didi-Huberman, ‘Any act of the image that is snatched from the impossible description of a reality becomes a haunting memory, a scourge of imagining, a proliferation of figures – of resemblances and differences – around the same vortex of time’ (125, original emphasis). And to return to Buck-Morss, such images are ‘complex webs of memory and desire wherein past experience is rescued, and perhaps, redeemed’ (68). However, as she continues,

Only partial interpretations of these images are possible, and in a critical light. But they may be helpful if they illuminate patches of the past that seem to have a charge of energy about them precisely because the dominant narrative does not connect them seamlessly to the present. The historical particulars might then be free to enter into different constellations of meaning ... To be engaged in the historical task of surprising rather than explaining the present – more avant-garde than vanguard in its temporality – may prove at the end of the century to be politically worth our while (69).

‘Where we perceive a chain of events,’ Benjamin’s angel of history ‘sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet’ (‘Über den Begriff der Geschichte’ IX). The storm that we
call progress ‘has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward’. Is there an angel of history in Dimbaza? If so, she is a very little girl, a child, angel, ghost of the township or bantustan, by montaged implication left alone on a road that fades into the distance, as shown in the concluding images of Last Grave at Dimbaza. Unlike Benjamin’s angel, this little girl, dressed in a white cardigan, hesitates and turns away – and we with her – from (or is it towards?) the empty graves ‘dug in preparation for the next month’s toll’,13 from the forgotten printing press buried on the banks of the Liesbeek River – its dreams of a non-racial social withheld – and from the past and present dream world of promises, doubts and betrayals. But the dirt at her (and our) feet is made up of the debris – the rearguard – of race and a future held in trust.

NOTES
1. ‘Diagrams’ or ‘maps’ for Gilles Deleuze, ‘fragments, regions and levels’ for Michel Foucault, that, following Georges Didi-Huberman, invite a resonant montaged readability of temporal discontinuity and of imaginatively putting the multiple and the disintegrated in motion, isolating nothing, showing the hiatuses and the analogies, the indeterminations and the overdeterminations.
2. ‘The South African Question’ (1928 Resolution adopted by the Executive Committee of the Communist International), Appendix to Lerumo.
3. John Mowitt uses the term ‘re: working’, ‘re, colon, space, working, ... as a novel way to translate Bertolt Brecht’s concept of umfunktionierung. More typically, this term is translated either as re-functioning or repurposing, perhaps even reconstructing, all perfectly reasonable choices except for the fact that they fail to capture an important theoretical, even political resonance of the term. Specifically, they drop the reflexivity that mattered to Brecht, a reflexivity that allowed him to suggest that “re: working” radio had to be as much about radio as about work itself. In effect, radio
implicates the labor of our reflection about it in the effort to recast its purpose’ (Mowitt 6).

4. We are reminded here of Slavoj Žižek’s joke, in *The Plague of Fantasies*, about the man who leaves the work camp each day and has his wheelbarrow checked to make sure he is not stealing anything, but he is in fact stealing wheelbarrows.

5. Since 1992, the IDAF Collection has been part of the University of the Western Cape’s Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, at UWC, Bellville, South Africa.

6. As did, similarly, Cosmas Desmond’s *The Discarded People*, which drew the world’s attention to forced removals and ‘separate development resettlement’ and inspired the making of the film.

7. After the political transformation of South Africa in 1990, de-industrialisation in turn transformed it into a ghost town; invisible, peripheral and forgotten. What remains visible of Dimbaza, marked by the repetition of the empty rusting skeletons of its factories and warehouses, is the hypocrisy of apartheid and the hollowness of liberation promises.

8. We might think of these new relations and strategies that ensue from the disruption to and within these sites of contestation and the circuits/networks of institutional practices that make up a territory, as a form of ‘reterritorialisation’ of empire or, read slightly differently, as a positive form of deterritorialisation, a line of flight that leads to ‘reterritorialization in an entirely new assemblage’ – the ‘empire of liberation’ (Jacobs 267; Patton 143).


12. ‘Mahomo’s film statement was clearly not intended for use within South Africa. His intention was to influence foreign decision makers in Britain and the United States, to shift policy from the *National Security Study Memorandum 39* (NSSM 39) mentality, adopted by the Nixon administration in February 1970’ (O’Meara 8).

13. Voiceover from *Last Grave at Dimbaza*.
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