

# ***Beneath: skin, body and interior in South African twentieth century mining photography***

by  
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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: February 25, 2014

## ABSTRACT

In South Africa, documentary photographs are met with suspicion in critical psychology scholarship either for their connivance with colonial and postcolonial classificatory strategies or their epistemic violence against racialized subjects. This has helped us to take photography, and mining photography within it, at *face value*, in other words, as particularly embedded in the form of geographic displacement, material dispossession and structural discrimination that race has been historically set to index.

Questioning this assumption, while sympathetic to the conditions for its emergence, my method in this thesis is akin to Benjamin's "literary montage" in *Arcades Project* (1999, p. 460) – a meaningful and poetic assemblage of a collection of mining photographs from 1910 to 2000, assuming that the figure of the black miner they help to produce is expressed through race, but also, to use Durrheim's term, troubles it. In other words, my critique constitutes what Nash (2009, p. 23) calls "racial iconography", to explore the meaningful ways in which race articulates the specificity of appearances at a particular historical time, and in dialogue with a particular set of material circumstances. The latter constitute here the development of capitalist modernity engendered by the gold mining industry, but also a range of historical, literary and philosophical materials that help me situate geographically and historically the figure of the black miner, particularly within three interrelated tropes: surface, digging, and interior.

In this manner, I attempt to show the material and abstract underpinnings of the mining archive that allow us to read images as a coherent narrative, understanding my own curatorial process as historically reflexive. I hope to contribute to what Derek Hook (2004, p. 118) has called a "new language of critique" in psychology and a theorization of race in a time marked by a increasing reification of our disciplinary gaze.

## OPSOMMING

In Suid-Afrika word dokumentêre foto's binne die kritiese psigologiese vakgebied met argwaan bejeen, óf weens hulle samespel met koloniale en postkoloniale klassifikasie-strategië, óf weens hul epistemiese geweld teenoor rasgedefinieerde subjekte. Die gevolg is dat fotografie, en daarbinne mynfotografie, op *sigwaarde*, dus histories spesifiek veranker binne die raamwerk van geografiese ontheemding, materiële onteiening en strukturele diskriminasie waaronder ras ingedeel word.

Met alle begrip vir die omstandighede waaronder dit ontstaan het, bevraagteken my metodiek hierdie aanname. In aansluiting by Benjamin se *Arcades Project* (1999, p. 460) se 'literary collage' metode – behels my metode 'n betekenisvolle en poëtiese saamvoeging van 'n versameling mynfoto's vanaf 1910 tot 2000, waarin die figuur van die swart mynwerker enersyds in terme van ras uitgedruk word maar ook, in terme van Durrheim, daardeur versteur word. My benadering behels wat Nash (2009, p. 23) "racial iconography" noem, om die betekenisvolle maniere waarop ras die spesifisiteit van voorkoms tydens bepaalde historiese tye, en in wisselwerking met 'n bepaalde stel ekonomiese omstandighede bepaal, te verken. Laasgenoemde omstandighede omvat die ontwikkeling van kapitalistiese moderniteit soos voortgebring deur die goudmynindustrie asook 'n verskeidenheid historiese, literêre en filosofiese materiaal, wat bydra om die beeld van die swart mynwerker geografies en histories, veral binne drie verbandhoudende raamwerke: oppervlak, delwery, en interieur, te bepaal.

My strewe is om die materiële en abstrakte grondslae van die mynargief, waardeur ons hierdie uitbeeldings as 'n samehangende verhaal kan lees, aan te toon. Ek beskou hierdie kuratoriese proses as histories terugwerkend. Ek hoop om, in 'n tyd wat deur voortgesette verkonkretisering gekenmerk word, by te dra tot wat Derek Hook 'n "new language of critique" (2004, p. 118) in die psigologie en teorisering van ras, noem.

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*Africa Gold Mine*

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*and the shades you wore for protection -  
defending your sight against  
pure burning light -  
fell and cracked were smashed  
beside a brick of treasure  
bric a brac a golden block  
laying upon a page (torn from the book of deals)  
on which was written:*

*imagine the dreams dreamt by those  
who mined your gold*

*imagine*

*Manfred Zylla, Business, 2004*

## INTRODUCTION

### Psychology, photography and the dream in the next body



Figure 1: Nomusa Makhubu, *Goduka (Going/Migrant Labourers)*, 2007-2013

*Racism can be a live texture in the composition of a subject. So can dreams of racial utopia.*  
(Kathleen Stewart, 2007, p. 107)

*Not only do race and photography share the same semiotic grid, but they have given each other substance: just like the epidermal signifier brands the body with the marks of race and indexes the body's location within a visual archive that trades in surface signs, so the photographic trace brands the real with a regime of image-ness that lays claims to an ontological connection between its surface existence as a visual object and the historical depth – the reality – from which it has seemingly sprung.*  
(Alessandra Raengo, 2013, p. 27)

*Labour in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin.*  
(Karl Marx, [1867] 1976, p. 414)

*A black man... is constantly struggling against his own image.*  
(Frantz Fanon, 1967, p. 170)

“When you touched me in a dream,” Gabeba Baderoon’s poem reads, “your skin an hour ago did not end where it joined mine”. In her poem *The dream in the next body*, Baderoon (2005, p. 33) offers an imagery of skin as a continuum of the self between bodies rather than a line of separation marking otherness; as point of contact and identity, rather than separation and difference; of shared interior rather than mere exteriority. How can we think of the psychological work of the surface here, as Alessandra Raengo suggests elsewhere, as the *skin* of the poem itself? How can we think of skin as Raengo (2013, p. 5) asks, “semiotically... a signifier? Chromatically, as a physical property? As a façade...an interface?” The work of surface as indexing touch and the fascination with otherness has its roots in the European imperial practice of ‘blackface’, where racial masquerade appears as a possibility of masking oneself with the surface of the other, “to image oneself inside the skin of an exotic people” (Rogin, 1998, p. 20). In a different setting, modern American blackface emerges in early nineteenth century when blacks and whites were intimately in contact, and the skin touch, as it were, is to be imagined but avoided.

In South Africa, the so-called Coon Carnival employed the device of black masquerade to produce a visual rhetoric of porosity, impermanence, mobility, as the mask acts both as an agent of the corporealization of blackness and of the latter’s abstraction. Race on the other hand “corporealizes the visual”, says Raengo (2013, p. 5), “at the same time it secures its legible surface”. Photography seems to attend to race as it secures the body in particular ways, acting as a medium of fixation and also producing fixity. With reference to this country, Constance Larrabee (cited in Danilowitz, 2005, p. 71) claimed that South African ‘natives’ were in fact “a marvellous medium for photography”. As artist Tracey Rosen (cited in Annie Coombes, 2003, p. 259) describes it, if life in apartheid was about “not being touched” by things (or otherness), how is apartheid’s dream of the other’s skin to be understood?

In my thesis I will shift the psychological gaze from the interior of the subject to the surface of skin, and also to the surface of the photographic image itself to adequately account for the visual articulations of the photographic gaze between skin and the racialised body. Following this turn, I will critically investigate the relations at play in the imagery and imaginary of the black body along with representations of modern subjectivity through the lenses of twentieth century photographs.

In an assumedly post-racial South Africa, the question of how racial difference becomes socially salient and visually apparent is still a challenge to an adequate critique of modern anti-black racism articulated in, and not at, the margin of capital. Endowing race with a body, or in a sense, remembering race, demands somehow that we ‘exhume’ race from the conditions that allowed for its historical emergence in the first place, while being cautious – under Paul Gilroy’s (1998) warning – of not contributing to naturalize visual signs of difference as *racial*. I follow Gilroy’s claim that ontologies of race are never ‘natural’, as our capacity to ‘see race’ has been historically attached to our physical, perceptual senses and the very immediateness of our senses are put into question when we think of race as socially produced. “Has you, has your body...been scanned?” asks Gilroy (1998, p. 841), as if calibrating our vision of the inner body with contemporary screening technologies could effectively challenge both the ‘*dispositif*’, to use Foucault’s (1980, p. 194) term, of the surface and the purchase of visual signatures of racial difference – those which Frantz Fanon (1967, p. 112) calls ‘epidermal schema’.

The post-Vesalian body, the dissected body of anatomy, allowed for an articulation between skin and interior that has rendered bodily surface somehow excessive, unable to dominate medical images and their own illustrative power as the surface’s diagnostic function fades. But how can this turn that Gilroy identifies, meaning, the turn from the (racially charged) semiotic of surface to the inner body, be thought of *reflexively*? In other words, how can my thesis account for the turn to

interior – symbolic and literal – as mediated, as well as mediating the decline of the surface in leveraging race in evocative, effective ways? How can the photographic gaze’s turn to the interior be taken as part of what psychology is, and upon which psychology as a science was to be founded? And how can my thesis approach the very framing of the photographic gaze as engendered in such a turn?

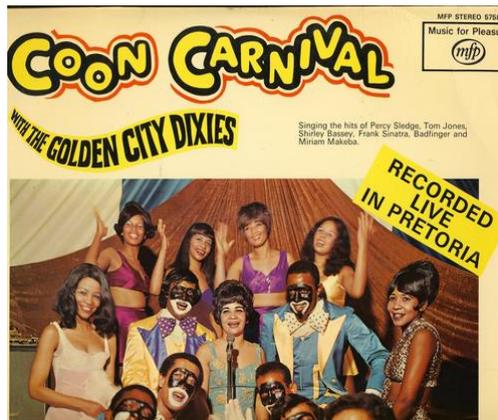


Figure 2: Coon Carnival with the Golden City Dixies (LP cover), Pretoria, 1971.

Retrieved from <http://soulsafari.wordpress.com/2013/01/01/coon-carnival-time-maurice-smith-presents-the-golden-city-dixies/>

Searching for images that could point to a formative historical moment for modern anti-black racism in South Africa, and epitomizing the ‘dream in the next body’, as it were, I arrived at genre of mining photography (Muthe, 2010, p. 114) as it establishes an eloquent, continuum narrative of both the influx of gold and money in South Africa and the mobilization of black workers to work in the modernizing cities. If, as Adorno (1997, p. 5) claims, artworks “speak in a fashion that is denied to natural objects and the subjects who make them”, in other words, their character is constituted by the empirical reality from which they draw content, but which they ultimately reject, I conceptualize the ‘photographic’ in my thesis as an artistic form capable of enabling as much as jeopardizing the historical conditions of its own legibility and the legibility of

that which they are said to portray. These forms of legibility are, of course, socially mediated, but that does not mean they are absolutely subjected to historical framings and/or racial ideologies: the ‘photographic gaze’ conveys particular epochal images, reflecting (on) such epochs’ social and political *form*, while thriving to achieve autonomy from it. Within such conceptual framework, I look into how particular photographs help to frame, with some degree of aesthetic autonomy, a representation of South Africa’s capitalist modernity as that inaugurated by the gold industry, and more specifically through its particular, iconic, figure: that of the black<sup>1</sup> miner. Some of the questions that coordinate my navigation in the mining photographic archive are: first, how does the photographic gaze participate in skin’s capacity to be both visually exchanged and to be a medium of visual exchange? Second, how can we look at mining photographs through the notion of *form*, meaning, how can the form of the photographic gaze be implicated in the modern form of appearance of race and of capital? And finally, how can we understand the photographic gaze’s turn to the interior in our considerations of modern interiority and subjectivity?

I have assembled photographs from the vast photographic imagery of gold mines in the Rand from roughly the 1910s to the 1990s, which were selected as responding to, interacting with or disputing particular understandings articulated in my selected tropes. I have selected this period as it points to both the beginnings of photography and mining, and of course to the imaginary of the modern as crossed by its ‘other’, or the black. My interest in this periodization is therefore bound up with the development of capital in South Africa alongside legal attempts to define the value of black labour in mining industry, as for example, with the industrial colour bar. It is important to note that I do not use photographs as illustrative nor as empirical evidence bound to particular historical events or periods, as I look at photographs in relation to their historical form in a way that is first,

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<sup>1</sup> I will use *black* throughout my thesis as an umbrella term for black African and all other legal and informal terms attributed to people inserted into that particular racial group.

not exclusively related to their *substance*, or images, nor second, part of a previously designated archive.

My research project focused initially on the inscription of *skin* as a form of historical marker that appears in mining photographs: not as a stable visual element, but as a *shifter* (Raengo, 2013, p. 166); just as in blackface, I argue, skin is imagined and imaged as a medium for its own abstraction, an element of the photographic imagery of the mines whose perception and materiality are always historically mediated. For my focus on forms of nostalgia for value I have defined a historical range from the beginning of gold mining industry in the Rand in 1886 and through the institutionalization of the wage colour bar in the gold mining industry of Johannesburg in 1946, up to the year 2000. This selection includes photographs before and during the first decades of apartheid, which allows us in turn to compose an archive “vacillating”, to paraphrase Lauri Firstenberg (2002, p. 66), “between corporeal representations and the conceptual erasure of the figure”.

If the figure of the black miner comes into being in what Butchart (1998, p. 92) calls the ‘micro-powers’ which were forged within the gold-mining industry in South Africa’s 1900s, how can we understand the production of images of the mines beyond the disciplining power of colonial and postcolonial apparatuses, and as the demise of skin and its representational potential? The demise of the skin indexes what appears to be a shift from the surface of the black miner’s body to his biological and subjective interior. Here, I contend, the visual transition from the surface of the mines to what is beneath is followed by the transition from the surface of the body to its – literal and figurative – interior. Hence, I speculate, the production and obsession with the black miner’s inner body imagery and x-ray photography.

In sum, this thesis is not a work based on gathering original empirical evidence in the manner of a social psychologist or social scientist. Rather, its originality is based on assembling a

range of diverse materials and photographs, and in its interpretation, akin to the “literary montage” Walter Benjamin (1999, p. 460) employs in his unfinished *Arcades Project*. It is thus a work of curating as much as redefining and reclaiming a particular epistemological space for the modern, photographic gaze in psychology’s critique. I attempt to place myself in current psychological research that attempts to grasp the photographic medium not just as a medium for representation and subjectivity, and therefore, as illustrative of particular kinds of psychological interpretation, but also as a form of framing of appearances and a form of imaging capable of both expressing and engendering particular forms of subjectivity. My conceptualization involved, thus, the critical engagement of my own process of curation as researcher, in other words, the process of meaningful assemblage of photographs according to themes that are, in themselves, *reflexive*, and which I will address in the next sections.

## **1. Images, subjectivity and Psychology in South Africa**

A recent corpus of research in Psychology examines the epistemic relevance of images in general and of photography in particular to the study of modern subjectivity, and has included visual material as part of its theoretical concerns (Forrester, 2000; Reavey, 2011). In South Africa, studies like Butchart’s (2005) and Hook’s (2002) have shown, inspired by Foucault’s genealogical method, the significance and the materiality of the ‘other’s’ *gaze* as a form of circumscribing the ways in which black body and subjectivity are historically represented and turned into object of knowledge. These studies have pointed to the ways in which images become fundamental to composing a modern visual repertoire of the black body, resulting, as Hook (2002, p. 148) suggests, in “a violent disjunction that obeys no strict demarcation between ideology and bodily experience”. Following Foucault’s analytic, these studies point to two distinct but interrelated moments in the supposed *telos*

from black objecthood to subjecthood: the first moment is illustrated by Foucault's famous figure of the Panopticon, which witnessed the alignment of photography with the scientific racial gaze that turned the African body visible at the expense of his or her subjectivity; in the second, 'techniques of interiority' substituted the *gaze* with individualizing social practices and social 'rituals' aimed at replacing the objective monitoring of black masses with increasingly more abstract apparatuses of discipline and interiority of the black subject. Besides these studies, photographs have been used as image-text and as body of evidence themselves, as in Dixon and Durrheim's (2005) study of racial interaction at Scottburgh beach in KwaZulu-Natal.

If psychology has been primarily concerned with how individuals interact, accommodate and produce images, what in my view remains underexplored is how visibility itself is implicated in the very constitution of the modern subject and subjectivity. In my thesis, I investigate how photographs attempt to produce a modern image of the black miner in South Africa, while proposing a different form of analysing the photographic gaze as neither entirely submissive to 'optic regimes' nor necessarily complicit with the kinds of epistemic violence these regimes advance. I depart from the assumption that, first, seeing race is not a transhistorical, unmediated act – it is also a *form*, a particular way of framing a mode of seeing according to, or making claims on, the specificity of appearances. Second, that visibility itself is fundamental to an understanding of the subjective underpinnings of South Africa's early modern anti-black racism, as it conditions, I argue, both a particular, photographic seeing of blackness and the ways in which blackness offers itself to the photographic gaze in a particular form of society.

What is implicit here—even if rather controversially for a psychologist—is that race is produced in relation to its own historically specific forms, in other words, in such a way that de-emphasizes the everyday capacity to transform race, and, thus, de-emphasizes *human agency*. As I will

elaborate on in the next pages, I situate my analysis of the photographic seeing of mining modernity as one rooted in a particular kind of nostalgia for value. This desire for lost value is projected onto gold, and becomes especially visible at the moment of the transformation of gold to paper as currency in the 1920s (Breckenridge, 1995). I argue that in South Africa this nostalgia for gold as lost value becomes identified with blackness in a way that shapes the modern seeing of race in this country. In so far, then, as blackness has come to stand for a currency and a lost time, and is thus inextricably bound up with the capitalist economy, it is not taken here as merely a means to produce coherent racial images, but to use Nicole Fleetwood (2011, p. 18) term, to “trouble” them.

To understand blackness, I will suggest, our seeing cannot be exclusively anchored in the governing, panoptic nature of modern imaging technologies (Butchart, 1998). It can neither be solely characterized in relation to the subjective underpinnings of South Africa’s racial regimes (Dubow, 1995) nor its racially marked every day lived experience and social encounters (Durrheim and Dixon, 2005). My analysis seeks to approach blackness – or that which Siyanda Ndlovu (2010, p. 61) saw as the “obstinate nature” of race and which Durrheim et al (2011, p. 1) call race “trouble” – by way of a dialectic inquiry whose theoretical underpinning and methodological implications I will elaborate on below.

## 2. Method: central elements

*“Method of this project: literary montage. I needn’t say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse – these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them”.* (Walter Benjamin, 1999, p. 460)

### a. Surface critique: social theory and the skin of the subject

In my thesis, I suggest that blackness is in dialectical relation to its forms of representation. In other words, even though I argue that the objectivity of blackness is part produced by the photographic gaze, it is necessary, following Edwards (2001, p. 19), to integrate the ontology of photography itself into the rhetoric its technological medium. But, I ask in this thesis, can the same be said about *skin*?

In his seminal essay *Black skins, white masks*, Frantz Fanon (1967, p. 110) provides an account of skin as the intersection between the inner, psychological, abstract experience of *negritude* or blackness, and the outer, phenomenological ‘texture’ of blackness, in relation to which the skin attains a particular *social form* in a given form of society. It is through the material form of skin, I argue, that Fanon offers a psychological interpretation of the experience of the black man<sup>2</sup> in relation to his blackness. As the etymology of the word *persona* already points to an idea of ‘mask’, Fanon is not speaking exclusively about black men *passing* for white, but a form of white personhood in relation to which blackness appears as mere shadow.

In Fanon’s account, blackness figures as both a *metaphysics*, or the quality of a thing whose character, being both human and non-human, stretches beyond the materiality of its own apparition, and as a material thing, a costume, external cover or surface that attains objective form in relation to its metaphysical quality. Assuming that the material appearance of skin is already engendered within the process of the abstraction of black value expressing itself in the concrete form of skin, can

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<sup>2</sup> Fanon speaks primarily of the black man instead of taking into account both the experience of the black man and the black woman.

explain why, for Fanon, *internalization* – a process by which an objective reality becomes ‘internalized’ – is indissociable from *epidermalization*, the very surfacing, or materialization of blackness *qua* skin. I will argue that such a reading complicates an understanding of race outside the development of capitalist modernity, as well as any attempt to assume the modern black subject outside of it at the expense of emptying skin of its historical specificity and consequently overlooking the conditions for the possibility of blackness to assert itself materially, i.e. to *matter*.

For Fanon (1967, p. 114), it is impossible for the black man to get rid of, or move beyond, such an “inborn complex” without losing himself entirely. The process of racial disalienation points, in Fanon’s (1967, p. 90) account, to a detachment of the black man from himself, or from a part of him that is his skin, and in this sense, “[t]he image of one’s body is solely negating”. A re-examination of Fanon’s account must contend with the dangerous position of a narrator who, by presenting ‘blackness’ as fact, as reified, already theatricalizes skin’s aesthetic abyss: the “uncanny divisibility”, to borrow Samuel Weber’s (2004, p. 187) term, between a concrete abstraction and its material manifestation. As both form and substance, I will suggest, the “epidermal” material is the very possibility of the appearance of blackness as skin, and thus the historical condition for the possibility of blackness to be experienced. By blurring the distinction between a thing’s objecthood and personhood, skin turns itself into an object/subject endowed with both historical and anthropological status, which for Anne Cheng (2011, p. 33) indexes the terrain of fetishism in both Freudian and Marxist terms.

Blackness appears in Fanon’s narrative, I suggest, as an autonomous thing in the same way in which the commodity appears for Marx’s as a result of production to reveal itself as structure. Skin appears at first in Fanon as a mere inanimate thing that attains life through lived-experience; skin appears sustained by its ‘use-value’, or awaiting value, only to reveal that the character of its value to

people is already a trace of its exchangeability *as* thing. Fanon's (1967, p. 34) account does not offer a solution, but elaborates the terms of what I call a 'crisis of blackness' as much as it *enacts* the terms of such crisis: that between the experience of blackness as non-identical to the subject and a form of metaphysics which affirms the subject's identity. It builds on the paradox that the black man's self-liberation already implies that the black man must "wear the livery that the white man has sewed for him" (Fanon, 1967, p. 17), in other words, that only by appearing as object does the black man become subject.

Exploring the genesis of industrial capitalism, Marx ([1867] 1976, p. 915) approaches the transformation of Africa "into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins" as part of the historical stage of accumulation. Whereas Marx' affirmation can be read as metaphorical or allegorical in nature, I will take issue here with what constitutes the character of 'blackskins' and the ways through which skin is rendered salient, visible, to allow for the visibility of race.

Following this reading of blackness I contend that it is not enough for researchers to write race in inverted commas, or to point to how race is illusory, as "the call to abandon illusions about [a] condition", to paraphrase Marx ([1843] 1977, p. 131), "is the call to abandon a condition which requires illusions". In other words, in order to assume that race ends here (Gilroy, 1998) it is necessary first to account for a particular form of appearance of race through the very historical conditions that make that form of appearance possible. Based on this premise, I will take the phenomenological, photographic constitution of black skin as an essential element of modern anti-black racism and show how, at the same time, identifying the concrete and abstract features of the photographic gaze allow for a psychological critique of the visual beyond experimental settings.

**b. Digging photographs: value and the demise of the ‘skin standard’**

*What transcends the reality principal towards something superior is always also part of what is beneath it.*  
(Adorno, 1997, p. 9)

Anne Cheng (2011, p. 28) describes skin as a surface that is “integrally attached to what it covers”. She explores the aesthetic kinship between the fascination with black nudity and the theoretical writings of the father of modern architecture style, Adolf Loos, and finds the modern unadorned surface “housing the very ‘primitive’ ghosts that it denounces”. Cheng suggests that the idea of modern surface — which thrives at distinguishing a surplus from that which is “proper to the thing” — brings implications for both the theorization of modern architecture and modern raced bodies. The invention of denuded modern surface embodies, in Cheng’s analysis, the nostalgia for the lost, original, naked skin, part of the historical imagination and material presence of a skin ‘primitive’. The “dream of a second skin” (Cheng, 2011, p. 28) is, like Gabeba Baderoon’s, a dream in the next body, shared by both the modernist architectural design seeking to imagine a space for the original and also “the racialized subjects looking to escape the burdens of epidermal inscription”. Surface is thus an interface of both nostalgia and deceit, a point of departure and an end in itself.

In the intersection between Loos’ writings and the performances of the 1920’s African-American actress Josephine Baker, Cheng notes how in key moments of Baker’s performances nakedness appears as a form of undressing that engenders the fantasy of skin as a mask and both literal and symbolic un/veiling. Baker’s nakedness challenges the notion of erotic nudity as it relies on the actress’ very act of covering up: in the interplay of skin and nudity a meta-image for the question of racial legibility, through an elaborate process of layering, or the piling of surfaces on the body. If blackness does not offer itself unproblematically in those performances, the ‘lack’ of blackness, *whiteness*, is also troubling, as a coal-covered Baker proceeds to hide herself in an oversized

flour bin, covering herself in white flour. This skin “‘racial’ conversion” happens immediately after somebody exclaims: “She’s easy to recognize. She’s all black!” – as if, suggests Cheng (2011, p. 59), her skin indexed both the “unreliability of presumed racial legibility” and the “flirtation with the idea of race-as-surface that can be added on or taken off”.

It follows, thus, that part of the colonial fantasy of penetrating a “territory-as-body” (2011, p. 63), she suggests, is articulated precisely in these forms of striptease in which the black body offers itself “nor as depth nor flesh, but a mobile outline or...another costume”. Not unlike the modern building, “instead of unveiled skin, the viewer gets only movements of unravelling skin, an unravelling...that is particularly unrevealing”. Cheng suggests that Baker’s persona relies at the same time on her physical body’s materiality precisely because her body is subjected to its own abstraction. Gold plays an important part in Baker’s iconography, as “that most malleable and ductile of metals...has long absorbed (like that skin) layers of social and symbolic values”: it is through skin and gold that we can trace “the historic and racialized imbrications undergirding the entwined themes of *ornamentation, waste, nationhood, and femininity*”. But moreover, as we shall see, skin – like gold – points to the matter of value itself.

In my thesis, like Cheng, I read race on the site of ‘racialized’ performance of the body, thus, charging with race what Cheng calls the “terms of the visible” (2011a, p. 167). Beyond the alignment of subjecthood and objecthood and the primitivist/modernist framings, Cheng (2011a, p. 63) suggests that racial difference relies on the visual availability and legibility of skin, although “what it means to discern, identify and recognize skin becomes problematic precisely at the site/sight of the visible”. In Baker’s performances, blackness acts as a cladding, Cheng (2011a, p. 163) suggests “that is neither pure illusion nor authentic embodiment, but a complicated and unceasing negotiation between the two”. If anything, Cheng (2011a, p. 64) suggests, it is the lack of a “real skin” that turns

those performances into something ‘obscene’: blackness is not an unbearable site/sight of race distinction, but it is unbearable as a *failure* to provide such distinction. The racialized self in performance is always already an effect of the failure of the (its own) mask, so that “we are given the cover that it uncovers” (Cheng, 2011, p. 171).

We are forcibly reminded that the idea (indeed, redundancy) of “bare skin” is itself always tropologically produced. In a sense, this is also the very paradox structuring almost all modes of racial identification: an avowal of physical difference that is in fact deeply metaphysical and abstract. (Cheng, 2011, p. 64)

Following this reading I conceptualize skin as a register that relies on historically specific forms of appearance and representation to be recognized as such, and to be racially legible. This implies that the mode of skin’s pictorial representation influences, if not determines, the way in which we *see* skin, and hence the importance of historicizing skin’s modes of display and curation.

I use the term *curation* here intentionally, as it points both to a scientific practice of biological exposé and a group of western cultural practices of assemblage and classification inherited from natural history, archaeology and ethnology. In his study of United States museums, Bennett (2004, p. 14) demonstrates the similarities of caged display of wild animals and raced ‘primitives’ as “semiotic equivalents”, and the circus-like exhibition of the cultural ‘other’ as living curiosity. Bennett makes a historical connection between hunting and collecting in the process of curation, as a means of acquiring the ‘other’s’ culture valuable goods. I will in turn relate this heavily ideologically charged process with my very own process of curation of photographs.

### c. Curating as interior: building photographs a home

*To come to this country,  
my body must assemble itself  
into photographs and signatures.  
Among them they will search for me.  
I must leave behind all uncertainties.  
I cannot myself be a question.  
(Gabeba Baderoon, 2005, p. 23)*

Bennett (2004, p. 15) shows how skin appears as both a medium for racial/primitive legibility and the mystification of scientific truth, in which “only the peeling away of custom, clothes, skin and flesh to reveal a skeletal truth of the body beneath could provide an ultimate basis for the ‘objective’ scientific demonstration of racial difference”. Hunting has made it possible for the manipulation of a distinct class of materials, such as bones, tissues, skull, teeth, carcasses and fossils, which were presented as dead or dying signifying practices of colonized or ‘primitive’ people. Such practices point to the value of the ‘dead primitive’ over the living one, as the opportunity he provided for self-(re)presentation ‘stripped’ from items which could blur his own legibility: naked.

Anton Kannemeyer’s parody of Hergé’s Tintin stories, “The haunt of fears” (2008), is most evocative of such ‘traffic of skin’ between the living and the dead, which produces an uncanny (albeit satirical) effect. Kannemeyer’s *Papa in Afrika* is a parody version of Tintin, which uses black skin to account for its forms of both identity and deception. In “Papa and the black hands”, Papa (Tintin) is a hunter who believes he misses every shot, as the profile of his target, an African man, continues to appear in the bushes. Later on, Papa finds a pile of black bodies, and realizes, relieved, he had in fact shot all of them. He then proceeds to cut off each of these men’s hands, and place them in a bag, as if to build a collection of black hands. Kannemeyer’s rendition of Tintin implicates visuality as inseparable from the museum colonial modes of display and its living and dead

specimen. Here, the ‘fetishism’ of skin is not merely a trait of that object but *its historical form of appearance*.

My use of Marx’s notion of fetishism is in no way an attempt to demystify a particular thing to reveal its “real”, “natural” worth, a value, like the curated materials, ‘stripped’ of meaning: an transhistorical ‘use-value’ of skin is impossible to determine as the modern appearance of skin is already conditioned by its modern, exchangeable, form. I follow Marx’s interpretation of value, not as a result of exchange, but as abstract social form that expresses itself concretely in social relations of exchange. The capitalist is, following Marx ([1887] 1976, p. 342), mere “capital personified”, as “his soul is the soul of capital...whose sole driving force is the drive to valorise itself”. The abstract form of domination that Marx’s critique is aimed at cannot be understood adequately with reference to a purely abstract dimension of the commodity form nor solely in its material expression, but precisely with reference to the duality of the commodity form as the interface of value and a thing’s matter.

Such an approach to Marx is not a reaffirmation of a culturally hegemonic or ‘Westernized’ form of exchange, as it is able to offer a critique of these relations not transhistorically but specific to capitalist historical dynamic. As Jason Read (2003, p. 156) affirms,

if these elements—interiority, abstract universality, and transcendence from any determinate existence or mode of activity—seem to be necessary aspects of any definition of subjectivity, then perhaps the entire philosophical and theoretical tradition through which we think subjectivity is itself internal to the history of capital.

This is perhaps a stronger version of Marx’s point regarding abstract labour and the idea of an abstract universality: these two concepts arrive at the same time because they are produced concomitantly. Marx’s writing makes it possible to locate in the Western philosophical tradition the distant effects of the struggle between subjection and subjectification in the history of capitalism,

and not the discovery of a timeless human essence (Read, 2003, p. 156). As I elaborate in the next pages, historically specific forms of subjection and subjectification are not tangential to, but the core of Fanon's (1967) account of 'black skin'. This allows us to investigate the ways in which black bodies in South Africa, as Butchart (2002) demonstrates, have been subjected to coercive institutional systems and technologies of power that produced, instead of simply shape, the bodies of the black as 'other'. Such processes are, in turn, socially determined by and within the historical conditions under which such 'otherness' exchanges, or the ways in which value makes claims on 'otherness'. Although scientific disciplines have contributed to effectively produce the African as a "knowable" subject/object and such forms of objectification become entangled with what the black, and his blackness, 'really' is, I will argue that knowing instruments – and perhaps most of all photography – cannot be grasped outside value.

"Snow White" (2001), the work of Capetonian artist Berni Searle, eloquently conveys the character of skin through the historical character of its appearance. Searle appears on her knees, obfuscated by the spotlight, while white flour poured down from above, like snow, helps to mark the contours of her own body. Projected onto two screens and filmed from varying angles, Searle wipes the flour off her skin to manipulate the flour on the ground, as if to produce dough. Searle's performances seem to take issue less with 'identity' than that which articulates both the abstract and objective possibility of racial identification: her skin.

Skin is powerful in Searle's work precisely because, contrary to Mary Douglas' famous claim, it is matter *in its place*, the historical 'dirt' on the surface of the subject that makes both surface and subject historically legible. Searle's surface – which coincides with, but also challenges, the surface of her art – can be read thus as meta-skin: her projection on screen mimics the 'doubling' of skin pointing to the capability of surfaces to both enable and challenge the legibility of (her) blackness.

Blackness can only appear in Searle's work as already cladding; a 'dirtying' of the body, against a spotless and polished mode of display which enacts the washing of the historical value of skin.



Figure 3: Berni Searle still from *Snow White, 2001* - *Two projector video installation*.

In the next pages, I contextualize the social relations at play in the production of a “social biography” of the photographic gaze through mining photographs and its visual rhetoric to see how blackness (de)materializes itself in particular ways. I will do so through three distinct but interrelated architectural and bodily tropes, as they appear in the mines: surface, digging and interior.

### 3. Structure of chapters

In chapter one, *Surface*, I focus on the skin of photographs and on the ‘surface value’ of black skin. This chapter provides an examination of the social practices of visibility in photography that grant *skin* particular historical salience. Fanon's (1967) account of blackness is articulated to analyse skin at a moment in capitalist modernity in South Africa when blackness gradually ceases to be a “raw” element in accumulation of black labour value. My argument is that such status is not marginal to

the development of capitalist modernity but stands in tension with the photograph's and skin's economic and historical value. I examine photographs produced on and producing the surface of mines, as well as on the surface of the black miner's body, in order to explore the varying modes of photographic nudity and the portrayal of a particular mode of skin as "raw material". I will look into how the 'rawness' and 'flatness' of skin representation finds an aesthetic parallel in the conversion of the fixity of gold money in relation to the borderless fluidity of paper money.

Chapter 2, *Digging*, evokes the imagery and imagination of underground excavation and the allegorical potential of such process in the journey into the skin's depths. I use Cheng's (2011) analysis of "second skin" to problematize the visual register of skin as both a form of covering and revealing of a subject/object historical presence. I also propose an understanding of skin 'disappearance' in a world increasingly flooded by money and photographs. Skin disappearance is not necessarily evidence that "race ends here", as Paul Gilroy (1998, p. 838) proposes, but that a different form of raced 'interiority' starts to substitute the indexical grip of skin while still dependent on its historically tinted surface. I will suggest that another form of photographic mediation and imagery starts to emerge, that of x-ray photography, which makes the interior of the body appear *as* surface. The skin as we know it attains, I argue, a completely different visual form, that is, the form of its purely abstract exchangeability.

Chapter 3, *Interior*, concerns the turn inwards, and the trope of interior pointing at once to an incursion into the interior of the country, the home and the subject. This chapter focuses on the notion of form of spatial segregation read through the form of race and the form of value. I explore the image of 'home' and racial dwelling as necessarily related to interior frontiers engendered in apartheid's dispensation of 'homelands'. My argument focuses on the production of the in-betweenness of racial spaces as a necessary part of South African modernity. Hence, I show that

race is both fundamental to South African capitalist modernity and how it is articulated within the impossibility of home, result of imposed mobility coupled with a systematic production of domestic discomfort. I will extend the notion of racial *passing* as both a medium of circulation of goods, images and people, and as a mark of the social instability of the black miner's.

Finally, I turn to the production of the 'interior' of the black miner's home as leveraging black interiority, whose image is erected as a continuum of, even if sometimes as opposed to, the original rural 'home' or the *kraal*. I conclude by suggesting that the interior of the home in racial spaces appears as a *mirror* of the miner's purported interiority, and that it seems to reflect the staginess and in-betweenness of the historical condition for racial subjectivity.

## CHAPTER 1: SURFACE



Figure 4: David Goldblatt (1966) *Old mill foundations, tailing wheel and sand dump, Witwatersrand Deep Gold Mine, Germiston.*

*The past haunts the present; but the latter denies it with good reason. For on the surface, nothing remains the same.*  
(Susan Buck-Morss 1989, p. 293)

*If what we deem to be immutable is in fact mutable and what we deemed as surface maybe profoundly ontologically structuring, then we need to rearticulate the very assumptions (authenticity, identity, shared universal humanity, etc.) on which the rhetoric of freedom is built.* (Anne Cheng, 2011, p. 171)

However we choose to engage the early twentieth century imagery of gold mining in South Africa, it is hard to avoid imagining mining through the image of the black miner, an image which – as Nadine Gordimer (1968, p. 22) has put it — is a “traumatic” one. The dreadful picture of strenuous underground labour that welcomes the black man into Western civilization, following Gordimer, is a baptism of “darkness and dust”. Gordimer’s description of the early experience of gold mining in South Africa is bound to what she calls the “twentieth century myth of Africa”: one in which the mines figure as the mythical stage of the black man’s path into Western civilisation. It is through the mines, according to such a narrative, that the South African black man experiences a symbolic re-birth as a modern subject.

The traumatic return, both in the sense of returning to the surface of the mines and in the sense of returning to one’s home, is a common trope in the literature on South African mining as I will show in this chapter, even if the very notions of “trauma” and “return” attribute varied meanings to the black miner’s plight. In the pages that follow, I will describe different attempts to characterize the black miner and gold-producing work as epitomizing South Africa’s modernity and composing an image of it. In order to explore the image of the black miner as emblem, I examine how race—and blackness in particular—are understood in relation to the development of South African mining. Like many previous accounts, I accept the priority of mining in understanding the formation of capitalism in twentieth century South Africa. Indeed, I will argue, the representation of the black miner comes to stand metonymically for modern capitalism in this country.

Such representation, however, is itself historically mediated, as are the subjects it purports to objectively represent. That is, both the representation of black miners and the constitution of blackness, are produced in relation to a specific set of historical circumstances. This is critically important to appreciate because the purpose of this chapter, after considering analyses of mining

and the value of gold, is ultimately to propose a more critical theoretical engagement of racism and subjectivity in South Africa through the photographic gaze and a reading of mining photography as a productive surface.

Central to this engagement is a reading of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, and especially his assertion that the subjective experience of blackness is determined 'from without', through an inescapable, ongoing encounter with the objective gaze which gives material substance to black skin, or what Fanon (1967, p. 112) terms an "racial epidermal schema". In so far as Fanon employs blackness as a necessarily historical category through which to understand the experience of the black man, it raises the question in South Africa – given the importance of gold mining – of how such an epidermal schema is produced in relation to that particular history. In short, therefore, this chapter is concerned with the surface of the black miner and photographs. Through this, it hopes to problematize three claims: first, that race is only a mystification of the "real" political economic reality; second, that racism has a transhistorical meaning, that is, that it appears as the same across time; and third, that economic value in South Africa can somehow be disconnected from the value of black skin.

Now it might be questioned that I provide a reading of mining from twentieth century South Africa to characterize blackness *in general*: perhaps such a reading is anachronistic. However, I will suggest that it is precisely because of nostalgia for the black skin as a form of value in a world that has changed, that the visual economy of the black skin provides a privileged standpoint from which a continued understanding of the relationship between blackness and modern subjectivity in South Africa becomes possible. At stake in such reading is precisely the historical nature of the *surface*: not as hiding more essential social relations but, as I will discuss with reference to Fanon below, as one central element through which value relations, embodied in skin, conditions the modern experience

of the black man. In so far as other analyses of race in the gold mining industry do not repeat Johnstone's (1976) insistence that the surface character of race veils more essential class relations, and recognizing the importance of race in structuring and maintaining such industry, they do not similarly theorize the surface—the black skin—as itself specific and revealing – or disguising – the particular historical character of modern anti-black racism in South Africa.

### **1.1 Skin matters: reading the surface of gold mining**

The South African gold mining industry was by far the most prominent employer of black labour for at least the first four decades of the twentieth century (Wolpe, 1972). This was no ordinary wage relation between industry and the black worker: the recruitment of African men from rural areas and life in company regulated hostels (though by no means as elaborate as they became during apartheid) were accompanied by lower wages than their white counterparts. An early revisionist scholar, Frederick Johnstone (1976), characterises the mining industry as the most extensive institutionalisation of racial discrimination in South Africa in the early decades of the twentieth century.

For Johnstone, whose approach seems to better express what Dubow (1992, p. 209) calls the “materialist scholarship’s fear of idealism”, the racial component of the early gold mining period in South Africa is merely incidental to, if not a mere ideological stain on the understanding of, class-layered capitalist oppression. Johnstone (1976, p. 6) approaches racism outside of the realm of material struggle, as a form of “misrecognition”: racial inequality for him constitutes “an absolute mystification” of what is, in fact, purely social inequality.

Johnstone (1976, p. 6) is generally emblematic of a kind of suspicion of taking race as face value, as for him the task of analysis is to be able to see the object of study *beyond its surface*, “penetrating behind the mask of specific nature...un-masking and de-mystifying and thus elucidating specific nature”. Since race has, “at least ontologically, nothing to do with social inequality” for Johnstone (1976, p. 7), South Africa’s racial system in the gold mines is better explained as a unique kind of class system, consolidated in what he calls the industrial production of “class colour bars”. Johnstone (1976, p. 4) explains the fact that white mineworkers opposed the end of the job colour bar in the mines as the bar secured the stability of the status quo of their labour as an “aristocracy of colour” (1976, p. 88).

White miners *projected* onto the “outward appearance and manifestation” of class oppression, i.e. onto racial differences, the contradiction inherent in this very system (1976, p. 77). The colour bar, even if seemingly working against and not towards profit maximisation, is also for Johnstone “a stabiliser of the labour status quo” of the white working class (1976, p. 86), a position shared with Visser (2004). Johnstone thus explains white miners’ inclination towards a “conservative policy” (1976, p. 88) – meaning, anti-black – as both a way of securing the white miners labour status quo, and a way of confronting the threat mining capital poses to white job security.

Thus racial difference appears to merely scratch the surface of the real of this seemingly transhistorical form of ‘social inequality’ presented by Johnstone, as class difference manages to reproduce itself through race “in disguise” (1976, p. 7). Race is not to be understood on the grounds of essentialized subjective categories such as ideas, beliefs, ideologies, nor according to the way things appear concretely, something which would “equate reality”, Johnstone (p. 8, emphasis added) warns, “with the *picture* of reality immediately apparent to the investigator and to those in the situation under investigation...as a given”. Race is the very concealment, the particularly opaque

surface that hinders a broader structure of class oppression in which “appearance and reality coincide” and so this

specific form of social reality, its specific outward appearance and manifestation, is often not a clear picture of, a clear window on to, its specific nature – its reality – as it is actually, as opposed to apparently, constituted and determined. (Johnstone, 1976, p. 6)

Stemmet (1996, p. 217) calls into question this particular “mechanical brand” of Marxism that for him assumes the proletariat already freed from the means of production. Stemmet’s analysis of the value of black labour-power in South Africa in the light of a political economy of gold differs fundamentally from Johnstone’s approach to race. Stemmet’s argument develops first by reassessing Marx’s theory of gold and establishing what he calls a political economy of gold of which, he claims, South Africa becomes emblematic. He examines the character of gold-producing labour under particular historical conditions and the value relations at play between gold-producing capital and black labour in South Africa. His analysis unfolds from the premise that the ultra-exploitability of black labour power was not a side effect of the maximisation of profit in capital, but that the value of black labour was to be defined at the very core of the development of the system, relying on the prevalent racial regime.

**The Chamber of Mines and the  
Mine Worker**



Figure 5: A cartoon from *The Strike Herald* of 1913, reprinted from Visser, 2004, p. 420

As Arrighi (1979, p. 323) notes, it is within the specificity of gold production that capital retains its “revolutionary character”, in that it continually works at directly or indirectly lowering the cost of reproduction and restructuring both the division of labour and production. Therefore, it is not that cost minimisation did not create and contain the supply of cheap black labour but, for Stemmet and Arrighi, from the perspective of capital, it improvised a solution to allow its labour force to be proletarianised without raising the value of its labour power. This minimisation of the necessary means of subsistence would differ for blacks and whites and help to foster a fertile ground for anti-black ideology and policies.

This position differs considerably from Johnstone and from a characterisation of anti-black racism as deriving from, and not participating in, black proletarianization, such as Dubow’s (1989). Dubow has argued that the institutionalization of anti-black racism was a response to a collapse of the reserves, and a socio-political strategy to cope with the threat of the black proletariat that started to populate the city. Dubow’s (1992, p. 210) attempt to characterize race in South Africa departs

from an assumption that anti-black racism, in its institutional or popular forms, relies on notions of human difference which were already at play, not on the ones generated by modernity. While Johnstone regarded race as a surface mystification of capitalist-driven class relations and Dubow accords racism an existence prior to mining capital, following Stemmet, I will approach mining capital as producing an image of race that was necessary to the existence of South African capitalism.

Thus, for Stemmet, capital must pay the black miner below the cost of his own reproduction: if the black miner was to be ‘fully’ proletarianised, his cost of living would have to be fully known and quantified in order to control his wages. Stemmet suggests that before the black worker started earning a wage his costs had already to be taken into account, creating a historical restriction against black labour to developing fully into free-wage labour (Stemmet, 1996, p. 205). The relationship between gold-producing labour and black labour constitutes a different form of capital-labour relation, Stemmet argues, one in which gold-producing capital itself has the opportunity to structure the capital-labour relationship, rather than ‘naturally’ historically inherit it, as in the case of white workers – very similarly to the ways in which for Arrighi (*op. cit.*, p. 205) capital structures gold production.

It is clear that in order to characterise the black mine worker, and to see him as an icon of a particular point of South African “crucial turning point” (Johnstone, p. 303) into modernity while seeing such icon as itself a product of such transition, we must now turn to gold production. I characterise gold production not just as a contingent historical passage but also a privileged theoretical standpoint from which to articulate the subjective and objective underpinnings of capital and modern anti-black racism in South Africa, as both make claims on the appearance of race.

## 1.2 Gold as ‘natural’ value

Like any other commodity, the value of gold has been determined by the amount of labour power expended to produce it. However, insofar as gold functions not only as a commodity but as a measure of all commodities – a form of money antecedent to paper – the value of gold must also be uniform across space if it is to successfully function as an equivalent. As gold already occurs in nature in its ‘native form’, once it is extracted from the ground, no elaborate labour is necessary for gold to become useful as money. This means that the labour spent on gold production seems to immediately *incarnate* the abstract unit of labour in general. The value of gold has therefore been historically identified with the labour-power spent on its production rather than with the use-value of any other commodity.

Given its virtually indestructible material properties, gold long appeared to be the substance most adequate for preserving value – its durability facilitates the exchange of labour objectified in one material form to be transformed into another form – and thus seems to also be a substance that must necessarily exist in abundance in a society of universal exchange (Marx 1976: 125-137). Indeed, since exchange value is congealed abstract labour, a homogeneous, undifferentiated substance, its representation must be able to accommodate all kinds of divisions and re-unification without ever dissolving or breaking apart. For its durability and malleability, gold long appeared to be the most adequate natural material for a medium of circulation.

But if gold seems to express the nature of exchange value, Stemmet argues, it is not just because the nature of gold production has been uniform across societies, but it has also been constant over time to allow the emergence of a *measure* of value: both as value, being materially constant over time, and as exchange value, reflecting the constancy of the labour-process involved in its production (Stemmet, 1996, p. 31). If the tendency of exchange value is to fix itself to an object

whose value remains constant over time, gold fits this exigency, Stemmet claims, as its value appeared long unchanged, especially before the gold rushes of the mid-nineteenth century. The perception of gold as a natural token of value is explored by Breckenridge (1995), who examines South African mineworkers, who until 1933, received their wages in gold. Breckenridge describes the tensions that arose following the introduction of paper money, showing how practices and ideas of black miners are necessarily related to broader, national and international political economic transformations in gold labour value and the value of gold – such as the gold standard and the crisis of international money supply.

Breckenridge (1995, p. 283) argues that beyond the appearance of gold's "metallic mystique", as a thing with abstract and mysterious qualities, the changing form of money and money supply in Southern Africa and their value relation with capital were articulated in the lives and politics of migrant miners. Breckenridge provides a reassessment of the gold standard crisis in contrast with, or in relation to the "form, value, velocity" of money and currency in the mining industry and the region as a whole, which has resulted in "a dramatic re-definition of the terms of economic conflict between workers and managers" (Breckenridge, 1995, p. 304). Gold was at the centre of the experience of migrant labour before the gold standard crisis in 1932 and became part of the 'self-consciousness' of the migrant miner up to the 1920s. Breckenridge notes how the deflationary period between 1919 and 1933 protected the labour of migrant workers, sharply contrasting with the chronic inflation experienced from the 1940's. Old migrant gold miners remember the stability of value of the earlier period, contrasting this with inflated paper money, that they regarded as inadequately stable for either rural villages or for their urban lives in the mines and compounds. As Mckenzie, Crown Mines leading expert on "native labour", pointed out about the mine workers, who:

...hav[e] no means of hoarding or saving money except by carrying it on their persons in armlets or body belts ... paper money becomes very insanitary, torn and dilapidated almost beyond recognition, and when tendered was either rejected or paid out at less than its face value. I have experienced notes rendered to a mass of paper pulp through being carried next to the owner's body and becoming saturated with perspiration or water while at work, or during rains. This condition is also brought about by being folded and refolded into very small capacities and the friction caused during work. When in this state they become a dead loss to the natives and a gain at their expense to the Government. (cited in Breckenridge 1995, p. 286)

If miners believed that monetary value resided only in gold, it was not just because of gold's physical character compared to paper money, but because it was projected in its very materiality –its solidity, durability and weight– gold's capacity, as currency, to maintain its value. The “dignity” of gold has much to do with its association with the “*abantu abadala*, the old people” – affirms Breckenridge (1995, p. 286) – the ancestors of the old people of the villages as gold is a nostalgic part of the migrants' experience. When gold disappears again from the compounds and villages, Johannes Mdlamza speaks of the change to paper money “with a mixture of curiosity, suspicion and nostalgia”:

We handled it then as it was given to us by abelungu even though our hearts were still with that red money - money that had dignity such that even if you're holding it you can feel that it's money that you're holding. That other money is a weightless thing. But then we took it because it was called money - everyone was given this money. (cited in Breckenridge 1995, p. 301)

Thus the seemingly metaphysical tendency of gold to be a touchstone of value can be explained by both a political economy of gold at the time, in which gold appears as having constant value against the vulnerability of paper money to inflation; and also by the very material or corporeal qualities of gold, which allowed for transportation, storage and circulation of gold-money to be possible in the journeys from and to the mines. The historical circumstances of the shift to paper

money was a moment in which value becomes experienced as fleeting and elusive, in which “all that is solid appeared to melt into air” (Marx “Manifesto of the Communist Party”, in Tucker 1978, p. 476). This is the condition of a nostalgia for gold: such a nostalgia precisely originated in a historical moment in which money appears to lose its value, so here we could ask what is the nostalgia for value nostalgic about. In order to answer such a question, I briefly turn to Stemmet’s considerations about gold producing labour and value.

Stemmet (1976, p. 49) shows how for Marx, the commodity-money assumes a “dual form” in order to represent value: particular use value and universal exchange value. Gold’s universal exchange-value satisfies a universal need arising from value itself – that of being money, and particular use-value includes individual use-values, in products such as tooth filling, cladding, jewellery etc. For the purpose of its universal exchange-value (money), gold is already found in nature in its ‘raw’, natural state of gold nuggets, grains, dust or flakes as it is the material and not the shape which gives it money-form. The production of exchange value must be examined both on the basis of labour not as itself exchange value and on the basis of labour *as itself exchange value* (Stemmet, 1976, p. 49). That is, when gold functioned as exchange-value, the labour that produced gold was different from the labour that produced other commodities, insofar as the form produced the basis of exchange value rather than being a mere means through which exchange-value was obtained.

Labour in production in general can reduce the value of commodities by improving productivity i.e., by reducing necessary labour-time in the production of a particular commodity, and thus reducing the value of labour-power and maintaining the standard of living. Labour in mining is not that adaptable, as previously pointed out, which results in very little historical variation in the value of gold (Stemmet, 1976, p. 58). If the value of gold producing labour-power is kept low, that means that more room is created within the value of gold, considering the uncertain ways in which

the richness/poverty of the mineral source can affect its future value. Stemmet clarifies the relationship between the value and the price of gold, by showing how the standard price of gold differs from its value as the latter is essentially internally determined. The price of a unit of weight remains a unit of weight and any fluctuation on the value of gold will merely give a different value to the unit of weight, whose price remains the same, i.e., the latter need not change in response to the former. The unit weight of metal, which is the price standard, is then finally rendered adequate to circulation as discrete bodies: gold becomes *coin*. Here lies, for Stemmet (1976, p. 59) the contradiction of gold: “ideal fluidity and ideal fixity coexisting in the same physical thing”.

What is important to note, in explaining what I call the nostalgia for gold, is how the constancy of the value of gold relies on its physical ‘nature’ as its natural qualities could possess themselves a form of essential, inner value, as if the ‘dignity’ of money, as Breckenridge points out, could already be found – like mining – in nature:

[g]old, in whatever social form, remains gold; so does labour, whatever social form it may take, remain labour. Gold, in whatever concrete form it is fashioned, remains gold; labour in whatever concrete form exercised remains labour. Gold is the troublesome which labour negotiates its way through is troublesome adolescence as value. The history of gold is, in the most liberal sense then, the history of making of humankind. Only upon his labour maturing as freely-associated labour can that labour eventually lay its golden lodestone down (Stemmet, 1996, p. 254).

In his analysis of the relationship between gold standard and the logic of naturalism, Benn Michaels (1985, p. 115) examines how the nostalgia for gold can be found in the denial of gold-money as a form of representation, and therefore of the denial of representation itself. To imagine money to be ‘found’ in nature, as Benn Michaels (*op. cit.*, p. 115) claims, is at the same time to deny the existence of money, turning money exchanges into barter exchanges, and so deriving the value of gold as money exclusively from its “intrinsic” value as an object. At stake in the nostalgia for gold,

I will suggest, is the naturalization of gold as bearing value, an idea that the concrete material substance in itself is valuable outside of the social relations that produce it. It is this nostalgia that in South Africa becomes coupled to the black skin, I will now suggest.

## 1.2 Gold skin: colour, shimmer, shine

*Color...is another world, a splurging thing, an unmanageable thing, like a prancing horse or a run in a stocking, something, this thing, this formless thing, that we need to fence in with lines and marks, the boundary-riders of thought.*

*(Michael Tausig 2009, p. 17)*

The opposite of thinking that gold *is* money (with dignity) is to think that gold, affirms Benn Michaels (1985, p. 175) *resembles* money, “distinguish[ing] between what it is and what it represents and so, admitting the discrepancy between material and value, to admit the possibility of money and a money economy”. Gold, Benn Michaels (1985, p. 111) notes,

occupies a strange position in the movement from a barter economy, exchanging commodities for each other, to a money economy, exchanging commodities for money. As money, of course, it replaces barter, but since its value as money is only a function of its value as a commodity, the exchange of any commodity for gold as money is identical to the exchange of that commodity for gold as a commodity. All money exchanges, in other words, are also simultaneously barter exchanges, and the "intrinsic" value that fits the precious metals to be money guarantees at the same time that nothing ever really need be money. The assertion that money exists in nature is thus identical to the assertion that money doesn't exist at all. Defending gold or silver, the money writers end up articulating an economic theory that, in its most out-landish and fetishized claims on behalf of "real" or "primary" money, actually stages for itself...the escape from a money economy.

This fantasy, in which the circulation of currency becomes a natural phenomenon and in which money itself is always either threatening or promising to “return to nature”, would seem to

find its most powerful figure in the miser, who nurtures for Benn Michaels (1985, p. 112) a “perfectly fetishized love of money [as] already a love of the material money is made of, gold”. Hence what is at stake is the threat that money will disappear and the world will lapse into “barbarism,” while the promise is that “only a money that might disappear could possess the natural purchasing power required by ‘civilized nations’”:

“In civilized nations,” wrote Wells, “natural selection has determined the use of gold as a standard.” But this attempt, common to gold and silver men both, to see the precious metals as nature's money embodied a rather complicated sense of the place of a money economy in nature. By insisting that ‘good money’ must “of itself possess the full amount of the value which it professes on its face to possess” writers like Wells were insisting that the value of money as money be determined by (and indeed identical to) the value of money as the commodity it would be if it weren't money (Benn Michaels, 1985, p. 112).

The correspondence that Benn Michaels finds between a ‘primitive’ form of desire for gold and the idea of barbarism related to the fear of the disappearance of money in nature is especially important, as he explores the figure of the ‘primitive’ himself as being purely representation, of being purely ‘irreflection’. As in Balzac's (2008) modern novella *The girl with the golden eyes*, gold appears conflated with the character's mixed race as a symbol of lack of depth and irreflection. The “living gold” metaphor here is telling: the character's ‘irreflection’ lies on the incapacity of gold to be a double of itself as it is purely representation; at the same time, such seductive surface elevates blackness to a kind of sublime, its material qualities mimics those of a mirror, a surface, as Rebbecah Zorach (1999) shows, in which desire can be projected into the object as if the object itself is *desiring*.

Then I *scrutinize* her. Ah, my dear fellow, speaking physically, my incognita is the most adorable feminine person whom I ever met. (...) And in chief, what struck me the most, what I am still taken with, are her two yellow eyes, like a tiger's, a golden yellow that gleams, *living gold*, gold which thinks, gold which loves, and is determined to take refuge in your pocket (my emphasis). (Balzac, 2008, p. 65)

The modern “naturist ontologies” that conflate gold and barbarism’s irreflexion in the form of the character’s mirrored surface, or blackness, rehearse a projection onto black skin of the nostalgic ‘return’ to value in a longing for gold which Michaels calls “goldbug materialism”. It is as if the surface of blackness can turn into its own substance, or as Adorno (1997, p. 196) describes it, as if the façade could be “transformed into a function of the content”.

This intersection of the surface of gold and the surface of skin can be found more explicitly in the work of South African artist Berni Searle, a body of work in which the surface emerges as a recurrent visual motif and a particularly appropriate metaphorical and literal site for generating both desire and deceit. In the photos and videos that compose *Shimmer, Interlace and Lament* (2011), Searle appears in the Gothic Chamber of Bruges town hall restored by King Leopold II. Either covered with black veil or hands clad with gold in a corporeal engagement with gold *through* and *as* skin, Searle articulates skin and gold conflation in a geographic location that, for centuries, was stage to international commercial trade on black skins. Skin is not to be taken as a fortuitous biological cladding of the black body’s value, as it is part of what turns the latter into a measure of value and, therefore, of *resurface as* gold: by having her hands and feet, and her whole body made of gold, and so conflating gold and blackness surfaces, Searle, using Benn Michaels words (1985, p. 118), “recognize[s] the representation as an ontological piece of the thing”.



Figure 6a: Berni Searle (2011), still from 'Sketches for *Shimmer* (feet projection). Four-screen video projection/installation.



Figure 6b: Berni Sarle (2011), *Lament II*.



Figure 6c: Berni Searle (2011), still from *Interlaced*. Three-channel video projection.

Writing on the value of the artisanal fashion of objects made of gold in sixteenth-century France, and how gold handiwork was viewed as a kind of representational, metaphysical excessiveness, Rebecca Zorach (1999, p. 35) describes gold as having its own “mysterious and illicit productivity”: “it appears not only to produce its like—to bear “interest”, in the monetary sense—but also to bear our interest, to solicit desire, signification, worship, metaphor”. For Zorach, in fifteenth century discourses of idolatry, the fashioning of gold indexes gold’s capacity to change its form and conceal the process of its making and therefore its status as “made”. The very gleaming surface of gold deflects the eye from the methods of an object’s fabrication, becoming, thus, an artefact of its own fetishism.

The word fetish derives (in all probability) from the same Latin verb (*facere*) from which the French *facon* derives. The fetish is thus a thing made by human labour but endowed with life. Whether the borrowed shine is that of the sun, of divinity, of value, or simply the maker’s humanness, it might make gold appear as surrogate source of light, existing on the ideal plane of forms (Zorach, 1999, p. 135)

Exploring the discourse of idolatry, especially within the Catholic rituals, Zorach notes how the literalism of substance, particularly in case of gold, has a potential to collapse different levels of representation, positing the idol not as a distant thing, but one of “excessive intimacy”. Closing a gap with the divine in an attempt to attach God to material things through the very process of making, Zorach shows how in the *Psalms*, for instance, the suggestion is not that idols are made of gold and silver, but that gold and silver *are* idols in themselves, and so the idolater who creates a reciprocity with the idols renders himself less human and more thing-like. The adoration of religious images as an excessive attention to the material at the expense of the spiritual, “is suspiciously akin to carnal lust”, writes Zorach (1999, p. 135), a potential threat present in idols and brilliantly evoked by Milcinovic’s 1973 black peril idol.

When fashioning is excessive, not only does the view run the risk of being seduced by it, but also the producer's relation to the object may itself suggest eroticism, lingering long on the surface, like that of a fetishist or idolater (Zorach, 1999, p. 136)



Figure 7 Wilko Milcinovic (1973), *Swart Gevaar*.

And so gold is, due mainly to its 'natural' origins, through its frequent employment in ornament – “both real and imaginary” –, through its malleability and susceptibility to metaphor, “triangulated between art and nature” (Zorach, 1999, p. ). Writing on the relationship between nature and art, Adorno suggests that the very longing for nature is the reflection of a “petrified” society which resorts to a elusive and utopian “first nature”, as

delight in nature was bound up with the conception of the subject as being-for-itself and virtually infinite in itself; as such the subject projected itself onto nature and in its isolation felt close to it; the subject's powerlessness in a society petrified into a second nature becomes the motor of the fight into a purportedly first nature (Adorno, 1997, p. 65)



Figure 8 Kendell Geers, *Mined*, 2010, 18 Carat gold

Thus what I understand as the nostalgia of gold in relation to gold-producing black labour is that the character of black skin comes to represent/embody gold's "perfect fluidity with perfect fixity", although the very *seeing* of skin as transhistorical effaces the traces as already a form of historical fixation. Such is, I argue, the projection onto the black miner of the fetishistic appeal of gold, which allows for the black miner to resemble gold on the surface of the mines and gold mining photography. This conflation of skin and blackness, I argue, marks the historical coincidence of a biological imposition and its ideological imago, and allows for the black miner's condition of modern 'subjectability' – or his capacity to enter modernity's subject-object relations – to be also a concealment of the marks of/on skin's historical fabric. Such is the premise, I argue, of what Fanon calls 'racial alienation', a concept to which I now turn.

#### 1.4 Raw gold and the raw 'native': analytics of the subject of/on display

*Man comes naked to the world again when he is industrialized* (Nadine Gordimer, 1968).

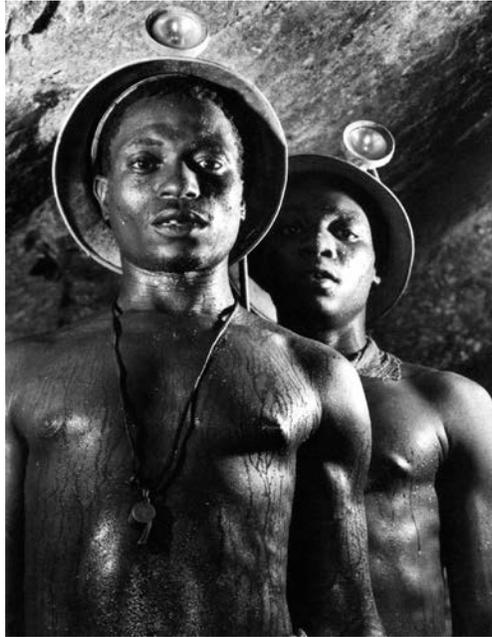


Figure 9: Margaret Bourke-White (1950), *Gold Miners, Johannesburg, South Africa*

Alienation, both in Freudian and Marxist terms, has been generally understood as the social dissociation of man either from a supposedly unmediated concept of 'nature' or of his so-called natural instincts. For the Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (1967), racial alienation signals exactly the opposite: the black man is in fact perpetually attached to that form of value of blackness which, having materialized itself in/as skin, imposes itself upon him precisely as *natural*. For the Black man, and above all, his black skin, nature is a form of concrete abstraction that confines black subjectivity—or rather black 'subjectability'—to the historicity of the corporeal medium. That is why for Fanon an analysis of racial alienation necessarily oscillates between the phenomenology of the experience and a metapsychology: blackness for the black man is not a surrogate of self, as Toni Morrison (1993, p. 37) has said about the slave, but a condition for the possibility of historical

experience. The programmatic aspect of Fanon's (1986, p. 184, emphasis added) critique – in his words, “a *mirror*, a progressive infrastructure where the black man can find the path to disalienation” – does not necessary solve as much as it enacts a paradox: that in which only through severing the ties with (his) nature the black man can claim for himself the modern, metaphysical crisis of the subject.

If the conflict of the black man resides pivotally in the charged field of the vision, Lacan's (2001, p. 12) notion of “*imago*” provides an appropriate psychoanalytic theory of the visual as structuring of the subject. A child sees an objective, exogenous reflection of her own body in the mirror, and in doing so, subjectively and visually *produces* that body. But also, and perhaps most importantly, it is the objective event of seeing in which ‘I’ assumes a form when confronted with its double, offering the subject “the pure mirror of an unruffled surface” (Lacan, 2001, p. 12). In his ontogenesis of the subject, Lacan elaborates on the encounter with the double in which the ‘I’ attaches itself to its own reflection – an event he calls the “*mirror phase*”. This event is therefore not tangential to the birth of the subject, but appears as the temporal and “*geometric*” structure that allows the body to see itself as its physical double, and in this process becoming the ‘I’ who *sees myself as the one who sees my own body*. For Lacan, the ‘*real*’—which Lacan distinguishes from the concept of reality – is also born in this same event, formed by the reflexion of that which does *not* correspond to its reflex (Lacan, 2001, p. 15).

[I]f I take myself to the other, metaphoric pole of the signifying quest, and if I dedicate myself to becoming what I am, to coming into being, I cannot doubt that even if I lose myself in the process, I am in that process. (Lacan, 2001, p. 166)

For Lacan the first effect of the *imago* is the subject's *alienation*, as “it is in the other that the subject first identifies himself and even experiences himself”. Desire, as reflection, is constituted under the sign of a *mediation*: desire is the desire to have my desire recognized by the other.



Sak, 10 August 1961

Figure 10: Len Sak (1961) *Contact*, Vol. 4, n.16

The modern black man, for Fanon, is already ideologically, even ‘metaphysically’ imprisoned by his own double: his biological exterior, or ‘epidermal schema’, this seemingly autonomous entity that conditions his experience of modernity’s subject/object dynamics. Fanon shows how the potential for the black man’s corporeality and ‘instinctual’ life to become an index of his personhood makes him prone to idolatry and fetishism. “Black is for penis” – Fanon (1967, p. ) claims referring to the historical “genital fixation” of the black man—“what the Jew is for money” and wealth.

For Fanon, the Jew is oppressed from *within* as the black is from *without*. In his elaborations on Sartre’s concept of anti-Semitism is the very idea of *passing* (as white), a form of mobility that Fanon identifies as potentially positive or a relief for the Jew. What he appears to miss is that the very ability and tendency to “mimicry”, as a kind of parasitism in which one incarnates the form of its host, is already popularly attributed to the Jew as a distinct ‘ethnic’ quality (Hund, 2003, p. 84).

The implication that “the Jew is money”, and the consequences of such a representation, are explored by Adorno (2005) in his *In Search of Wagner*. Reading Wagner’s anti-Semitism as a historically specific form of the fetish projected onto the figure of the Jew, Žižek (2005, p. xi) writes

in a preface to Adorno's *Wagner* how “[f]irst, modernity—this abstract, impersonal process—is given a human face, is identified with a concrete, palpable feature; then in a second move, by rejecting the Jew which gives body to all that is disintegrated in modernity, we can retain its advantages”. The question asked by Žižek resonates with the question I ask in my thesis: if the anti-Semitic figure of the Jew itself is “not a direct ultimate referent, but... already encoded, a cipher of ideological and social antagonism”, can we say the same about the black in anti-black racism, following Fanon? Putting it differently, should the modern black be decoded insofar as his encoding “refers to the ‘original’ social antagonism” (Žižek, 2005, p. xv) of which he is a cipher?



Figure 11: Margaret Bourke-White (1950) *Mining recruits are fingerprinted, the tribesman's way of signing contract as a gold miner.*<sup>3</sup>

Moishe Postone's analysis of anti-Semitism and National Socialism demonstrates how the projection of money and wealth onto the Jew does not necessarily rely on the concrete form of money, but rather find in the Jew the figure of the “mysteriously intangible, abstract, and universal”

<sup>3</sup> “These Natives, Pondos from the southeast, are signed up by National Recruiting Corporation official after quick oral reading of the contract” (Life Magazine, 18 Sept 1950, p. 119)

character of capital (Postone, 1996). The power that the Jew evokes is precisely a form of power that does not manifest itself directly so it finds another mode of expression, “a concrete carrier, whether political, social, or cultural, through which it can work”. As a foreign, dangerous, destructive force, the Jews appear as potentially undermining the social “health” of the nation. This turn to biology is not just a by-product of segregation, but the very mechanism through which the concrete can be ‘hypostatized’ as *natural*, translated here in biological terms and a desire for the ‘return’ to nature.

The hypostatization of the concrete and the identification of capital with the manifest abstract underlie a form of “anticapitalism” that seeks to overcome the existing social order from a standpoint which actually remains immanent to that order. Inasmuch as that standpoint is the concrete dimension, this ideology tends to point toward a more concrete and organized form of overt capitalist social synthesis. This form of “anticapitalism,” then, only appears to be looking backward with yearning. As an expression of the capital fetish its real thrust is forward. (Postone, 1980, p. 111).

It is the quality of modern anti-Semitism as a form of anticapitalism, Postone (1980, p. 98) argues, which distinguishes this ideology to that of “racism in general”. But if racism in general sought to comprehend also modern anti-black racism, the emphasis on nature as itself rooted in/as the black fetish must be explored in relation to capital. Pre-Apartheid accounts of blackness, for example, as symbolic of a “primal power” (Connellan, 2007, p. 249) are to be taken as a similar desire to ‘return to nature’ or they point precisely to the relationship between nature and (its) representation that the fetish actualizes? If, as Postone argues, forms of ‘fetishized anticapitalism’ culminated both in the extermination of the Jew and “the positive emphasis on nature”, nature itself must be thought here not only mediated by, but also a medium of its own fetishism.

In other words, if in the late nineteenth century blackness itself could be already understood as a signifier of an ‘atavistic nature’, black racism in South Africa could point to a moment in which nature, appearing as unmediated, presented itself as an antidote to the commodity character, and

more specifically a return to a pre-money economy, a moment in which things appeared to have value in themselves: as nostalgia for gold in which, by projecting the value of gold onto the black, modern anti-black racism can be identified as a form of ‘fetishized anticapitalism’.



Figure 12: In Schoeman, 1996.

Both modern anti-black racism and anti-Semitism have been part of South Africa’s imagination and imagery of the modern long before the war (Shain, 1994, Shimoni, 2003). At the turn of the century, Johannesburg would have been called “Jewburg” (Gilbert, 2001, p. 56): a colonial Jewish bourgeoisie has been widely associated with excessively ornamented surfaces and

being reportedly characterized as ‘the Kaffir circle’ (Viney, Proust, 1987, p. 142). As early as 1902, the New York musical comedy *The Girl From Kay’s* – a New York production and West End hit that toured South Africa just after the Boer War—presented a certain Max Hoggenheimer as “a quintessential Jew-capitalist” based on a series of anti-capitalist and anti-Semitic depictions of a Jewish Randlord by South African cartoonist Daniël Boonzaier (Shimoni, 2003, p. 12). Hoggenheimer is part of South Africa’s vast imagery of the mining magnate who comes to embody the danger of financial capital in the figure of an avaricious, hooked nose, “ugly” and oppressive Jew.

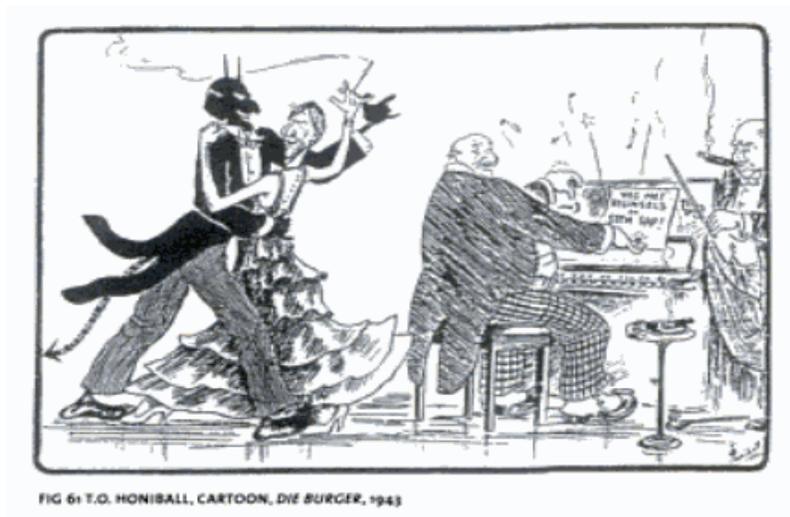


Figure 13: Boonzaier’s (1943) black devil and Hoggenheimer in Mason (2009, p. 53)

In the first part of the nineteenth-century, both Afrikaner miners and the unionised British miners imagined and imaged anti-capital struggle through anti-Semitic and anti-black sentiment. Also abundant in South African literature (Bonner, np) are the manifestations of anti-black racism that are profoundly related to a nostalgia for ‘nature’ and the ‘native’ – a term derived from the latin *nativus*, “being particular of a place” –in contrast with the *uitlander*, the foreigner, most appropriately

incarnated by the European Jew. Mader's (2012) study, which looks into forms of anti-war protest expressed in popular culture by pro-Boers during the Anglo-Boer War – a group ranging from “Liberal politicians, to socialists, women's groups, suffragists, trade unionists, Quakers, and Irish nationalists” (2002, np) –, shows how the prolific imagery of anti-war protest visually conflate the perceived dangerous abstraction of financial capital and the concrete figure of the Jew, represented as a serpent without bowels of compassion. As Mader shows,

[L]inks between capitalism and Jewish financiers, specifically in STWC [Stop-the-War Committee] publications was striking. In several STWC leaflets, the insinuation was made that Jewish financiers in the diamond and gold rich Boer territory fomented the conflict. It was well known that Barney Barnato and Alfred Beit were two of the leading Jewish entrepreneurs in the territory. Similarly, five of the ten major mining firms on the Witwatersrand (Transvaal) were Jewish operated. To promote this theory, the STWC worded pamphlets castigating Jewish financiers as “serpents” who had “no bowels of compassion.” These words were combined with strongly anti-Semitic cartoons, playing upon the stereotypical caricatures of Jews: crooked nose, dark features, and bags of money (Mader, 2012).

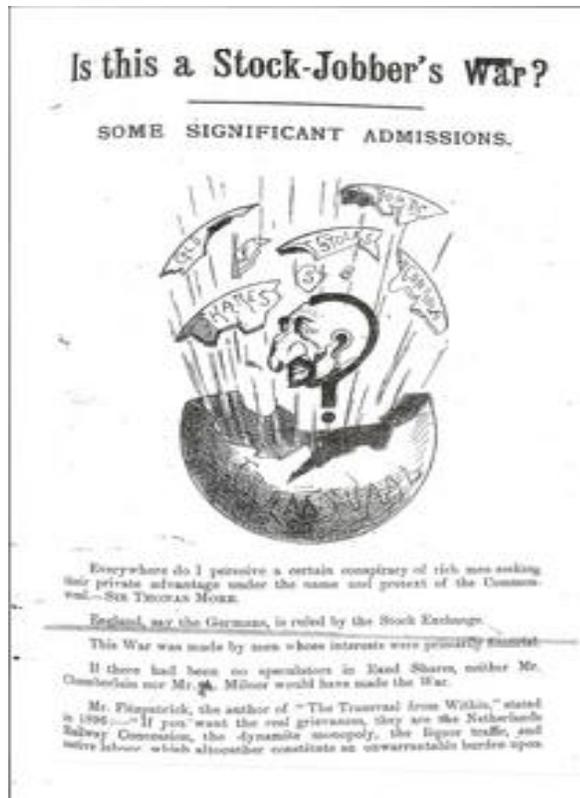


Figure 14: STWC, Leaflet n.8, "Is this a Stock-Jobber's War? Some Significant Admissions."

If modern anti-Semitism and modern anti-black racism differ in expression, I argue that their root can be found in the objective circumstances of the nostalgia for value in South Africa. As Postone (1980, p. 18) argues elsewhere, the attempt to overcome or abolish capital's abstraction is not an unintended side effect of Nazism, but its logical climax, as Auschwitz becomes an industrial complex created in order "to 'liberate' the concrete from the abstract".

The first step was to dehumanize, that is, to rip away the "mask" of humanity, of qualitative specificity, and reveal the Jews for what "they really are"—shadows, ciphers, numbered abstractions. The second step was to then eradicate that abstractness, to transform it into smoke, trying in the process to wrest away the last remnants of the concrete material "use-value": clothes, gold, hair, soap (Postone, 1980, p. 18).



Figure 15: Wedding rings found by US army soldiers near the Buchenwald concentration camp. Germany, May 1945. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md.

The Jew had to be reduced to his concreteness to “eradicate that abstractness”, reduced to “use value”: gold teeth, rings and other jewellery, shoes, bones, hair etc. In the early machinations of South African modern anti-black racism, the black must be retained as something that eludes capital. As I have already suggested in previous sections, if in capitalist development this ‘retention’ of the black miner, the quasi-proletarian, was possible because the black man seemed to incarnate all the qualities appropriate to circulate as gold (money), in the beginning of apartheid, the ‘retention’ of the black relied on this very characterization as to nostalgically retain the black as a ‘touchstone of value’. This psychological –as well as literal, as we shall see—form of projection can be characterized in South Africa more as a response to capital rather than, as Postone suggests, “racism in general”.

This logic behind ‘material’ blackness also explains how the black miner in the 1960s is cast as a remnant—not reduced to its use-value, as in Holocaust’s imagery— of his own abstraction, as pure exchange value. The erasure of the figure can potentially point not to a “reduction” but an elevation of the concreteness of the black into his pure abstractness, endowing his labour artefacts

with an aura. The matter of skin, in particular, can be restored – quite literally: and so there is a belief that human skin has been used in German concentration camps to fashion ‘leather’ goods and that human bone fashioned into buttons (Edwards, 2012, np)— transforming the living matter in something dead, i.e. congealed labour, nature transformed into artefact. The annihilation of the Jew is made possible through the single, private concreteness of his individual belongings and also its ‘natural’, biological parts. The visual disappearance of (the natural body of) the Jew in the photograph occurs when it is turned into particular use-value (gold rings, for example, or a pile of shoes), whereas the black miner’s body, I argue, appears elevated to pure abstraction, pure exchange.

This ‘return to artefact’ could be articulated as a negation of nature’s capacity to represent, a negation of representation itself and, thus, of money. On the other hand, the black is turned into the material, the historically constant, abundant in nature, raw, bordered, physical, indigenous and tangible matter of value. The modern black is a surrogate of his own condition of representation as he is *purely* surface. The Black seems to be enlivened in the very figure of his artefacts, as if, like gold, blackness had a value in itself. Goldblatt’s shovels expresses the sum of labour-power of the black miner that makes it possible to see the black miner as a sum of shovels. It has meant historically that the miner, through his black skin, could be seen above the law of value and also as seemingly fixated in a pre-money economy, like gold itself.



Figure 16: David Goldblatt (1966) *Lashing* (shovels retrieved from underground at Randfontein Estates).



Figure 17: Pile of clothes of prisoners of the Dachau concentration camp liberated by troops of the U.S. Seventh Army. Germany, April 30, 1945. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

As I have explored in this section, to further our understanding of the black miner in relation to the photographic gaze, it is necessary to examine the nature of gold mining labour and the historically

specific character of gold itself. Following Stemmet's (1996) use of Marx to read gold mining in South Africa, the character of gold-producing labour in modern South Africa is related mainly to two interrelated temporal instances, of capital: one, the abstraction of capital that attains materiality in the value of black labour-power and the relations between labour and the social nature of gold itself.

In the next chapter, I will explore the visual articulation between gold and the Black miner and how the black miner comes to *resemble* gold. How can such characterization also imply the understanding of early apartheid's model of segregation as particular nostalgic of the value relations at play in early gold mining period, a period that, Stemmet controversially argues, is the very rudimentary form of apartheid? My suggestion is that it is precisely by how value imposes itself onto/as black skin which allow for a reading of anti-Black racism to be equated with anti-capital sentiment in the turn of the century as an expression of a nostalgia that allowed for the Dutch Reformed Church's metaphorical reading of the 'native' in 1921 as the whites' "sacred trust" (Du Plessis, in Dubow, 1992).

If I have argued so far that in South African anti-black racism the black miner resembles gold, in my next chapter I will elaborate on Alessandra Raengo's claim that "race is a form of appearance of capital" (2012, p. 2). Not only that, but photography too, continues Raengo, "as a general equivalent in the realm of visual representation" can be thought of as a type of money. In light of the argument I have built on so far, different forms of money might lay different claims on the surface and "depth" of representations, as well as on the photographic gaze, a theme to which I now turn.



Figure 18: 1922 white miners' revolt: "workers of the world, unite and fight for a white South Africa"

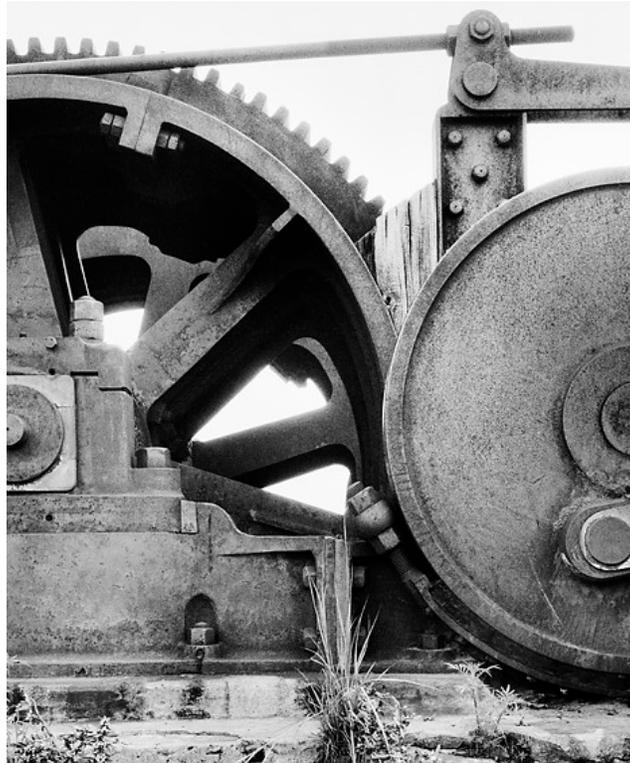


Figure 19: David Goldblatt (1966) *Disused steam boist*

## CHAPTER 2: DIGGING



Figure 20: David Goldblatt (1971) *Team leader and mine captain on a pedal car, Rustenburg Platinum Mine, Rustenburg.*

*The field of vision has always seemed to me comparable to the ground of an archaeological excavation.*  
(Paul Virilio cited in Crary, 1992, p. 1)

*I arrived at a procedure... of clearing away the pathogenic psychical material layer by layer, and we liked to compare it with the technique of excavating a buried city.*  
(Sigmund Freud, 1896, p. 139)

*When no image is available...archaeology must be done in order to create images.*  
(Laura Marks, 2000, p. 33)

In my first chapter, I analysed the ways in which the figure of the black miner becomes iconic of, and a point from which to explore the subjective and material underpinnings of, mining modernity in South Africa. I pointed to how the operation of gold mines demanded a substantial amount of capital and how the gold industry struggled to have any influence on the price of its product as the latter was defined by international agreements. Since production costs increased even though the price of its product remained stable – with the gold standard – gold production on the Rand depended mainly on controlling the total production costs, over a half of which were wages (Mawby, 2000, p. 356). The discrepancy between the cost and value of black labour was secured through monopolized colour bar recruitment, as the industry sought to make black value stable as a form of “skin standard”, and making blackness ‘function’ as, and thus resemble, gold itself.

As Breckenridge (1995) discusses, South African gold mines underwent intense labour unrest in the first decades of the twentieth century, especially in the 1920s, with the Black workers’ protest and the White labourers’ Revolt. He argues that the roots of this unrest lie in the instability of the gold supply and the monetary status of gold, as this period saw the ascension of gold as a monetary unit. A similar response to a monetary crisis, apartheid’s slightly later model of racial segregation can be seen as a projection of a nostalgia for stable value onto black labour. While in the first chapter I articulated the nostalgia for ‘hard money’ in the transition from gold into paper money as a nostalgia for value, in the second chapter I will show how a nostalgia for value also informs the suspicion of surface in the articulation of coinage, authenticity and defacement, and how it fuels what I identify in this chapter as the photographic gaze’s move *beneath*.

The photographic gaze follows, I will argue, the anxiety of the first part of the twentieth century turn from gold-money to paper money. Historically, as Benjamin (1971) has argued, photography also articulates a turn from an aura of art into an artefact artificially reproducible *en*

*masse*. In so far as the artifice points in my analysis to the appearance and representation of the black miner, photography appears to restore the historical ‘aura’ of blackness as monetary value, I argue, and, in so doing so, it relates closely to the concept of the *fetish*. Engaging both Marx and Freud, I will consider the specific character of the fetish of blackness, considering Homi Bhabha’s concept of racial fetish (1983). I will argue that blackness appears atavistic not just as it points to an idyllic, pre-industrial past, but because nature itself — as gold — appears as having monetary value. In other words, the ‘metallic mystique’ of blackness is posited not by nature turning into money, but by money appearing as *natural*, as quite literally located in nature. The mines’ industrial colour bar sought to naturalize the monetary value of blackness precisely at a moment in which capital itself sought to engender a gradual demise of Western scientific-based racism and racial biological determinism (Dubow, 1995).

If, as I argued in my previous chapter, apartheid’s form of black atavism reaffirms blackness as intrinsic, natural, and thus imagines the possibility of blackness escaping a money economy, in this chapter I will elaborate this by beginning with an analysis of what I identify as a “suspicion of surface”. If, with general circulation of paper money, skin gradually begins to lose the capacity to index blackness as value, in this chapter I will relate the imagery of excavation in the mines, the digging of land and landscape, to the digging and stripping of the surface of the subject. The need to scratch the surface, the need to find a truth that is hidden will be a trope and theoretical thread I will explore in this chapter. I will explore the historical conditions for such move under surface, and how it reflects both the photographic *motif* of mining photographs and the scientific enterprise of psychoanalysis, as the latter sought to uncover what lies beneath. I will also explore the imagery and imagination of South African landscape and how the black miner appears as ‘return of the repressed’ expressed in ghostly images.

## 2.1 Suspicion on the surface: gold, coin, face

*Gold is a barbarous relic.* (Charles H. Howell, 1895)

*The literal is barbaric.* (Theodor Adorno, 1997, p. 61)

### i) *Gold*

Observing how gold “occurs in nature in its pure form, as a substance not chemically combined with other substances”, Marx (1859, np) characterizes gold as a thing that appears “in a virgin state”. Nature does “the technical work”, Marx affirms, by washing gold on a large scale in rivers. Gold and silver appear to first “come out of the bowels of the earth”. Since gold and silver are not necessary in the direct process of production (differently from copper or iron), as means of subsistence, nor as articles of consumption, gold can be used in abundance since its use has no implication to circulation and even to its consumption as such, as “[its] individual use-value does not conflict with their economic function” as money (Marx, 1859, np). For Marx, gold has a “special use value”, as cladding, tooth filling, jewellery etc. and a “formal use value” as money. Due to its special use – or rather, useless – value, gold becomes a “natural index of wealth” Marx (1859, np) observes; in other words, it is precisely when gold is not used as money that its innate aesthetic qualities, and its ‘negative’ aesthetic superfluity as money is made into a positive, ‘natural’ value *as a representation of wealth*. Indeed gold and silver, Marx observes (1859, np),

are not only negatively superfluous i.e., dispensable objects, but their aesthetic qualities make them the *natural* material for pomp, ornament, glamour, the requirements of festive occasions, in short, the positive expression of supra abundance and wealth.

Marx shows how these relations can be found in a society in which the individual “has not yet severed the umbilical cord that unites him with his fellowmen in a primitive tribal community, or

upon direct relations of subjection” (Marx, 1959, np). They can arise and exist only when the development of the productive power of labour “has not risen beyond a low stage, and when, therefore, the social relations within the sphere of material life, between man and man, and between man and Nature, are correspondingly narrow”<sup>4</sup>. Only when labour assumes a social *form*, in other words, only when it is historically mediated by value, does “the social character of labour” appear as “an objective character *stamped upon* the product of that labour” (Marx, 1976 [1867], p. 320).

This stamp upon products makes claims on their material appearance, even though exchange appears to attain stability as a result of the *nature* of products themselves, as when “one ton of iron and two ounces of gold appear as *naturally* to be of equal value as a pound of gold and a pound of iron in spite of their different physical and chemical qualities appear to be of equal weight” (Marx, 1978 [1867], p. 323, emphasis added). In other words, the nature of a thing is itself mediated by a social form of production even though it appears to be as much self-evident and unmediated as productive labour itself. A thing’s fetishistic, “mystical character”, does not derive from its use (or “useless”) value, but from the very social form of exchange of a thing *qua* commodity. Nature here “bears [its objective character] *stamped upon it*” like a coinage, a currency of value, in other words, nature, in its objective appearance, expresses the abstraction of labour as a social form. What is at stake here is not only that nature is itself historically mediated but also a medium for the realisation of labour in a definite form of society.

The matter of gold is thus already “a matter of form”, as Rebecca Zorach (1999, p. 195) puts it, and so it follows that gold’s fetishized form “is value itself”. If the labour that realises itself in the

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<sup>4</sup> “This narrowness is reflected in the ancient worship of Nature, and in the other elements of the popular religions. The religious reflex of the real world can, in any case, only then finally vanish, when the practical relations of every-day life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellowmen and to Nature.” (Marx, 1859, np)

values of all commodities is presented in its “negative aspect under which abstraction is made from every concrete form and useful property of actual work”, Marx (1976 [1867], p. 159, emphasis added) observes, “[labour’s] own positive nature *is made to reveal itself expressively*”. That constitutes, for Marx, fetishism, in “all [its] magic and necromancy”<sup>5</sup>. In Benn Michaels’ (1985) analysis, gold fetishism consists in seeing gold as a useful commodity. By insisting that “good money” must “possess the full amount of the value which *it professes on its face* to possess” writers like Orson Welles, Benn Michaels (1985, p. 110-111, my emphasis) observes, regard the value of gold as determined by, or indeed identical to the value of money.

The stamp of value upon nature produces and it is articulated on the surface. But in assuming that gold *is* money, or equating gold’s value as money with an intrinsic, unmediated, natural value, is to imagine the possibility of value outside a money economy, value outside exchange. Alternatively, to think of gold as *looking like* money is to acknowledge the discrepancy between a thing and its surface, a substance and its value form and acknowledge, thus, the possibility of money. For Benn Michaels, natural objects that look like artefacts rely on a form of resemblance that cannot be an identity and so enable the possibility of representation: the kind of representation gold relies on, writes Benn Michaels (1985, p. 117), is not the man-made reproduction of a natural object but a representation in nature of a man-made thing: as a natural object (metal) that looks like an artificial one (money), gold fascinates not for being money already, but for looking like money.

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<sup>5</sup> Interestingly necromancy is the science of turning things into other things, a twelfth century use of the post-classical Greek term for “science from the death” and widely used in the twelfth century to indicate absorbing religious mystical practice into scientific practice. In medieval Latin and English texts the variant nigromantia, “nigromancy”, is found. This form arose when writers of that era replaced the Greek word element necro- with the better-known Latin nigro-, “black” as Rutledge (p. 119-120) suggests.

Roland Barthes illustrates this point in his analysis of jewellery fashion, where he notes how the gemstone

has long participated in this power of gold. And this is not all: owing to the fact that gold very quickly stopped being convertible or useful and so removed itself from any practical application, pure gold, whose usefulness was almost entirely self-referential, became superlative gold, absolute richness – here the *gemstone becomes the very concept of price*; it is worn like an idea, that of a terrific power, for it is enough to be seen for this power to be demonstrated. (Barthes, 2006, p. 60)

ii) *Coin*

If the gemstone is a concept, the coin is the material token of value. Writing on sixteenth-century France, Rebecca Zorach (1999, p. 213) shows how coins have an important role in gold's monetary relations of the Renaissance: as although they had a regional value, coins were progressively converted into national currency in the course of French kings' minting, while *lettre de change* – promissory notes, precursors of paper money – remained the international currency of exchange. This geographical configuration of monetary transactions allowed for the exchange bankers' speculation on the currencies with and without *seignorage*, and the speculation on inflation. Zorach points to two interesting expressions of the perceived threat of inflation engendered in the increasing monetization of that period: the first is the abundance of coins, as much as books, prints, and other visual elements, which were captured by French writers at the end of the sixteenth century as an anxiety “with a loss or dispersal of value” motivated by “an attention to surface rather than substance” (Zorach 1999, p. 30). The second is that this very project of standardization of currency was increasingly associated with the national prestige that accompanied what Zorach calls “the ‘visual culture’ of coins” (1999, p. 30). So, at the same time in which value seems to be inflated – or to mark the discrepancy between a thing's value and the value it professes on its surface – the suspicion over the surface of gold money also grew.

Coinage, I suggest, points to the deceiving work of surface in marking the discrepancy between a thing's 'nature' and its value form. Adam Smith already in the late eighteenth century explored the anxiety over the value of gold-money by noting the discrepancy between the real weight of gold and the weight indicated on its surface (2005 [1776], p. 29). Smith elaborates on the deceptive potential of coinage, as *seignorage* can index the coin to be more valuable (or heavier) than its gold matter and it can also be potentially 'devalued' by the tax already involved in determining the price of the currency. At the same time, Smith points to the ways in which coinage was also to alleviate the burdensome task of weighing gold, as

[b]efore the institution of coined money...unless they went through this tedious and difficult operation, people must always have been liable to the grossest frauds and impositions; and instead of a pound weight of pure silver, or pure copper, might receive, in exchange for their goods, an adulterated composition of the coarsest and cheapest materials, which had, however, in their outward appearance, been made to resemble those metals. To prevent such abuses, to facilitate exchanges, and thereby to encourage all sorts of industry and commerce, it has been found necessary, in all countries that have made any considerable advances towards improvement, *to affix a public stamp upon certain quantities of such particular metals*, as were in those countries commonly made use of to purchase goods. Hence the origin of coined money, and of those public offices called mints; institutions exactly of the same nature with those of the aulnagers and stamp-masters of woollen and linen cloth (Smith, 2005 [1776], p. 27, emphasis added)

In order to have a glimpse of the symbolic relevance of coinage in South Africa, Breckenridge (1995) notes how the sovereigns in circulation before the final collapse of the gold standard were minted or recast during the period of George the Fifth's reign, and "his moustachioed, uncrowned profile formed the one side of the coin. On the other side was an elaborately cast picture of St. George slaying the dragon". Although, Breckenridge notes, the symbol of snake is already part of the cultural landscape of Southern Africa generally, it is possible to infer that the dragon in the coinage might be associated with 1920's and 1930's migrant miners'

mythology of *Imbawula*, a giant snake some believed could be pacified by white workers' wives by throwing it coins. For Breckenridge (1995), although no simple claim could be made between mint and the mythical account, this kind of symbolic resonance of the images on gold coins points to how the latter went intimately intertwined with migrant miners' experience, for it is grounded, says Breckenridge, in a direct relationship between wages and product of labour.

Although the anxiety over coinage is not specifically modern<sup>6</sup>, the particular anxiety around coinage and value I am trying to explore seems to be expressed in modern writing – such as in Anton Chekhov's story *In the ravine* (1900) – as one in which the currency of deceit and suspicion appears already engendered in a broader crisis of subjective identification and recognition. This crisis of recognition builds itself, as Zorach (1999) notes, around the circulation and value of things and the value of people against the background of ever-growing urban spaces increasingly and overwhelmingly populated by commodities and money.

I am unhappy about my money. Do you remember on Low Sunday before his wedding Anisim's bringing me some new roubles and half-roubles? One parcel I put away at the time, but the others I mixed with my own money. When my uncle Dmitri Filatitch...was alive, he used constantly to go journeys to Moscow and to the Crimea to buy goods. He had a wife, and this same wife, when he was away buying goods, used to take up with other men. She had half a dozen children. And when uncle was in his cups he would laugh and say: 'I never can make out,' he used to say, 'which are my children and which are other people's.' An easy-going disposition, to be sure; and so I now can't distinguish which are genuine roubles and which are false ones. And it seems to me that they are all false (Chekhov, 1900, p. xx).

Coins, thus, deceive precisely because what surfaces is not the 'real', 'intrinsic' value of a thing, but already the abstraction of value 'stamped upon' the matter of value, upon the concreteness of a thing itself. This culminates in Nietzsche's statement that the liquid status of

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<sup>6</sup> The most illustrious of the Cynics, Diogenes of Sinope, was reportedly sent into exile for defacing coins of his minter father (Navia, 2005, p. 205), and when asked about his ultimate purpose in life, Diogenes reportedly replied, 'to deface, or restamp, the coinage'" (Clausen, 1973, p. 104).

'truths' was measured against the imprint of their coinage, as truths appear as coins that "lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins" (1999, [1873], p. xx).

### iii) *Face*

Indeed, in the second half of the nineteenth century, coins and coinage also extended their 'deception' on the surface of metal as far as to the surface, or a *sur-face*, as Buck-Morss (2004, p. 22) puts it, of people. In 1880, the British eugenicist Francis Galton used a series of relief sculptures of Alexander the Great on ancient coins to produce a composite of photographs with multiple exposure prints that ultimately blended all individuals into an ideal racial type. This imagery had, according to Mary Bergstein (2010, p. 216), a great impact on Freud's visual imagination and historical modes of interpretation. Galton's attempts to identify "the ideal Jew" by assembling different 'coined' faces of Jewish schoolboys in London fascinated Freud. Galton's alleged scientific evidence of racial evolutionary theories were to be found on the surface, from the 'noble' Greeks and their "best faces" to the African Negro, in a kind of facial spectrum that prompted Freud to assert that "face is race" (Bergstein, 2010, p. 216).

Bergstein (2010, p. 209) argues that Freud's quest for his own Jewish ancestral heritage, which he believed to have Mediterranean roots, was fuelled by his visual study of historical objects, taking as example his reported description of a mummy-portrait from Roman Egypt as "a nice Jewish face" (cited in Bergstein, 2010, p. 211). Photographic measurements such as that of Jewish physiology have substantially informed ideas that gave life to British eugenics and Nazi propaganda, and helped to pathologise the image of Eastern immigrant Jews living largely in small ghettos of big cities like Vienna, and to make their alleged vulnerable health status and their purported hysterical and psychotic tendencies increasingly identifiable in terms of appearance. It is precisely

photographic pseudo-historical studies such as these that informed, Bergstein (2010, p. 217) argues, Freud's overarching historical forms of interpretation as he tries to answer "Who is a Jew?...How is a Jew to visualize and be visualized?"

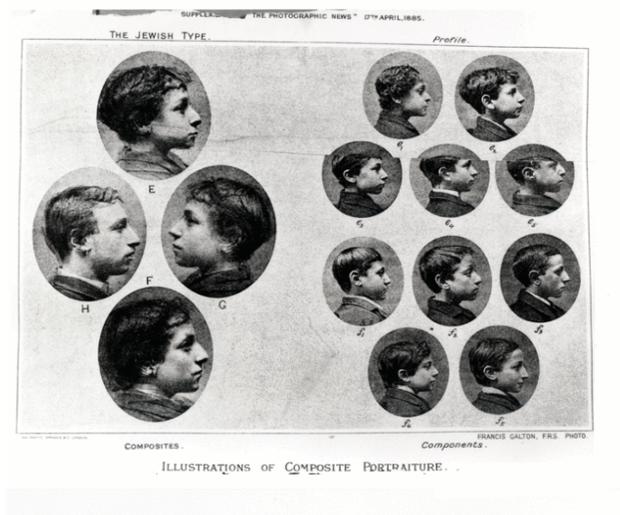


Figure 21: Francis Galton (1885) "Illustrations of Composite Portraiture, The Jewish Type"

It is possible to infer that this search for origins on the surface of the visual is influential to Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900, p. 117). In this work Freud describes one of his own dreams in which the face of a friend suddenly conflates with the face of his uncle Joseph, who had been sent to prison for – interestingly enough – the possession of counterfeit money (Bergstein, 2010, p. 217). Freud shows how in dreams the work of the visual *misrepresents* things “by producing their opposites, then the manifest affection in the dream serves the purpose of the misrepresentation: in other words, the distortion is here shown to be intentional – it is a means of disguise”.

Where in social life can a similar misrepresentation be found? Only where two persons are concerned, one of whom possesses a certain power while the other has to act with a certain consideration on account of this power. The second person will then distort his psychic actions: or, as we say, *he will mask himself*. (Freud, 1900, p. 117, emphasis added)

Although Freud's emphasis is on the intentional misrepresentation of the surface, indexed by the face itself, the relationship between counterfeit money (coins) and the "masking" of faces in dreams appears as "[i]t is like one of those composite photographs of Galton's; in order to emphasize family resemblances Galton had several faces photographed on the same plate. No doubt is now possible; it is really my opinion that my friend R is a simpleton - like my uncle (...)" (Freud, [1900], p. 117). As Freud himself describes in the text's footnote, he has four uncles even though in the beginning of his interpretation of the dream he affirms he "had only one uncle, my uncle Joseph" (Freud, 1900, p. 130, footnotes). The dream-work conflation of multiple uncles in one points to the same conflation of coined faces that produces an ideal (racial) type: a *face*.

Freud likens the work of Galton's coin composites with the work performed by dreams as the latter are already engendered in the process of facing/surfacing/defacing. Exploring the powerful trope of *defacement*, Michael Taussig (1999, pp. 3-5) has argued that it is entwined with ideas of concealment and revelation, as the power of the face, which defacement actualizes, is a form of "reconfiguration in which depth becomes surface as to remain depth". Defacement allows, Taussig (199, p. 3) observes, for face to be "the figure of appearance, the appearance of appearance, the figure of figuration, the ur-appearance...or secrecy itself as the primordial act of presencing".

As Zorach (1999, p. 125) observes, precious metals are a form of "currency of metaphor", due to their "protean potential to be 'liquidated' and remade into as many different shapes as the sophistication of techniques allow (Zorach, 1999, p. 125). What I suggest here, nevertheless, is that, more than a currency of metaphor, metals, and gold in particular, are a matter form whose expression already contains the labour of their own abstraction – or as Taussig has said, following Hegel, "the labour of the negative". Blackness, having assumed its monetary form also appears

“coined”, stamped upon by its value. Thus blackness is also subjected to the same suspicion, I argue, a suspicion that troubles the fixity and legibility Homi Bhabha attributes to the surface of the racial fetish. Following this assumption, in the next section I will approach the fetish precisely as “a token of recognition” (Taussig, 1999, p. ), not of *something* “but of [something’s] absence, combined with disavowal of that absence”.

## 2.2 Under the skin of the fetish

*Skin... is the most visible of the fetishes. (Homi Bhabha, 1983, p. 30)*

*Fetishes resist abstraction. (Laura Marks, 2000, p. 92)*



Figure 22: Joanne Bloch (2013), *Hoard*. Clay.

Now I turn to examine how the forms of skin fetishism, appearing in and as the trope of shine, point to visibility as much as they jeopardise, I argue, the conditions for the visibility and purported authenticity of blackness in securing the monetary value of black skin. This is shown more clearly, in the photographic turn to excavation and the material compromises of the visibility of photographic

excavation indexes. In order to account for this move from surface as truth to surface as troubling truth's recognition, I will look more in depth into the articulations of the concept of the fetish for both Freud and Marx, and what it does to the commodity, the subject and the forms of representation of both.

Freud's concept of the fetish, not unlike W. J. T. Mitchell's (1986, p. 162) elaboration on Marx' commodity, "is the antithesis of the scientific image, epitomizing irrationality in both its crudity of representational means and its use in superstitious rituals" but, most importantly, as "a 'producer' of images, not by means of mechanical reproduction, but by an organic 'breeding' of its own *likeness*". Mitchell's understanding of the fetish as a producer of likenesses is particularly important here to establish a parallel between photography as posing representing skin as much as it poses a problem to the skin's auratic, authentic character. But how exactly are skin and blackness articulated in the racial fetish? Teasing out the psychological machinations of the fetish, Freud (1927, p. 4538) suggests that the "normal prototype of fetishes is a man's penis", while the genital nature of fetishism points at the same time to a disavowal and affirmation of the castration already engendered in the construction of the fetish. In traumatic amnesia, Freud (1927) explores how, for example, memory sought to 'freeze' the moment before the trauma (of castration) as to crystalize the moment as image and, by freezing it, produce an image as a *fetish*. For Freud, thus, the fetish fixes a moment in which both presence and loss can be lifted up from a particular memory or history.

The fetish is, thus, "[l]ike a scar that remains after a wound heals", Jay Geller (2007, p. 98-99) observes, as "[it] both covers the injury and serves as a reminder of it". In Freud's exemplary case of fetishism, a young man notes what the latter describes as a reminder, a shine on the nose. Freud analysis then relate the fact that the man had attended an English nursery school before moving to Germany, as to get to the root of the word "shine" in the German vernacular ("*glanz*" *auf der nase*),

'glance'. The nose is thus the fetish as the man, by glancing at it, endowed it with, or stamped upon it, the luminous shine. Here, *shine* marks, as Cheng (2011b) argues, precisely the intersection between an object and an object's fetishistic precondition. Exploring the work of "shine" as the intersection of the racial fetish and ideas of celebrity, Cheng (2011b, p. 1023) articulates the Freudian and Marxist notion of fetishism to question precisely the foundations of ideas of personhood that inform both 'celebrity' and race.

Exploring the performance of Anna May Wong, a 1920's icon of 'race beauty', Cheng (2011b, p. 1027) argues how the 'shine' of racial fetish appears through a "paradoxical staging and erasure of her own body and skin". Through its fetishism, skin turns itself into a site in which what is at stake is the "intimacy, rather than opposition, between personhood and objectification". Asking how a celebrated body might operate "subjunctively rather than materially", Cheng (2011b, p. 1027-1028) suggests that Wong's film, instead of relying on a lack, a castration, already engendered in the notion of fetish, "seduce[s] us into occupying the slippery interspace between shine and glance, between blindness and insight", as Wong "stands in for light and becomes the precondition for cinematic vision rather than for psychic blindness":

When the flickering light leads us to the gazing audience in the film, we are thrown back to our own watching, to our own dwelling, reminded that the true object of fascination in the cinematic experience is light and arrestment. What is the pleasure of cinema as a sensual experience if not the fantasy that we can fuse our eyes to light, a fantasy of sight as well as of blindness? (Cheng, 2011b, p. 1027)



Figure 23: William Kentridge (2007) *Nose I (Scissors)*. Bronze.

If, appropriating Freud's reading of the fetish, Homi Bhabha (1983) proposes that racial fetishism points to the "disavowal of [sexual] difference" that appears as the pre-condition for the circulation of the symbolic chain of absence/presence, Cheng conversely traces how idealisation and denigration are articulated in the extremely ambivalent sciences of Primitivism and Orientalism. Cheng suggests that by consuming the racialised 'Other', modernity actualises the historical ambivalence of the fetish rather than transcends it, something which Cheng (2008, p. 48) calls the racial fetish "negative capability". Fetishism relies not only in disguising such a dynamic by restoring it with a primal image or a *stereotype*, as Homi Bhabha (1983) suggests, but it also points, as Cheng (2008) observes, to a failure to produce such an image. It is precisely because of the fetish's inability to become fully stable or successful that fetishism "designates a mode of negotiating difference that in fact engenders rather than resolves the crisis of differentiation" (Cheng, 2008, p. 48).

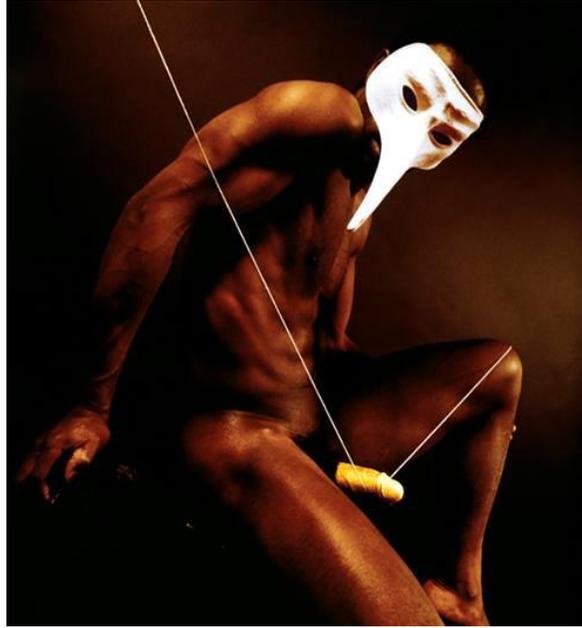


Figure 24: Rotimi Fani-Kayode (1989) *The golden phallus*.

Writing on what she identifies as the fundamental struggle/intimacy between modernity and nostalgia that structures the very relationship between black skin and modern surface, Cheng (2011a) notes how European modernity is erected precisely on the suppression of the nostalgia for atavism, but also on the complications engendered by this disavowal. Thus the making of the modern object “with its clean lines as the ultimate embodiment of purity, mechanization, and the rejection of regressive sensuality for intellectualized visuality” is a constant struggle to remake, or “paint over” the reminders of that (internalised) dark skin. For Cheng, thus, “when the glittering shine of the fetish is removed, what we get is not the ghastly gap of castration but the smoothness of yet another surface”. Moreover, for Cheng (2008, p. 20-21), “the glittering and the dark turned out to be uncannily equivalent”.

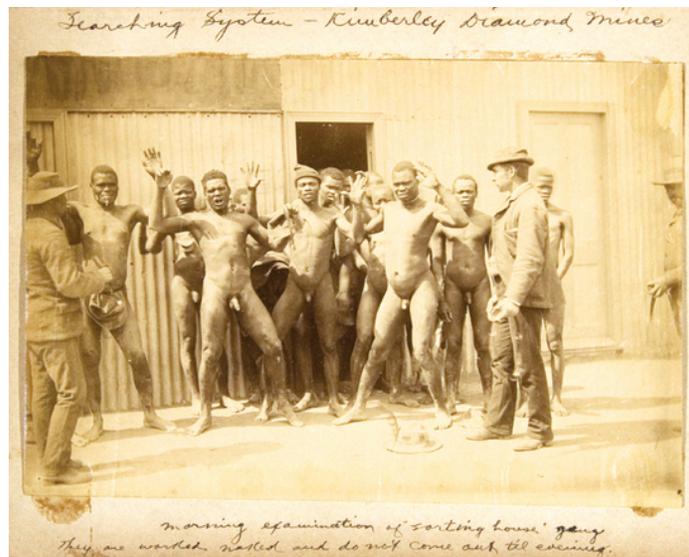
The fetish creates, thus, I argue, the conditions onto which the monetary value of blackness can be stamped as/onto the value of black skin, as a condition for the skin’s fixity. But as a coin, or

a token of value, blackness also points to the deceiving work of black skin in indexing a particular, man-made value. I will show in the next section how this contradiction that the fetish articulates is also present in, and promotes the photographic gaze's turn inwards to, and also indexes the nakedness of skin as, a form of authenticity of blackness. The figure of the "dressed native" will be explored within the very dynamics of value and gold I have been exploring so far.

### 2.3 Un/dressing the native: skin, concealment and secrecy

*[W]ith the so-called civilized workers, almost without exception their civilization was only skin deep. " (O. Pirow, quoting South African Prime Minister J. B. M. Hertzog)*

The image of the black miner has been used to articulate the industrial threats of physical and psychological corruption and skin has been a physiological locus of contact and contagion that marks the black miner's transition into the world of wage labour. The compound – as a point of transit to wage labour controlled by authorities designed to resemble traditional African forms – marks precisely this point of contact, and its image is that of a *queer* space: on the one hand a place for fostering a modern, compartmentalized, industrial idea of personhood, and a space for parochial forms of control and surveillance on the other. It is a place of belonging and identification of the black miner, as much as it is seen as alien to him. It not surprising that the compounds became a focal point from which to explore theories around black miners' disease, conflict and "deviant" sexuality, as "[n]ot only did it provide a space of exclusive male 'agglomerations' where labourers were disconnected from their families and local communities", Forman (2007, p. 387) argues, "but it also functioned as the iconic location of industrialization in South Africa, with its consequent redefinition of the African as individuated, capitalist worker".



Figures 25a, 25b: Robert Harris (1880-1894) *Kimberley Diamond Mine*

Perhaps the figure of aberration and secrecy promoted in the compound finds its epitome in the so-called “marriages”— homoaffective, long-term relationships established between miners – described by many scholars as a form of gender transvestism and crossing. In the inquiry on the "Unnatural Vice in the Johannesburg Compounds," the appendix to the second edition of *The Life of a South African Tribe* (1927), Junod (cited in Achmat, 1993, p. 102) states that “[u]nnatural vice was taught to the South African Bantus by men of a foreign race; it first invaded the prisons; now it is raging in these big Native miners' settlements, where it is deflouring [sic] the Bantu youth." The

inquiry's recommendations were not aimed at policing desire per se, as Achmat suggests, but to somehow regulate the same-sex relationship “*stripped* of its emotional and cultural components” (emphasis added). Thus the inquiry conceptualized private space within dormitories not as “a unique opportunity for intimacy and romance” as Isak Niehaus would have it (2009, p. 106), but for ideas around crime, concealment and *secrecy*.

Such emphasis on surveillance, Achmat claims, was indeed a way in which to inscribe desire in the compound as a register of violence. “Removing curtains”, says Epprecht (2008, p. 136) “increasing police oversight at the mines offered a paternalistic approach to the mines, as to paraphrase Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for white men to save black men from other black men”. The black miner, who has been said to have been ‘rescued’ and remasculated (Epprecht, 2008, p. 136) responds to this sense of being ‘demasculated’, queered, even though this state points more to an idea of movement, of “gender crossing” already contained in the miner ‘cross-(un)dressing’, rather than performing what Hyam (2012, p. 98) calls a “surrogate female role”. This figure of gender crossing is explicit in Ruth First’s interviews in her *Black Gold* (1983, p. xv), as she describes how the Mozambican who leaves his country to go to the mines receives the name of “Rosa”:

[Y]ou become Rosa because when you’re done for because, having offered yourself, they can do anything they want with you and you have no say. (...) The man becomes Rosa when, to escape suffering in Mozambique, he goes to the mines. The woman Rosa because she feared her husband, because she wanted her freedom from him, and because he was unable to offer her the good things she had expected from their marriage, decided to desert him and travelled to Beira to seek her liberty and fortune” (interviewer cited in First, 1983, p. xv)

I am suggesting thus that this journey is already imagined as a cross-dressing, a travesty that blurs the forms of recognition of the body and also the forms of desire this journey might engender. The journey from the ‘kraal’ to the mines is a journey imaged and imagined as a form of cross-dressing as clothes mark the Black miner’s entrance to the world of the commodity and

proletarianisation; a special form of uniform also marks the distinction between mine bosses and boys, which points to an idea of cultural and racial ‘civilizing’ through dressing, cladding. Harris asks a similar question about ambivalent ideas around the ‘native’ homosexual encounters that were to be seen at the same time a ‘vice’, and thus criminalised, but also an irremediable turn towards western/capitalist modes of personhood: as “homosexual acts had long been derided as a weakness to which only the most advanced civilizations fell prey” thus asks Harris (2007, p. 387), “might they not also be a symbol of advancement itself?”

In Ruth First’s (1983, p. 99) account of Mozambican mineworkers, her informant notes how he “was made a boss-boy in the tunnels”. First (1983, p. 99, footnote) points out the name Thonela – the *Shangaan* version of “tunnel” – became a common name in areas of migration in South Africa, pointing to the ontological relationship between the passage and the very concept of ‘identity’. The concept of crossing also appears in Achmat’s timely reexamination of historical accounts of homosexual encounter in gold mines, as he explores the ways in which the black body turns into a site of investment for both production and pleasure. He reexamines the corpus of literature produced about the mines and prisons as, in his reading, such literature seem to occlude the possibility of homoerotic pleasure to be a register of desire, not only of deviance or violence. If the discipline of the compounds and secluded sites creates new forms of pleasure in the body, Achmat’s (1993, p. 94) descriptions elicit a similar form of voyeuristic ‘desiring’ imagery, created exactly in the play between hyper-visibility and secrecy: “[He] fucked me, kissed me, masturbated me. I wanked him and showed him what sixty nine was”.

The journey into the mines, which points not only to the literal geographic displacement but also a form of excavating into personhood and the performative potential of the double, most clearly shown in the relationship between boss/boy. This relationship, already clearly demarcated as a form

of dressing or undressing of a particular type, is already a voyeuristic, sensuous one, in which dressed men observing naked bodies constitute what Tiffany Gilbert (2011, p. 240) has called “homoerotic spectatorship”.



Figure 26: David Goldblatt (1966) *Boss Boy*.

The trope of stripping off the compound curtains for controlling the spread of homosexual vice, and the stripping of its emotional and cultural traits, I argue, finds resonance in the stripping rituals of the mine's medical and scientific procedures such as x-rays. As South Africa's innovative x-ray apparel was developed by De Beers to detect theft of diamonds inside its miner's bodies as early as 1916, the x-ray culture of South African mines has more recently evolved into Lodox, a full-body,

digital x-ray scanner that uses low dosages of radiation and is globally known<sup>7</sup>. Writing on the advent of x-rays and how they become subject of public frenzy, Cartwright notes that x-ray photography does not point to a totally new world, but it otherwise steers into the realm of science a technique of representation typical of phantasmagorias (Cartwright, 1995, p. 113). “Light”, Cartwright argues, “becomes a brutal force that physically penetrates its object, stripping away its concealing surface to lay its structure bare” (1995, p. 114). Otto Glasser (1933) shows how the usage of x-rays were believed to turn “base metals...into gold...and the human soul photographed” as the x-ray collapses “the metaphysical foundation of the senses, the essential dualism that separates interiority from exteriority...subject and object”.

In South Africa in particular, the scrutiny of the mineworker’s inside body that could unveil the secrecy of a vice is already engendered in the emergence of x-ray technology. The American magazine *Electrical Experimenter* of 1919 observes how

The tricks resorted to by the native diamond miners in Kimberly, South Africa, and other mines, pass all human belief and imagination at times. Cases have been known where the lucky finder of a particularly fine specimen even swallowed the stone, intending presumably to regain the diamond later. In some instances diamonds have been secreted in self-inflicted wounds or incisions in the leg. But the x-ray spoiled all these clever ruses as soon as it was adopted for examining the miners every day, before they left the mines. The eye of the x-ray sees all (1919, cited in Novak, 2013, np)

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<sup>7</sup> Curiously, besides Lodox, South Africa is the birthplace of another form of imaging technology, the CT scanner, developed by scientist Allan Cormack in the 1970’s.



Figure 27: Electrical Experimenter, April 1919, p. 362 in Novak, 2013, np.

Butchart (1998, p. 97) notes, nonetheless, how the very possibility of a “medically disciplined” Black labour force by making visible the inner structures of the body does not start with the advent of radiography, but much earlier with anatomic dissection in the late nineteenth century. The evolution of mining medicine and its gaze moved from surveys to tuberculin tests in the turn of that century to the use of radiographic examination as instruments of discipline and insurance. As early as 1919 White miners were initially and periodically scanned by x-ray but the problem of costs delayed the wide-scale x-ray screening of Black mineworkers for tuberculosis, the major cause of death in South Africa in the first decades of the last century. Moodie (1994) and Packard (1989) show how the Black miner was perceived to have a predisposition to tuberculosis and other diseases due to migration and proletarianization as, with little experience in industrial life, the latter was believed to physically and biologically susceptible to contracting diseases, underplaying the impact of the social conditions in which they lived and worked.

Packard quotes Frank Retief, Chief Medical Officer for the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA), who observes in 1947 the susceptibility of the Black miner to his “low racial

immunity” (cited in Packard, 1987, p. xx). X-rays, even if able to detect TB and other pulmonary diseases, were rendered futile in the face of the theory of African predisposition. This kind of assumption managed to delay the use of radiography in recruitment and thus avoid the high cost of the technology and the risk of restricting the flow of Black labour by eliminating otherwise healthy recruits. Only the labour shortage would force mining companies to employ workers who in previous decades would have been rejected on the basis of their health, and from that point on x-rays started to be taken as a means of reducing compensation expenses of ill workers. That basically meant that if a mineworker died on the job, or in a mine hospital without being certified by x-rays, or if discharged and repatriated without being certified, no compensation would be paid. So x-rays would be extensively used, not only as a measure of social control, as Butchart would have put it, but a corporate, industrial means of regulating the costs involved in Black miners’ severance.

After a crowded train journey to Welkom in South Africa, the men arrived at the recruiting test center, where they again had “*to strip naked and run in droves*”. They were kicked and pushed to the doctor after being doused in bitterly cold water. After the examination they were x-rayed and then fingerprinted. Having been assigned a number, they performed aptitude tests – and only then were they fed for the first time, on a thin gruel. Finally, a “police boy” escorted them to the mine. (Moodie, emphasis added)

The first x-ray camera in South Africa was reportedly used to locate and extract a bullet from General Piet Cronjé’s body in the Second Anglo-Boer War. General hospitals even had portable x-ray apparatuses to allow retained bullets to be detected and fractures to be diagnosed and treated. Technology here, as both Cartwright (1995, p. 113) and Buck-Morss (1992, p. 33) have shown, has its own “phantasmatic character”, as radiation appears as a tool and a weapon which extends human power “at the same time intensifying the vulnerability of what Benjamin called “the tiny, fragile human body’ ” – and thereby producing a counter-need, to use technology as a protective shield against the very threats technology produces (Buck-Morss, 1992, p. 33). For Buck Morss, indeed this

“prosthetic sense organs of technology” appear like a form of "ego", dividing the porous surface between inner and outer, both perceptual organ and mechanism of defence (Buck-Morss, 1992, p. 33).



Figure 28: My collage of stills from “Natives X-Ray Issue Title The Young Idea” (British Pathe, 1942)

Buck-Morss (op cit, p. 33) also suggests the prosthetic function of the uniform as a protective shield, an element of military defence, and also as a function of what she refers to as the “phantasmagoric” of technology. Here, uniform appears as a charged ‘technological’ interface

between subjecthood and objecthood, very similar to Fanon's ([1967] 1991, p. 3) image of black skin as the livery "that the white man has sewed for him". Here, skin as livery speaks of the impossibility of seeing 'native' nakedness as the most 'natural', pre-technological, original condition, as skin is already a form of shield against western clothing's symbolic meanings.

In the "great mirror" of technology, the image that returns is displaced, reflected onto a different plane, where one sees oneself as a physical body divorced from sensory vulnerability—a statistical body, the behavior of which can be calculated; a performing body, actions of which can be measured up against the "norm"; a virtual body, one that can endure the shocks of modernity without pain. (Buck-Morss, 1992, p. 33)

So if the increased visibility of blackness in contemporary visual and material culture paradoxically attests, for Alessandra Raengo (2013), to a new and de-materialized way in which blackness functions "as an agent of abstraction", what she terms "commodity blackness" is already attached to the materiality of black miners' (naked) bodies when they enter the wage labour world. This "resisting abstraction" of the naked native is only 'detachable' from the black bodies to which it is made to adhere by a purposely natural, ontological, form of appearance when his body is actually covered. So if for Raengo, the detachment of blackness points to a new phase of blackness' value form—one in which blackness as a bodily and value sign loosens its historical ties with (Black) labour, and once liberated from it, appears in the sphere of exchange as currency-in-itself, a disembodied form of value—black miner's interiority, I suggest, relies precisely on this kind of 'fetishism'. This form of liberation which does not confront alienation, but relies on it, constitutes for Raengo "the stage in which an increasingly simulacral status of the visual develops its own, independent, social-materiality".

It is suggestive that the concept that Moodie (1994, p. 3) has chosen to describe black miners' narrations of political resistance is a social form of "*integrity*". This is particularly poignant

since most experiences in the mines, as miners' narratives suggest, point to fragmentation rather than coherent experience. Integrity as Moodie suggests, appears to forge a subject through the suture of its ruins and rupture, and implies a kind of visual integrity, which I have argued, was not possible to imagine at the beginning of the century for its historical conditions of possibility were still to be forged. The image of a horse without the horseman, described by one of Moodie's informants is uncanny:

[b]lack miners see the power of white man as adamant or arbitrary... with regard to white management, these miners said that they "feel the kick of a horse, but they do not see the man [riding the horse] giving these kicks". (1994, p. 107-108)

In a well-known anecdote Hegel affirmed on seeing Napoleon that for the first time that he was witnessing "the World Spirit on horseback". Žižek (2006, p. 107) has argued that this form of "reification" of a social relation in a person cannot be dismissed as a simple "fetishist misperception", as he stresses the relevance of identifying what he terms a "Hegelian performative": the illusion which sustains people's veneration of a king has in itself a "performative dimension" actualized in the person of a king. Escaping the "fetishist trap" is not only what is at stake here, or to distinguish between the contingent person of a king and what he stands for, simply because "what the king stands for only comes to be in his person, the same as with a couple's love which...only becomes actual in their offspring". Žižek's radical proposition is that we don't try to overcome the split, but to see how the split – between the thing itself and its performative dimension - *stands for* subjectivity. If subjectivity is this very split, or "gap of negativity", I use the parable of Napoleon to construct the argument I am following so far, within the modes of photographic seeing.

In her study of the psychological impact of racism among black women in a small Brazilian countryside town, Piza (2002) shows how women described the experience of entering white

women's spaces as 'bumping your head into a glass door' (Piza, 2002, p. 61). Most interestingly is that Piza considers the "self" who conducts these narratives are not necessarily black nor white—the "self" was, for Piza, "neutral, colorless and transparent; glass windows and doors so polished one couldn't even see it" (Piza, 2002, p. 61). As Moodie's miners, who could feel the kick of the horse but see no horseman, Piza's informants feel the impact of bumping against a door, without seeing it there. In the footnotes to his *Black Skins* Fanon addresses the material of the clinical experience of the Antillean "mirror hallucination", one in which Antilleans always appear in their dreams as colour-neutral: "I had no colour", one would claim (p. 163-164, footnotes). What these narratives suggest is that although visual regimes are said to be complacent or to produce forms of power, it is likely that power in such cases lacks a visual form or using Žižek's formulation, they are not realized as such, but they can only be felt, or be *realized* only as a misperception: the impossibility of skin to represent; or put differently, skin as an obstacle to its own representation.

In my next and last section, I will approach another form of suspicion of the surface, as the surface of the land itself and the ways in which both mining in the first part of the twentieth century and photography saw digging as a metaphor for finding truth. The surface of land and landscape in particular was also put into question with the change of geographic spaces forged by the intensity of capitalisation in modern cities, including Johannesburg. How this move articulates the photographic gaze and mining forms of digging is the theme to which I now turn.

## 2.4 Landscape melancholia

*[T]he shell itself is marked by what it shelters; what it encloses is disclosed within it.*

*(Abraham and Todorov, 1994, p. 80)*

Freud's narrative of unearthing entwines antiquity and modernity into a landscape that is archaeological, psychical, and political. I have construed these surfaces as places of concealment, requiring disruptions of the visible in order to recover what has become virtually inaccessible (O'Donogue, 2004, p. 668). Diane O'Donoghue (2004) notes how in 1869 a project to revamp Vienna's City Hall was submitted by architect Schmidt and called "Saxa Loquuntur", pointing to the building's capacity to "speak" the values of the turn-of-the-century Vienna that it would come to represent, an allusion that by the mid-1890s could have carried for Freud the intensification of an already profound anti-Semitism in Europe. In order "to recall what has been hidden from sight", O'Donogue (2004, p. 658-659) observes, "one must go beneath the surface and reclaim the stones that carry the lost language of liberal modernity". With the dramatic influx of Jewish families like Freud that migrated to Vienna with the emergence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 1860s, the city's civic buildings became increasingly inadequate, and started to be refaced. Thus the earliest appearance of archaeological trope in Freud's speech "coincided with the period when Freud was confronting the limits of representation in the discourse of the neurosciences, as well as, increasingly, the limits he faced as a Jew in Vienna" (O'Donogue, 2004, p. 659). Opening *The Aetiology of Hysteria* lecture, Freud gives a detailed account of what would become known as the "archaeology metaphor":

Imagine that an explorer arrives in a little-known region where his interest is aroused by an expanse of ruins, with the remains of walls, fragments of columns, and tablets with half-effaced and unreadable inscriptions. He may content himself with inspecting what lies exposed to view, with questioning the inhabitants—perhaps semibarbaric people—who live

in the vicinity, about what tradition tells them of the history and meaning of these archaeological remains, and with noting down what they tell him—and he may then proceed on his journey. But he may act differently. He may have brought picks, shovels, and spades with him, and he may set the inhabitants to work with these implements. Together with them he may start upon the ruins, clear away the rubbish, and, beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried. If his work is crowned with success, the discoveries are self-explanatory: the ruined walls are part of the ramparts of a palace or treasure-house; the fragments of columns can be filled out into a temple; the numerous inscriptions, which, by good luck, may be bilingual, reveal an alphabet and a language, and, when they have been deciphered and translated, yield undreamed-of information about the events of the remote past, to commemorate which the monuments were built. *Saxa loquuntur!* [“The stones talk!”] (Freud, 1896, cited in O'Donoghue, 2004 p. 656)

In this section I turn to what the trope of archaeology and excavation does to the surface of landscape and the body. I approach landscape, following W. J. T. Mitchell (1994), not as a genre but a medium of producing images, and “a medium of exchange between nature and human, the self and other”. As a medium of exchange, landscape “is like money: good for nothing in itself, but expressive or a potentially limitless *reserve* of value” (Mitchell 1994, p. 5). Landscape is a form of inscription, a “social hieroglyph” that conceals the basis of its own value “by naturalizing its conventions and conventionalizing its nature”.

In South Africa, Jacob Hendrik Pierneef created in 1929 the famous landscape paintings commissioned for the Johannesburg railway station, with an iconic image of nature as a form of “idealized absence” of the black, as Peffer (2009, p. 226) observes. Pierneef’s landscapes created a picture of an idyllic Pretoria without its British imperial Union Buildings while it “blocked from view the urban industrial congestion and the presence of gold and diamond mines” (Peffer, 2009, p. 226). Wayne Barker, the artist who later symbolically –and quite literally– *defaced* Pierneef’s idylls, took offence at these “cleansed landscapes, uninhabited by people, least of all blacks”. In Barker’s view, this form of defacement was meant to “create an intervention on the surface ” (2009, p. 227), or to

re-surface, in Peffer's (2009, p. 226) words, "that which could neither be buried nor thrown away". This difficulty in actualising the act of mourning expressed in the nation's political project's failure to efficiently 'bury' the black man also figures in Athol Fugard's seminal play *Boesman and Lena* (1980, p. 287), more clearly displayed in Lena's pressing question "how can one throw away a dead kaf--r?".

The ghostly emergence, or 'return of the repressed', in Barker's defacement is attuned to what Achille Mbembe (2004) identifies as the ghost in the machine of the postapartheid metropolis. This ghost is bound to the city form, "its design, its architectural topographies, its public graphics and surfaces" which for Mbembe (2004, p. 375) are themselves forms of visual embodiment of "society's archaic or primal fantasies, the ghost dances and the slave spectacles at its foundation". The 'spectral power' of the black repressed resides in "the vertiginous capacity of the native to be both a thing and a metonym of something else" (Mbembe, 2004, p. 382), as the value of black labour rests precisely on a form of 'doubleness'. Sophie Chevalier (2011), reflecting on the black subject in Johannesburg, examines how the modern black subject has been 'shifted' from the sphere of production to that of consumption as 'phantasmagoria': blackness here becomes a spectre of production and of capital, as its autonomous phantasmatic entity re-surfaces in the figure of 'black diamonds'.

Jacob Dlamini (2009) explores the symbolic meanings of rats both to the South African national body, and to the imaginary of gold mines as related to black miners' influx in the city.

[O]ne colleague suggested that the big rats we see in South Africa's big cities, especially the former mining areas around Johannesburg, might actually come from abandoned and flooded former mines. According to this man, rats are to South African mines what canaries were to European mines. He said it was all well and good when the mines, which are some of the deepest in the world, were still operational. Then the rats underground could get fed through the constant human traffic going up and down the shafts. But with the closure of many mines and their flooding due to lack of maintenance and to prevail illegal mining, the rats had nowhere to go but up. If this is indeed the case, the denizens of South Africa's

economic foundations, the mines, *may be coming to the surface to claim some of what belongs to them* (Dlamini, 2009, p. 71, emphasis added).

In this account, intestines and mines already share a penetrable, vulnerable register, as spaces that articulate anal eroticism, but also, following Freud, control of sphincters and of retention of the lost object, and following Dlamini's anecdote, the return of the 'racial repressed'. Rats, we may note, point to both contact and contagion and – as David Roediger (1991, p. 3) suggests in the United States – to places in which “sexuality and blackness were...thoroughly confused”. The intestines are a site for urban influx and control, a role that Camus (1948, p. 14) attribute to rats in *The Plague*, announced exactly by the “coming out” of the rats from their invisibility, and the underworld, “to die in the open”.

Mines are haunted by the threatening return of the repressed, as miners start coming out of their underground, or “sepulchral crevices”, as Achille Mbembe has put it (2008, p. 44). The mines rather porous landmarks, such as the archaeological marks, are like scars, an image evoked by the dolomitic “sinkholes” of Johannesburg. Those reminiscent –coined “satanic” (Sunday Times, 2011)– underneath voids, are a constant hazard to the ones walking over it to collapse into its depth: as a geographic scar, the sinkhole is to the mines, using Richter's (2007, p. 28) words, “a sign of both healing and danger: it always threatens to be reopened”. In *Call me not a man*, South African writer Mtutuzeli Matshoba's (1987, p. 95) character is suggestively afraid of the “Golden City” as “it may swallow him...[and] he may not return from the dark earth's entrails”.

Another example of an aesthetic of disappearance with uncanny effect is the work of the silhouette in Johannes Phokela's 2006 *Head on Collar* portrait series. Phokela's work is an instance of what Alessandra Raengo (2008) observes about the silhouette as “a reified version of the shadow”, a

representational form that registers the transition from an indexical to an iconic order, from a metonymical to a metaphorical function. In fact, while the shadow is, Raengo suggests, a fleeting indexical sign, because it requires the presence of the body that produces it, the silhouette is its man-made durable reproduction as it indexes “the body’s departure” (Raengo, 2013, p. 147). In the silhouette the body’s vacated the sign dissolved in the abstract iconicity of its contour – and has left behind a blackness, which is held as the trace of its past presence and current absence<sup>8</sup>. The silhouette and the cinema share this originary loss and deferral; they are both a play of ghosts, memories of something that has never had the form of presence” (Raengo, 2010, p. 4-5). In the series *Tapestries* that William Kentridge began in 2001, for example, moving silhouettes trouble the legibility of the map, and perhaps confound the image of the traveller/conqueror with his own shadow. Writing about Mtutuzeli Matshoba’s stories, Mike Vaughan (1981, p. 46) observes that the traveller here is not a proper subject but a “co-ordinator, a principle of relationship and unity...[who] looking out upon the passing landscape and its diverse monuments to the history of the land, also serves the function of representing the (repressed) dimension of history”.

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<sup>8</sup> Tellingly, the most famous psychoanalytic test to date, the Rorschach, created by Hermann Rorschach in 1960 and comprising famous 18x24cm cards with black inkblot designs, relies precisely on the projective capacity of human perception to inhabit the silhouette’s ‘vacated sign’.



Figure 29: Johannes Phokela (2006) *Head on collar*

The photographic gaze and its “industrial form of facticity” (Morris, 2009) have not only made it “possible to apprehend more by seeing” but “changed seeing itself, by fostering the idea of seeing for seeing’s sake” (Susan Sontag, 1977, p. 93). The photographic seeing points to the camera’s “twin capacity” using Sontag’s (1977, p. 178) words: “to objectivize and subjectivize reality”, and of being “both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence” (Sontag, 1997, p. 16). Photography, as an object and a mode of seeing, can be at the same time material “paper phantoms” and “transistorized landscapes” (Sontag, 1977, p. 68). Raengo (2012, p. 5) also argues that, just as the commodity has a double character, photography has two bodies, “a body natural and a body politic”, thus as a “general equivalent”, the sublime body of photography “is in fact the reification of the social relations that sustain it”. For Raengo, thus, “photography is like the blackness it fixates”.

If in this chapter I articulated what can be described as a turn to the interior of skin within the trope of archaeology and excavation, in my third and last chapter I will turn precisely to the trope of interior of landscape, body and the subject to explore both psychoanalysis’ (and psychology’s) notion of ‘interiority’ and also of geographic and immaterial interior frontiers as to

think of ways in which the photographic gaze has helped to forge an interior body of the subject, and of the nation, as much as to offer the conditions to visually define its borders.

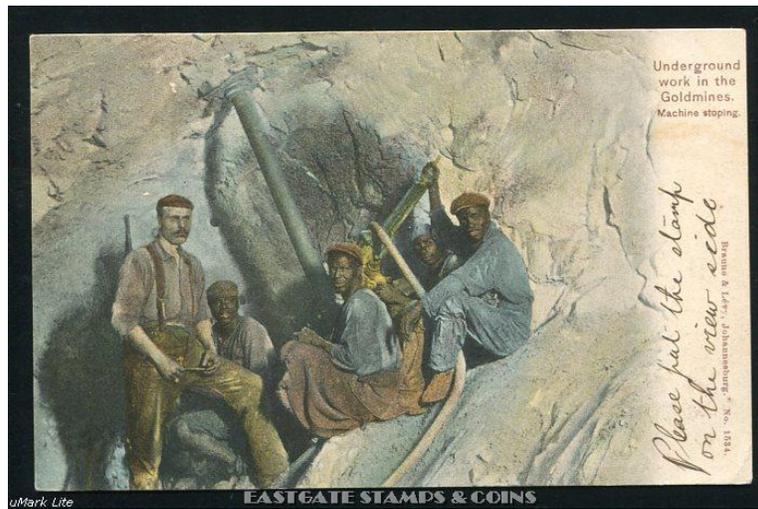


Figure 30: Transvaal Vogelfontein gold mining postcard



Figure 31: J. Wilbur Read (1900) *Stopeing, Simmer Deep*.

### CHAPTER 3: INTERIOR



Figure 32: David Goldblatt (1965) *Pinups in the remains of a mineworker's bunk*. Probably New State Mines.

*The interior designs itself as a museum of preciousness, in part as a reaction against the de-authentication of object production and objective experience in the nascent world of commodities and mass consumerism.*  
(Didier Maleuvre, 1999, p. 5)

*No doubt there are many facile claims to the expressions "inner vision" and "inner light." But here it is a painter speaking, a producer of lights. He knows from what heat source the light comes. He experiences the intimate meaning of the passion for red. At the core of such painting, there is a soul in combat – the fauvism, the wildness, is interior.*  
(Gaston Bachelard, [1958] 1994, p. xxi)

*They look at their shirts  
Overalls, trousers, jackets, all ragged  
Hanging aslant on the damp walls  
Like faded, dusty family portraits.*  
(James Twala)

How do we think of form in a “deformed world”, that is, in Johnny Steinberg’s provocative characterisation of Apartheid (cited in Dlamini, 2009, p. 13)? If the connection between race and value has been a concern throughout this thesis, in this chapter I turn specifically to the geographic and symbolic racial emplacements that appear in mining on the Witwatersrand in the early twentieth century and that become foundational for apartheid. In other words, this chapter considers the spatial interface of race and value, as a means to consider how boundaries become drawn, internalized and transformed. I examine how the interface happens in physical space but in the production of subjectivity, interiority. If, as I’ve been suggesting, the anxiety about *becoming black*, or about the infiltration of the black body – through blood, land, money or labour— is a projection of the effects of the increasing intensity of capitalisation on the Witwatersrand, then the “pass” should be understood as expressing a nostalgia for fixity, place, and disciplined, orderly movement.

Photography appears in the second half of the nineteenth century South Africa as slowly extrapolating the boundaries of the studio and interior of houses to move inland, with the popularity and affordability of the *carte-de-visite*, which turns its aristocratic roots into a “photograph-for-the-million” (Bull, Denfield, 1970, p. 82). South African small towns saw a new type of craft invading the streets as “general dealers, pastry cooks, tobacconists and even bootmakers” included in their business the trading of photographs. As a result of intense proliferation of ambrotypes and other insurgent techniques, small towns did not exactly enjoy the best result of the early traders in “likenesses” and their aesthetic ambitions. At the same time in which the *carte-de-visite* was used by professional portfolio and as a visiting card, images of the ‘native’ were also circulating like an modern aesthetic of the exotic: the black body is, to use W.E. B. Du Bois’ (1966, p. 238) term, in “unusual evidence”, its image spread as much as photographs themselves enjoying a pictorial – as much as a material – mobility in the city. In an alluring anecdote, Marjorie Bull and Joseph Denfield (1970, pp. 83-84) show how in 1870 a Port Elizabeth photographer has been ordered a few *cartes* by

a composer, which the latter then returned to the photographer in disapproval. As a revenge, the photographer “produced a new *carte-de-visite* consisting of the composer’s head attached to the body of a ‘kaffir female not of the most reputable character’. For his offensive libel the composer sued the photographer for £100 damages” (Bull, Denfield, 1970, p. 84).

We see that the photographic is already framed in this anecdote through the black body as a form of default. The conflation of the image and the racial image, as Raengo (2013, p. 163) points out, rely on the “anxieties the black body is able to assuage about what images are and what they refer to, where they might lead or land, and the intelligible surface that it is seemingly able to secure”. For Raengo, it is by the very capacity of a *body* to be secured in an image that the ‘ontologizing function’ of the racial image is performed: it becomes a stable reflection, a mirror, a shadow. But if the Western subject encounters the racial image as the mirror that produces a reflection to be disavowed, the ‘native’ image is one that “is neither here nor there”: his imago is produced as displacement itself, an in-between, a phantasmagoria<sup>1</sup>. It is the shadow, claims Raengo (2013, p. 165), that for being an extension of the body into its surroundings becomes “a figuration of the body’s skin, understood not as the racially charged epidermis, but rather phenomenologically as flexible, porous, and constantly redefined border between self and other, impression and expression, inside and outside”. Even the title of Bull and Denfield’s (1970) book on the history of Cape photography – “Secure the Shadow” – is telling.

My object of investigation in this chapter thus bears resemblance to what Lindon Barrett (1999, p. 29) calls the “violence [of value] disguised or dis-figured...by means of a symbolic boundary”, and follows three analytical threads. First, I will explore the elaboration of ‘interior frontiers’ of modern South Africa expressed by the *pass*. In South Africa, the mark of both racial

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<sup>1</sup> Curiously, Bull and Denfield (1970, p. 91) point to a few accounts of late nineteenth century photographers in South Africa who become popular magicians.

contact and enclosure has been, I suggest, largely based on the literality of the pass or, in other words, the literalisation of both pass *as* interior frontier, to use Etienne Balibar's (1990 cited in Stoler, 2002, p. 80) term, and of dissolution of frontier as/through racial *passing*. This entails a coupling of ideas of racial "passes" and the possibility of "passing", a coupling that, I suggest, raised anxieties as early as the aftermath of the South African war in the early twentieth century and became central to the development of apartheid's form of geographic segregation in the 1940s.

In this first part of my analysis, Barrett's (1999, p. 5) understanding of boundary as the site/sight of value becomes useful to conceptualize forms of visibility the pass realises as a literalised form of "fetishization of boundaries". An especially important context for conceptualising the pass is the well-known white anxiety about the black peril, in both its urban manifestation as a threat to white miners and in its rural version as a threat to white small scale farmers in capitalising industry, and its attendant, perhaps less familiar, anxiety about *verkaffering*, "becoming black". That is, in early twentieth-century South Africa establishing racially proper places through passes appears as an attempt to stabilise value that in the context of technological and social changes is palpably unstable.

Secondly, I turn to the compartmentalised, industrial interior of the mine compounds, and to an idea of 'home' and racial dwelling that is necessarily related to interior frontiers and forms of racial belonging engendered in late apartheid's dispensation of 'homelands'. My argument focuses on the production of the in-betweenness of black spaces as a necessary part of South African modernity. Hence, I will demonstrate how race is both fundamental to South African capitalist modernity and an unstable register articulated within the impossibility of home, as result of imposed mobility coupled with a systematic production of domestic discomfort. I will extend the notion of racial 'pass' as both a medium of circulation of goods and people, and a mark of the social instability of the migrant miners and of modern forms of racial 'crossing'.

Finally, I examine the production of the ‘interior’ of the black miner’s home as a form of territorialisation of (black) subjectivity, whose image is erected as a continuum of, even if sometimes as opposed to, the original rural ‘home’ or the *kraal*. Here, the interior of the houses in ‘native spaces’ appear as *mirrors* of the miner’s purportedly voluble, even contrived interiority, and the in-betweenness of the historical condition of his own subjectivity.

### 3.1 A right place in the sun: pass and the anxiety of racial *passing*

*The department wished to give the native his right place in the sun. The native wished to enjoy the benefits of civilization to the same extent as the European did... If the native residential area was placed adjacent to such a reserve, the residents... had an outlet for their ambitions...they could establish themselves in the native reserves and also still retain employment in the City (Minutes of Native Affairs Committee, April 1956 cited in Minkley)*

In South Africa’s 1940s city, as Gary Minkley (1998, D11) points out, crime, drinking and the threat of ‘*verkaffering*’ (or becoming black) were conspicuous. But the threat of *verkaffering*, as Swart’s (2006, p. 101) analysis of the 1914 Five Shilling Rebellion suggests, is older than the decade preceding Apartheid, and finds form both in the passing between rural and urban and in the vulnerability of many white farmers in rural South Africa. In the latter context, the fear of becoming black appears as a response to capitalised farming, where geographical and economic ‘proximity’ between races had produced porous, unstable boundaries between them. In this section I will assemble different historical and literary sources that can provide a historical context to the photographic gaze’s turn to interior as it appears embedded both in a desire for interiority and an anxiety around racial mobility.

The problem of *verkaffering* starts to inform the imaginaries of the “poor white problem” in the country and its purported psychological implications gain evidence, culminating in the 1932 Carnegie Commission report on the socio-political effects of white poverty. The imaginary of white

poverty – implying, I have been suggesting, the possibility of “becoming black” – Nicholas (2001, p. 282) argues, had a major impact on the development of psychology in South Africa and the professionalization of psychology was particularly leveraged in face of the poor white phenomenon. Wilcocks (1932), for instance, suggested a solution for *verkaffering* both by urging more employment restrictions for blacks and more laws to prevent interracial relationships. Psychologizing the geographic forms of racialization has a particular effect on photographic images and their classification, as I will demonstrate later. For now, I am laying the foundational grounds for the kinds of rural as well as urban interfaces of the infiltration of race and capital which will help produce, I claim, a particular image of the black miner as the interface of both.

The first historical episode I will discuss is the Five Shilling Rebellion, a rural protest of over eleven thousand Boer men in the Free State and Western Transvaal districts in 1914, against a five shilling fine imposed on South African war hero General Christiaan de Wet after he confessed to the beating of a black child. Swart (2006) argues that a new kind of Black Peril emerges, distinct from both end-of-nineteenth-century mid-Victorian anxiety typical of Natal or the urban anxiety common of Johannesburg in the early twentieth century: in *platteland dorps*, rural villagers’ anxiety articulated the fear of the productive capacities of the black families and their social role in increasingly capitalised farming. Although the rebellion was largely organized to oppose the government in its decision to go to war for the British, its economic motivations expressed a rural imaginary of class boundaries and *verkaffering*. Crossing meant that Black peasants, having accumulated stock and equipment, were more prepared for a post-war economy than the white small farmer, and were frequently accommodated by larger white farms at the expense of small white farmer’s labour security, political status and access to land.

[A] bywoner might go to the neighbouring `native' kraal and use his few donkeys to plough for the `native'. As payment he would receive a pig, a calf or maybe a heifer. Usually his

family would accompany and wait for him. 'Sometimes the African women would take pity on [his wife] and offer her some beer as well as companionship. ' This way of earning meat was not explicitly talked about in white society, and was referred to euphemistically by saying: 'We go to earn.' (E.G. Malherbe cited in Swart, 2006, p. 101)

This insecurity was captured by the five shilling rebel leaders, who appealed to the *bymoners'* racial fear by "conflating the black labour issue with other socio-political concerns of the capitalising polity". Swart (2006, p. 96) cites the rebel leader Manie Maritz who spoke publicly of how he feared having his land "ruled by Englishmen, niggers and Jews". So by conflating the threat of becoming black with the threat of capital infiltration as changing the dwelling and racial configuration in the countryside, the rebellion was engendered as "trying to retain what it meant to be a white man in a changing world" (Swart, 2006, p. 102). The nostalgia expressed in the desire for pass control is not only built on a sense of internal cohesion founded on rural frontiers of blood as a protected 'currency', but also of resistance to a world increasingly borderless. De Wet's report reinforces this nostalgic sense of the pass as attempting to re-establish boundaries:

natives were allowed to move about...the pass laws had been knocked on the head and that the natives were in the same position as the whites; coolies had been allowed entry into the country and that the language was not being given its fair position. It was the principle involved of allowing the natives to do as they liked; to march through the countryside without being controlled by passes. (Swart, 2006, p. 102)

The second interrelated historical episode I will discuss is the anxiety around the black peril and unintended effects of *verkaffering* within the history of urban planning in Johannesburg, based on Van Onselen's (1982)'s account. Afrikaners experienced some economic ascendancy associated with house building and their brick craftsmanship in what Van Onselen calls the post Anglo-Boer war housing boom. Yet this ascendancy was short-lived: the increasing cost of housing and the competition with industrially manufactured bricks and cement, as Van Onselen (1982, p. 20) notes,

contributed to hundreds of Afrikaner brickmakers losing their jobs and being literally out of place. The dislocation of Afrikaners on the Rand was the basis of that class-informed, political mobilisation at different times, and also helps to explain their lack of class camaraderie with fellow black miners, who were seen somehow less critically 'accommodated' in compounds. Indeed, the urban mobility of white working-class men into boarding houses without their families configured a particular kind of modern social malaise. As James Ramsay Macdonald said in 1902,

You have simply to walk through the wage-earning districts of the town to see the numerous working-class dining rooms; you have simply to try and find a workman at home in Johannesburg, to discover that his home is only a bedroom, which he generally shares with a fellow workman, and that family life - upon which the state is built - may be said hardly to exist amongst great sections of the population. Men rent beds, not houses, in the golden City (Ramsay Macdonald cited in Van Onselen, 1982, p. 27)

Johannesburg became a place dominated by working class men over women and families, with a tendency to cluster working-class houses in specific spaces in the city, and promote urban intimacy between the 'labouring classes and the dangerous classes'. It is critical to note how an anxiety of racial crossing also connects these housing arrangements in the Rand and forms of passing between the domestic space and the capitalising city, in the case of the so-called black 'houseboy'. These frequently Zulu-speaking, domestic servants, by the end of the nineteenth century, were paid more than in the mines. The later strategic reduction of houseboys' wages had the long-term effect of rendering domestic services unappealing for black men, facilitating a move from work in homes to work in mines.

Map 2. Some of the 'Abandoned Places' of Apartheid

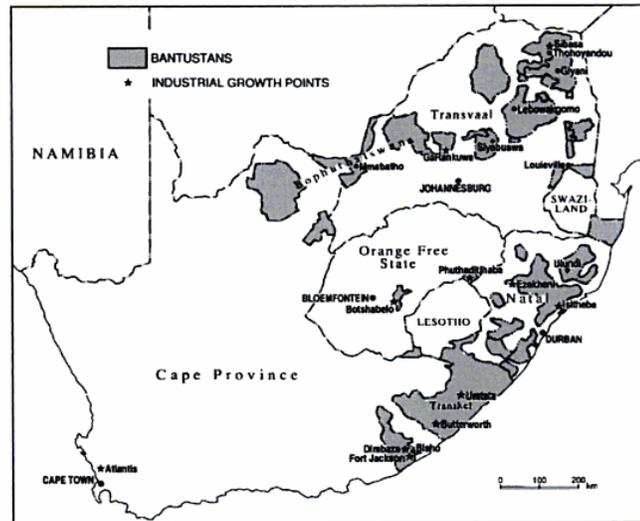


Figure 33: “Some of abandoned places of Apartheid”. In J. Baker and Aina, 1995, p. 115

Such spaces were thus increasingly imagined as racialised dwelling spaces at the same time as the white working-class was itself unable to find a secure space in the new industrial dispensations. This dual plight of dwelling was expressed in anxieties around *verkaffering*: ‘becoming black’ as the very condition of being urban and rootless, an indefinite geographic location and symbolic displacement (or, what I shall call ‘in-betweenness’). It is helpful here for me to conceive of the pass as a kind of “material border”, a term recently discussed by Wendy Brown in her analysis of walls (2010, p. 114), especially in the sense of construction of icons to and of failure: “namely the failure of nation-state sovereignty, followed by the literal ‘failure’ of the walls that would prop this faltering sovereignty”. The pass thus emerges as a testimony to the repeated failure of adherence to any “natural” racial boundary in Johannesburg.

But more than materialised failure, Brown (2010, p. 114, emphasis added) suggests, walls also constitute a material “*scrim* on which can be projected an anthropomorphized other as the cause of national woes ranging from dilutions of ethicized national identity to drug use, crime, and

declining real wages.” To accomplish the move from the material to the psychological, Brown deploys Balibar’s concept of ‘interior frontier’. She suggests this is compelling because of its contradictory connotations: the interior frontier “is both a site of enclosure and contact” which marks dwelling, and “of observed passage and exchange”, which marks the not-at-home, and *pass*. In other words, the pass is a materialization of the projected reasons behind the desire for walling. I have shown here how passes in South Africa pointed to forms of racial control structured by the very anxiety over the porosity of racial boundaries. Racial crossing and sites of transgression of boundaries create a sense of “homelessness”, as

just as the space of a city divided, they also generated crossings and interactions: crossings as people moved and lived and worked in different places; crossing as the memories and meanings of different places were carried with them; crossing as people imagined what those other places were like, places they’d never seen except on the TV or magazine. (Robinson, 1998, D7)

The imagined effects of the crossing through articulations of spaces of home and spaces of race is perhaps more eloquently expressed in Langston Hughes ([1926] 1999 p. 158) evocative poem *Cross*, of a racially segregated American South in which “My old man died in a fine big house./ My ma died in a shack./ I wonder where I'm going to die,/ Being neither white nor black?”. The idea of racial home is, I suggest, threatened by the *cross* as unsettling the demarcated, institutionalized forms of racial dwelling and thus of *home* – a theme I now turn to.

### 3.2 Picturing interior: race, mobility and home

*From all these influences the South African house is slowly developing; a low light, cool-looking building, with a dark flat-pitched roof, large unobstructed windows sheltered by the deep eaves, and an enclosed yard with the native rooms. This, growing naturally and harmoniously out of its surroundings, may well be the South African style of the future, as the gracious Cape Dutch was of the past.*

*(Report on the Argus Ideal Home Competition, in the Star, 28 December 1937 cited in Minkley, 1998)*

A silent 1942 footage of the Weekend Military Encampment illustrates the spatial and racial connotations associated with the gold mines and the notion of passing and crossing along with a growing interest in interiors. In this footage, black miners appear with jackhammers in underground tunnels, and white inspectors appear entering and leaving the mines with their lanterns, while next to an electrical railway, unidentified black miners shovel ore into a cart. The interior of the mines is visually delineated as miners enter and leave the mine's elevator and walk to a "Change House": here, white men dressed in suits enter the space first, followed by white miners and casually dressed black workers. White miners are shown having coffee in a changing room; their clothes appear on hanging ropes, and the camera follows as they leave the Change House. The next scene shows how gold is put into a bucket and lifted out of the furnace to be poured into moulds with tongs<sup>2</sup>. Further along, the film shows white and black miners presumably at the end of shift walking home as the mine slowly disappears in the background, a scene that seems to clearly demarcate men and mining machinery at the end of a working day. This separates work and home in both spatial and temporal terms. Domestic comfort indexes the modern individual, whose private, less automated space is a space for the *self*.

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<sup>2</sup> As described in the video's caption



Figure 34: Stills from silent footage “South Africa Gold Mine”(1942). Weekend Military Encampment.

The second part of the footage changes the impersonal tone of the first by showing “Kelly”, as the caption names him, the white man who walks to (what appears to be) his house and is greeted by his children. This part of the film, as the images show, is not shot from the perspective of an outsider, or the distant documentary framing as it has been up to this point, but from the unexpected perspective of the interior of the house. We find Kelly walking in from the outside as we sit behind his children. As Kelly approaches the house, the children get up and go out to greet him; we then watch the family places themselves at the table, have coffee and cake until Kelly, now in uniform, kisses his wife goodbye and leaves for the weekend military camp. This footage – made before the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act passed in 1953 – begs the question of the

relationship between these apparently disconnected spaces: what kind of spatial coherence seems to bind these images, and to what forms of racial and social coherence do they point? What kind of connecting sense of interior passes through inner/outer territories of mines, residence and military camp?

This footage, I argue, domesticates the notion of passing in and out of the mines by presenting the white miner's form of mobility as made possible by a proper inhabitancy of the modern interior. That is not the case of the black miner who appears in the same footage and who also moves in and out of the mines, but whose way out of the public, industrial space, into home is fundamentally uncertain. While the rural home is imagined as—and indeed *is*—geographically remote, three distinct spaces come to stand for this 'passage' from work space to the black miner's home: the *pondokkie*, the township and the compound. In this section, I explore the idea of a racialised homelessness through these three distinct spaces. The *pondokkie* refers to the description of the 'tin town slum' (Minkley, 1998, D11) that gave way in the 1940s to the new administration's township models. The township appears "both of the city and not of the city", to paraphrase Mbembe and Nuttall (2008, p. 13), and is thus a "space in motion" as Nsizwa Dlamini (interview with Achille Mbembe, 2008, p. 240) puts it. As a space that symbolically and quite literally bridges the black miner's two worlds (Moodie, 1994), the mine compound becomes the quintessential South African industrial dwelling in-between residence and waged work.

But there is another question that the footage addresses, albeit fleetingly: verticality, the inner/outer 'distinctions' in the trope of surface and depth. The underground as passage points not just to the transient image of the institution of the compound as a kind of *umzi* (rural household) diaspora, but becomes iconic of the movement to the interior and beneath that characterizes South Africa's modernity. The imagery of Johannesburg underground is not just an 'uncanny' space of

danger, displacement, and extraneous work, a place forever condemned to transition, as much as it is a place upon which urban modern aspirations are engendered. The underground, albeit portrayed in opposition to modernity, “seems to hold the keys for unlocking the secrets of its modernity” (Mbembe and Nutall, 2008, p. 23). Thus, how does the compound mediate between surface and underground, and who has the key of such an unrequited form of home? Why is the compound institution the most contested of the industrial spaces?

The migrant miner, a “temporary sojourner in the city”, as Mbembe and Nuttall (2008, p. 22) put it, is “the paradoxical cultural figure of African modernity”. But unlike Benjamin’s modern city *flaneur*, the miner’s fluency in the emerging ‘commodity culture’ is not an expression of the characteristically urban time-wasting idling, nor a leverage for a form of liberation that sees movement as freedom, since the migrants’ movement is a result of orchestrated unsettling policies and imposed mobility. The space of the migrant is built upon the very impossibility of home (cf. Dubbeld 2013) and domestic comfort as well as of urban transiency, and thus the impossibility of realizing Baudelaire’s ([1863] 1999, p. 9) cosmopolitan predicament of “to be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home”. While the migrant makes the ‘cross’ from the *umzi* to the compound, the very notion of rural home historically and pictorially shrinks, as much as does its material base (Moodie, 1994, p. 32). Thus it is not that the interior “where the soul accommodates its memories and curios” as Adorno (2005, p. 166) would have it, “is derelict”, but it is precisely the impossibility of interior that produces the impossibility of *flanerie*, which in turn creates a ‘derelict’ soul—that of the vagrant<sup>3</sup>, the vagabond, the drifter, the migrant.

Even though housing around mines has been a problem for both black and white miners (Van Onselen, 1982), and even though the mine hostel has been referred to as a “total institution”

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<sup>3</sup> The infamous American Southern states late nineteenth century “Black Codes” had specific provision for ‘vagrancy laws’ that could restrict the mobility of free black men, criminalized homelessness and harbored commitment to labour in the city. Cf. Du Bois, p. 8.

(Laburn-Peart, 1995, p. 40), the barriers to passing between the mines and the city were not absolute (Niehaus, 2009, p. 91). Miners could leave the compound and move to the township even though the passage inside was more restricted, including the entrance of women and outsiders in general, liquor, drugs and weapons. A manager controlled these passages while also inspecting the condition of tidiness and cleanliness of dormitories. In other words, even though the walling of the compound was porous, Foucault's ([1975] 1995) characterization of the open doors 'disciplinary' power of the institution seems to prevail here over Goffman's (1961) characterisation of the asylum. It is in fact the capacity of the compound to assure the black miner a place in profound volubility that makes this form of dwelling so arresting. The compound thus becomes iconic of the urban in-betweenness among an un-orderly township space and an purported original, rural home: both these spaces signal the unstable register of the migrant in the city but also confirm the possibility of passing within the city for the compound's geographic intimacy with labour and money.



Figure 35: *Family outside Red Location Hut*, author unknown, in Baines, 2005, p. 254

Writing on the racial division of the city of East London in the 1940s and 50s and on the figure of the township, Gary Minkley (1998, D11) shows how the appearance of the ‘round hut’ was a reference to the threat to the white city of this “primitive, traditional and tribal” presence. Minkley shows how, similarly, the *pondokkie* in the white urban imagery constituted a “black spot” – signalling both the visibility of embodied forms of black presence in the pre-apartheid city and also of a troublesome form of blinding of the so-called ‘native problem’. “The white cities” in the 1940s, describes Minkley, “found themselves confronted by a ‘mass of unsightly *pondokkie* settlements’...in the eyes of the officials and the public”. The image of the *pondokkie* was an “eye-sore”: a space in which visibility and territory are negotiated. The form of ‘passing’ that the *pondokkie* points to

stands out consistently as the symbol of the end-result of uncontrolled [native] migration. The thousands of *pondokkie* is ‘home’, a tangible retreat from the rigours of competitive

living; to the casual observer it is an ‘eyesore’, a ‘blot on the landscape’; to the scientist it is the natural excrescence of a diseased economy... The word *pondokkie* is doubtless diminutive form of the Afrikaans word ‘pondok’, meaning a hut or hovel. That is a fair definition but let it be admitted frankly without further elaboration that the structure that has left its image so deeply impressed on the mind of the committee *is capable of pictorial definition only*. (Britten Commission of Enquiry. Cape Town, 1942, p. 14 cited in Minkley, p. d11, emphasis added)

It is through a pictorial depiction of these conglomerated and hazardous interiors that the black body, observes Minkley (1998, D11), starts to be imagined and represented in the same architectural language, as “intimately acquainted with this wilderness”. The filth associated with the *pondokkie* rendered the idea of home ambivalent: at the same time that the *pondokkie* was a home for the ‘native’, it was not a place that could be fully realised, seen as home, for there “homeless people are living in filth and indescribable squalor” (report on Welsh Commission cited in Minkley). The space of the *pondokkie* was but an expression of the space of the native himself, his moral degradation, in relation to which the map of the city was to be reinvented, redrawn. The urge for more demarcation is articulated in the “fear of invasion and siege” (Minkley, 1998, D11) the ‘black spot’ around white cities come to represent. As Minkley shows, the visual apparatus is an attempt at creating new visible boundaries against the disorder and chaos of the *pondokkie* interior, as much as producing a coherent, hygienic picture of the racially segregated city through its architectural styles and other visual apparatuses. On the one hand,

[m]unicipal records and the press are full of photographs labeled ‘Municipal Housing’; on the other, those labeled ‘Private housing: Shack rooms’. The picture theory of the former is pleasant and desirable – an image of neatness, order and control; that of the latter is threatening and objectionable – an image of congestion, disorder and chaos. These images are reflected time and again, both visually, in all kinds of official and public constructions. (Minkley, 1998, np)



Figure 36: Constance Stuart Larrabee (1936-1949) *Professor Meiring Holding Architectural Renderings*<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the most insidious of the ‘native spaces’ in the city, ironically enough, is the then-called *location*, the divided spaces between ‘municipal sections’ – with state-built houses that were rented to black residents – and ‘shack yards’, with houses built by residents. The latter have a particular temporary status, as they were the symbol of a ‘spatial tension’ between reserves and the ‘tribal native’, on the one hand, and between the cities and the ‘de-tribalised native’ on the other. In Monica Hunter’s 1936 account, for example, the interior of houses was also caught in-between the aesthetic notions of primitive and modern: both bodies and furnishings attempted to replicate the so-called European style while still not achieving the full status of the city dweller. The location, for its space in the city albeit its marginal position in relation to it, was a place in which forms of modern aspiration and aesthetics were most insidious.

<sup>4</sup> “Professor Meiring is standing and holding up a framed architectural layout of Ndebele homesteads.”

Second hand furniture is bought at sales, and in the house of a well-to-do tradesman or teacher one finds the horsehair sofa, plush tablecloth, lace curtains, and elaborate frilled bed hanging of Victorian England. Only the aspidistra is lacking. Only goatskins on the linoleum-covered floor remind one that the owner's father was a herdsman. Often the walls are papered with sheets of old magazines as the only available substitute for wall-paper, the photographs of member of the family or school teams, and crude prints, usually representing Biblical scenes, are hung up. (Hunter, 1936, cited in Minkley, 1998, np)

Speaking of the memories around his house in a working-class community of Katlehong, built in 1949 outside Johannesburg, Jacob Dlamini (2009, p. 51-52) observes how families were allowed to build their own houses with the help of a home-ownership scheme<sup>5</sup>, creating a space for middle-class aspirations in certain sections of the township. Dlamini (2009, p. 52) observes how the difference between a child from within and without these middle class sections was actually “visible”: he cites resident Joe Mashao who notes “it was possible to recognize poor people between the children of people from Nhlapo to those from Monaheng”.

But even though immersed in urban forms of surveillance and technology, the location was more often than not described in 1950s by its “rural overtones”. The new model township of the 1940s and 1950s appears then as a sanitised solution to the in-between, as an attempt to give the ‘native’ a proper place in the city. The township constructed in a new land, from scratch from the 1950s onwards was an attempt to get rid of the dangerous places of the location. The “curative journeys”, says Minkley, “upwards and outwards could only be permanent with ‘rehousing, improved living conditions and the raising of general environmental standards’ to create a new model of township. The ambition of this enterprise was higher than just to build a ‘black spot’. As Minkley suggests, following the Daily Dispatch (1949, p. 12 cited in Minkley) reports,

By developing new township and new forms of housing they hoped to redefine urban native space and produce new citizens, new families and new communities that were stable, urban

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5 Cf. Laburn-Peart (1990) for a more detailed account of home-ownership schemes for miners.

and responsible. The ‘conscious and determined policy to re-urbanize the Non-European population on family basis’ thus involved the construction of houses that would meet ‘the modern conception of a workman’s cottage’. The rebuilt townships...would provide not only for the residents’ material needs but also for their ‘mental needs’. They would provide ‘new people’.

Thomas Hansen (2012, p. 66) observes how the working class, Durban Indian family similarly emerges as a ‘mythical structure’ within the architectural impositions of the new township. As houses were built to encourage “modern and clean living” and to resemble the “Western biological family (Hansen, 2012, p. 64), row houses and small flats and plots became particularly inappropriate for extended family. The prefabricated houses of new townships were somehow related to the reform of the native dwellings in the colony. “On the colonial frontier,” Hansen suggests (2012, p. 67), “native dwellings were models of the native souls”. Comaroff and Comaroff (1997, p. 285) argue that far from seeing these forms of dwelling as models of a particularly ‘enlightened architecture’, or an aesthetic of textured interiors, the evangelist characterised native houses as

constructed from “raw”, natural materials: the clay of the earth, the feces of cattle, the branches of trees, the wild grasses of the bush. Devoid of the signs of cultivation, these dwellings were said to have no “proper” windows or doors, nothing to let in light or lock out unwanted intruders, nothing to mark private space. No furniture, or other making, they displayed none of the elements design that Europeans took to set off human art from animal fabrication. (...) All of which added the impression that added up to the impression that “native huts were more like the impermanent abodes of creatures than the homes of cultured humans. (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1997, p. 285)

The relationship between the figure of the ‘dressed native’ that I discussed in my second chapter and the construction of the interior is evident here, as “the gauge of a civilized abode was the degree to which its interior space was rendered functionally specific and distinct” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1997, p. 227). In other words, if the miner’s clothes have indexed modernity as

fashioning exterior, the idea of interior furnishing in the West was analogous to an “emergent inner life”. Writing on a colonial evangelist’s assumption about the Southern Tswana, they suggest that in South Africa a new sense of domesticity was a promise to rescue the ‘native’ from “a base, ‘irreflective’ dependence on the external world”. The irreflexion was elsewhere referred to, evocatively, as a sign of a particular exterior layer or “thick-skin” of the native as its dwelling. As a contrast to the thick-skinned native, Protestantism was to be thought precisely as a religion of ‘interiority’.

[E]xteriors were merely surfaces which reflected an inner state of being; these required apertures to let in light from the outside, as windows to the soul. On the inside of simple, square abodes – in their spaces and their furnishings – was a terrain on which Christianity might work its revelatory way, illuminating the recesses of the “native mind”: in particular, its capacity for self-reflection. (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1997, p. 277)

Constance Stuart Larrabee’s 1930s photography of Ndebele attire comes to mind, as paradoxically pointing to the exotic appeal of her subjects’ ‘tribal’, ‘traditional’ costumes, while at the same time indexing their increasingly conspicuous Europeanisation. This position resonates with the 1940s expression of the ‘pastoral dream’ with its pictorial aestheticisation<sup>6</sup> of the ‘native’ architecture and idealized (black) rural homeland (cf. Danilowitz, 2005, p. 71-93). In the latter, women “were, in a manner of speaking, *transhumant*” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1997, p. 277) so to forge a new domestic space was to imagine a more compartmentalized nuclear kin and thus more centralised in the marriage and the figure of the woman and the idea of feminine domesticity. In the same manner, Hansen (2012, p. 65) seems to indicate, the Indian woman was to be imagined in the new township plan in 1960s Durban as the centre of the Indian home: free from the pressure of the Indian

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<sup>6</sup> Asked about the social implications of her photographs, Larabee claims these express ‘ethnic beauty’. Black and white photography have a particular ‘ethnic ontology’ is evident in Patricia Hayes’ claim that many younger township residents today still associate black and white photographs with poverty. “Most people, quite simply, want 'beauty'. This means colour.” (Hayes, 2007, p. 156)

mother-in-law and of the patriarchal chains of the male head of the *ketum*. Indian women were not only appraised for wearing Western clothes, or replacing the wedding *thali* with rings, but they were also perceived as the ones dictating domestic forms of interior furnishing and taste distinction, such as “using cutlery, crockery and laying the table with linen and also western table manners” (Fiat Lux, 1973, p. 23, cited in Hansen, 2012, p. 65).

The hostel dwelling and other forms of housing around the mines also impacts the familial arrangements of black mine workers. Moodie (1995) notes how a viable *umzi* also meant constantly moving back and forth between country and town to be with husbands. Inexpensive rental accommodation in or outside the mine village or a township shacks is fundamental (Moodie, 1995). Moodie shows how Ciskeian women interviewed, although already committed to urban life as they came from Mdantsane, near East London –a “homeland township” in the Ciskei built in the 1960s and the largest black township after Soweto in the 1970s (Minkley, p. D11) –were more likely to settle around the mines when visiting their husbands, considering the conditions of their home areas.

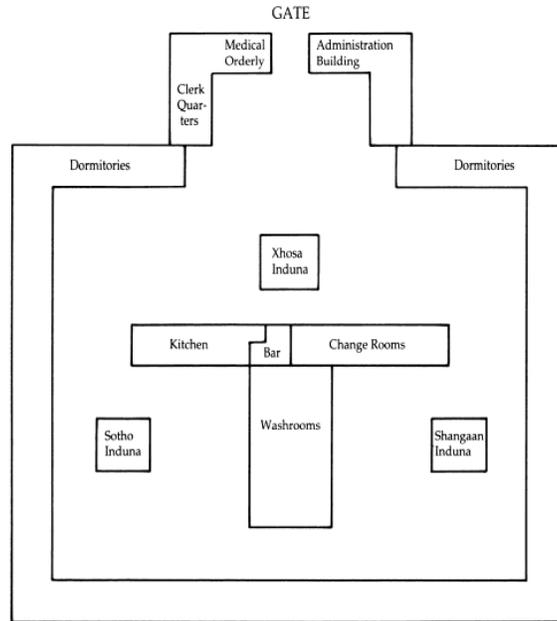


Figure 37: “Typical compound layout” in Moodie, 1994, p. 79.

Thus if the rural dwelling is portrayed as the original form of dwelling of the ‘native’, David Coplan (1995, p. 6) shows how in times of increased mechanisation and mine retrenchments, the Basotho considered a kind of migration as a sign of class mobility while the unemployed were “condemned to home”. The seduction of this mobility and the danger of living ‘far from home’ that is expressed in the generational conflict between old miners and their sons who go to the mines, is best expressed in the figure of the absconder, as Wylie (2001, p. 70) shows. While turn of the century miners blame their sons for spending their money away from home, and, thus, not sending money back, the attachment of salary to home seems to tie the rural bonds of the compounds even tighter. The figures of the Amampondo homestead fathers as sending their sons to the mines guarantees “the children were to remain children”. As E. Tshongwana (in Wylie, 2001, p. 70) reveals, the “The Pondo could only seek the shelter of their father the Government”. But as Noor Nieftagodien (2012, p. 264) shows in his historical account of Alexandra township around the Rand mines, this shelter was not always available. As neither the Transvaal Provincial Administration nor the Municipality would claim responsibility over its territory, Alexandra – as its dwellers – was a

township with no government “father”. Tellingly, the township and later ‘hostel city’ was ironically named by its residents as “Nobody’s Baby” (Nieftagodien, 2012, p. 264).



Figure 38: House and family of a white diamond digger

As I have shown in this section, the notion of passing as racial crossing, was also to be *interiorised* as a positive sign of civilized domesticity and appropriate modern form of dwelling. I have also shown how, even though native dwellers were believed not to have the sense of boundary between privacy and public, it is precisely this clear boundary between space of home and space of labour that is denied to the black miner as migrant life and transiency are the very condition of his cosmopolitan, subjective experience. So the lack of interior boundaries that has been attributed to ‘natives’ as “a form of promiscuity, a practice that polluted their own intimate world”, (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1997, p. 286), is the very condition for the possibility of the black miner’s interiority. No wonder the miner’s microcosm, his ‘intimate sanctuary’, as Pam Warne (2004, p. 100) reads Zwelethu Mthetwa’s 2002 *Empty Bed Series*, becomes the aesthetic expression of “causality and loss in a portrait of absence”, a longing for presence to which I now turn.

### 3.3 Strangers in their place: miners, photographs and interiority

*This house is strange. Its shadows lie. Say, tell me, why does its lock fit my key?"*  
(Toni Morrison, 2012, np)

*What is it to me, now that this village confronts me as a stranger?*  
(Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 2012, p. 8)

Compounds were initially designed in the late nineteenth century to accommodate diggers in diamond mines in a model of total institutions (Donham, 2011, p. 100), a system of control and surveillance akin to Foucault's panopticism, designed to regulate the passing of diamond miners in and out of mines and thus detect and discourage smuggling. The spatial transition from the model of the 'total compound' to the gold mine compounds is a particularly interesting one, as it relates to different, historically located forms of imagining the interior of these places of confinement, and the kinds of 'disciplinary power', in Foucault's terms, that produces different modes of subjectivisation. What is the kind of subjectivity do the compounds contain and help to produce? How is the move Foucault identifies between the architectural modalities of confinement and disciplinary modes, to be articulated with the question of visibilities that these places allow for and rely on? How does photography produce an image of the subject engendered in these spaces, and how does it help to produce an image of the compound as an architectural metaphor of the miner's interior?

In this section I approach the turn of the photographic gaze to the interior of compounds and hostels as a way into the black miner's interiority and — I argue — the condition for representing

the miner's racial subjectivity. I also examine the ways in which photographs, and mining photographs in particular, have contributed to produce an image of compounds as a liminal space, a place between the rural and the urban, between what is understood as traditional and the modern, and the ideas of the primitive and the industrial. The compound appears as a stationary form of passing between these binaries that signals forms of arrest, as I showed in the last section, instead of mobility. In this context of Apartheid – a promise to arrest crossing by fixing the blackness ethnically – I focus on the aesthetics of ethnicity and ethnic forms of belonging which comes to stand for racial divisions within black miners' groups and to somehow justify mine compound violence. I justify my approach to 'ethnicity' in two ways: first, by locating the difficulty in blackness to index the racial signs to the miner's body as it did at the turn of the century, as discussed in my second chapter, and the 'inner' fixity and the cultural and scientific purchase of 'hereditary' that produces 'ethnicity' as a stable marker of difference and *emplacement*, to use Foucault's (1999, p. ) term.



Figure 39: *African mine workers in a migrant hostel*, Cape Archives Repository, 2000

If the compound is “a cross between a college dormitory and a prison, but perhaps most likely like an army barracks” (Donham, 2011, p. 11), demarcating as it were, the world of Western wage labour and the African home and family in “alien living environment” (Moodie, 1994, p. 19), the open-ended kind of confinement shares the same prerogatives of what Foucault identifies as the turn of the century end of asylum and the alienist model. For Foucault “all disciplinary power has its margins” (p. 53) even though the margin seems not to get the same attention as a producer of power in itself. I use Foucault to imagine the kind of subjecting power the compound holds, in other words, how the norm of the compound is to be internalized by the black miner, whose operation in the centre is supposed to confine him to the margin (a marginal role in society, a marginal humanity, a marginal place in the Bantustan). In addition, I relate the ways in which ethnicity and interiors relate, in other words, how both architecture and dwellings produce a platform for an unstable form of subjectivity of the black miner, which rely, I argue, precisely on the surface value of his located ‘ethnic’ markers so that the figure of the miner emerges in a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic setting.



Figure 40 “A 1920’s abandoned compound” in Donham, 2011, p. 14.

Speaking of the birth of the bourgeois interior alongside the infiltration and abundance of commodities at the end of the nineteenth century Europe, Didier Maleuvre (1999, p. 145) describes how realism goes against the perceived disconnection of the objectified presence of furniture in interior spaces. He observes that writing about objects is a difficult task, as “objects have no life; they are, instead, a resistance against the subject”. Indeed, Maleuvre continues: “[t]o see things in an unchanged state, as in still life, is to see things through the eyes of the dead, that is, of the object”. The subject’s ghost is the true interior dweller. So photography in that sense fails to portray what Maleuvre (1999, p. 138), calls elsewhere a “triumphant domesticity” as the interior “mollifies presence” as it takes away the possibility of setting up the distance that is crucial to representation. Representing the home is already marked by melancholia, as ‘tidiness’ can be seen as a bourgeois ideal dictating that the interior should remain always as it is. Maleuvre’s use of Nietzsche’s aphorism is compelling: for the latter, the modern man, as he built himself a house, ends up by walling himself into a mausoleum. Thus it is not only that the subject of the interior is ghostly, but also that particular objects create spatial form whose historical aura is also perishing.

As Nietzsche’s aphorism refers to the modern disbelief in “a monument more permanent than bronze” (translated by Kaimowitz, 2008, p. 138), it allows for the appropriation of monuments in moments of political uprising. Marx’s famous prediction of the destruction of Napoleon’s bronze statue as symbolic of a “stripping [of] its halo”, points exactly to this kind of spatial and historical defacement. In fact, the Napoleon bronze is for Kristin Ross (1988, p. 7) the symbol of a state that is also a “whited sepulchre”. For Ross claims that the workers who toppled the Vendome Column “were ‘not at home’ in the centre of Paris” and thus that the aim of this particular kind of iconoclasm is ultimately an attempt “to strip false meaning or value from the original” (Ross, 1988, p. 42). What Marx (2008 [1852], p. 135) sees as the surface fading of the statue, the “imperial mantle falls on the shoulders of Louis Bonaparte”, depends for Ross on the very forms of mobility and

permanent displacement that turns interior into “passageways”, thus reversing or suspending the spatial division of public and private. If for Benjamin (2006, p. 40) the *flaneur* experiences the street “now as interior, now as a room”, for the Communards “the interior becomes a street”.

Thus if space is interiorized, how is interior to become street, or in other words, how is interior to be a space made public? Maleuvre reads Eugène Atget’s 1910 *Intérieurs Parisiens* exhibition of Paris houses not so much as a photographic representation of the turn of century bourgeois interior, as much as the difficulty of representing the interior made into photograph. “In trying to take a picture of the place where one is”, Maleuvre (p. 152) observes, “Atget really attempts to represent the place where vision and consciousness take place – the place of the subject”. Nowhere else is this sense of absence more present than in Santu Mofokeng’s photograph of a mine hostel room, the first of a series taken by Mofokeng in the former black compounds of a South African gold mine. It shows, as Donham further describes it, a “staged room”: it shows a bed neatly made, ironed shirts hanging, two bars of soap and a bible displayed next to the picture of the worker’s absent wife. For its conspicuous ‘stageness’ the photograph seems to express in Donham’s words, the staging of South Africa’s colonial history itself and, as he adds, “a black interpretation of what whites want to see” (Donham, 1994, p. 13).

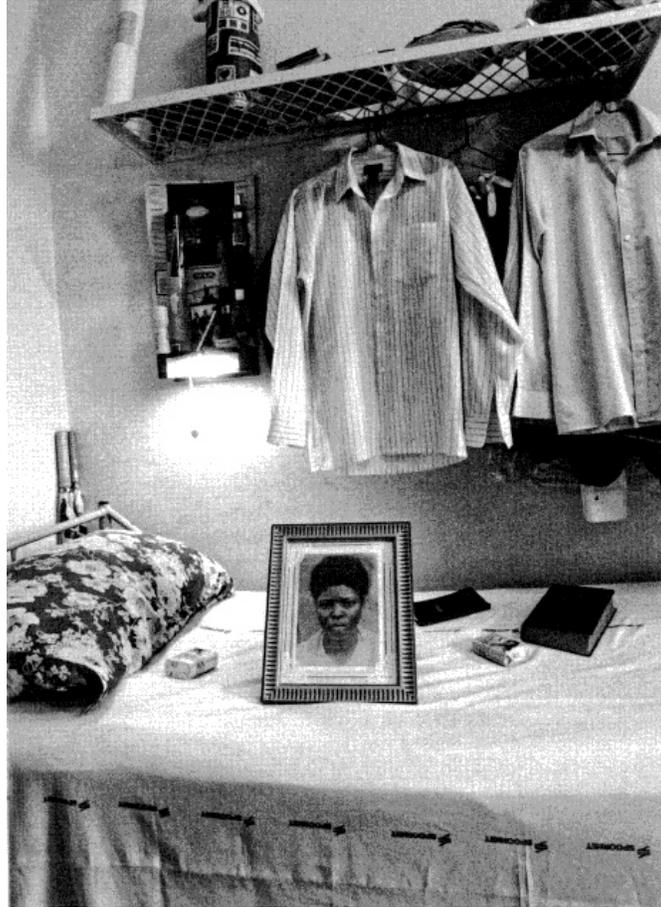


Figure 41: Santu Mofokeng (1994) *A staged room in the Far East Hostel*

The issue of portraying the interior, following Maleuvre (1999, p. 152), seems to be the attempt of the picture to capture the place, rather than a thing in the place. So the question seems to be “can the place that encompasses the viewer become a thing”? In other words, how can one represent the place in which one is and which one is? The camera works self-reflectively, thus, “as the camera becomes the picture of its own chamber and the interior...becomes an image of the photographic chamber, and beyond that of consciousness, which seeks to grasp the situatedness of its chamber”. For Maleuvre the pictures of the interior seem to capture the lack of mediatory distance inside consciousness itself. Not surprisingly, in the centre of Mofokeng’s ‘staged room’ we find but another photograph. Edwards (2002) suggests that a staged photograph “disclose[s] specific

intentions”, as it refuses to align with a priori historical meanings they are ascribed to, and strives to project themselves and their content forward to something external: the relationship between viewer and viewed.

Following this, the visual ‘apparatus’ that Panopticism relies on seems to point not to an idea of interior transparency, but to one of public spectatorship. This reading is akin with the idea of “solipsism”, as Maleuvre, puts it, being substituted by architecturalised, contrived spaces of subjectivity, in which interior comes to be not the ‘inwardness’ architectural metaphor, but “the opening up of objects to more public contexts of inspection and visibility”. The modern notion of exhibition is one such particular space in which place and time are produced and meant to signify in particular ways. Foucault (1998, p. 183) calls exhibitions precisely ‘chronic heterotopias’: spaces outside space, or places of placelessness, articulated within a chronic temporal discontinuity. It is in the articulation of heterotopias/heterochronias, that Foucault gives us a hint of their nostalgic value: he cites the Polynesian vacation villages, where time is accumulated and eternity and festival are combined as “one abolishes time, but time is also regained, the whole history of humanity goes back to its source as if in a kind of grand *immediate* knowledge”.

Bennett (1995) proposes a way of understanding these different modes of visual control not as a “perfected a self-monitoring system of looks in which the subject and object positions can be exchanged”, and which he names as “exhibitionary complex”. Such ‘regime’, as it were, envisions the crowd as self-regulating precisely as it interiorises its ideal image, or its controlled vision of power, as “a site of sight accessible to all” (Bennett 1995, p. 82). Here, the panopticon is supplemented or substituted by the ‘panorama’, as it proposes “not to atomize and disperse the crowd but to regulate it, and to do so by rendering it visible to itself, by making the crowd itself the ultimate spectacle” (Bennett, p. 81). It does so by displaying machinery and industrial processes as “material signifiers of

progress”, not individual, but as a collective of national modern industrial achievements. It is not a vision that aims at producing interiority, but a form of vision that places “itself on the side of the people by affording them a place within its workings; a power which placed the people behind it, inveigled into complicity with it rather than cowed into submission before it”.

[T]his power marked out the distinction between the subjects and the objects of power not within the national body but, as organized by the many rhetorics of imperialism, between that body and other, 'non-civilized' peoples upon whose bodies the effects of power were unleashed with as much force and theatricality as had been manifest on the scaffold. This was, in other words, a power which aimed at a rhetorical effect through its representation of otherness rather than at any disciplinary effects (Bennett, 1995, p. 80)

Just as Maleuvre sees Foucault turn from rule to norm as defining the free subject not from outside, but from inside out as “it does not fence in unruly nature behind limits” (1999, p. 154), I suggest that the compound attempts to do precisely the opposite. The image of the compound seems to coexist with the impossibility of home and of the subject himself: this impossibility comes to stand for interior. If normative society thrives at eliminating all marks of liminality, as Foucault (1998) claims, the architecture of the compound is erected as the most concrete sign of the liminal: it is not conceived by the norm, as Foucault would have it, but conceived *as* the norm. In other words, it stands for mediation itself. No wonder it looks staged, because the photograph reveals its theatricality. Such theatricality mediates, I argue, our seeing of the compound interior. In the next section I will address the issue of the process of curating photographs in relation to the archive, and how a proper ‘interior’, a home for photographic images is envisioned.

### 3.4 The ‘clearing house’ of the archive

The curating process of images, the ordering of the collection, is a technique that mediates our relationship with them, something that might give us a sense of filling their perceived lack of mediation, and also a possibility of experiencing ‘immediateness’, as Foucault suggests. In this section I address something that it is part of my very process of writing and interpreting images, i.e. the curatorial strategies of assembling photographs of different archives meaningfully.

The archive, as I have pointed out, might appear as an intention to give homeless images a home precisely by liberating them from their own contingencies, as Allan Sekula (2002, p. 445) evocatively suggests, as a “clearing house of meaning”. Since the compound is never fully interiorised, and because it is also modern but not fully so, it does not manage, I have argued, to fully ‘subjectivize’ its dwellers. If the black miner cannot be the *flaneur* of the city he can neither fully be ‘interiorized’ as the modern bourgeois notion of the interior, and therefore, he comes to stand as the one who cannot fully be subject. It is perhaps not surprising that Van Onselen (1973) analyses the very first sign of a worker’s consciousness of the black miner to be expressed in/as *desertion*.



Figures 42a and 42b: Old and new compound, in F. Wilson, 1972.

Thus the staged photograph of Mofokeng points to a double absence: that of the interior as modern 'home', but also the absence of a purported 'interiority' against which the object opposes itself. That is why the turn Foucault sees in the disciplinary arrangement of the Panopticon to the 'norm' comes to be "staged" in the compound and the hostel: the modern 'stageness' of boundaries, as it were, of ethnicity itself. If the panopticon suggests a mode of visibility that aims at controlling, the ethnic lines of the compounds are also in a sense informed by more spectacular modes of exotic exposition and curation that makes salient, as it helps to engender, ethnic traits as forms of industrial machinery. Guy and Thabane (1988, p. 258) comment on how, at a moment in which mining suffered from labour shortage and at the same time envisioned less time and more productivity, the particular quality of the Basotho, as ethnic-technical trait, was salient. Although that form of ethnic skill is engendered through what was seen as technological innovation, the authoritative historical account of these mines tries to present the miner's performance as indexing a backwards, or primitive pseudo-industrial technique.

Perhaps in this relationship between the panopticon and the exhibition, one could place the spatial production of a "mythical mining past" (Guy, Thabane, 1988, p. 278) articulated in the concrete and specific historical conditions for engendering ethnic, 'tribal' markers of difference in industrial spaces of confinement. It is telling that the very notion of ethnic violence in the mining compound addresses a notion of passing fabricated over the very slippery surface signs ethnic different seems to rely on. When a Zulu has to dress like a Xhosa not to die, he has to pass as, precisely by making use of the unstable surface signs of difference: "Because you are a Zulu take this blanket and wear it", "now wear this copperhead as disguise and they won't be able to see you (...) just like the Xhosas" (cited in Donham, 2011, p. 83). Ethnicity "became a category of interaction defining appropriate modes of behaviour between people in situations where the transitory nature of social contacts entailed only superficial relationships" (cited in Van Onselen, 1973, p. 251). But this

characterization of ethnicity underplays the impact of the shared work experience within the context of compound discipline and the forms of shared spaces black miners inhabit, where they are “collectively housed, fed, worked and paid in a relatively closed environment, have substantial interests in common for most of their working day” and also fails to account for significant differences between them other than simply 'ethnic' ones, for example the differences between and long and short term workers who were granted different and at times conflicting forms of benefits.

Assuming that ethnicity is a non-essentialist term does not imply denying the ways in which ethnic differences and boundaries have been systematically emphasised in relation to labour dispensation and the handling of modern machinery, in addition to spatial demarcation in compounds. The portray through ethnicisation of a particular kind of social issue allows for it to be fully abstracted from the social, as Diana Wylie (p. 101) shows in relation to raced representations of poverty; i.e. as malnourishment has been considered as a result of black becoming modern just as it is of a modern 'becoming black'. As an adaptive strategy of the 'tribal native' in modern life, as it were, the image of the malnourished black indexes “the human body... exhibiting the weakness and decay of an outmoded social order”. The compound's territoriality in similar ways is built on the assumption that it “fed” parasitically from the Reserves, while “unnaturally” divorcing men from their family environment, as Mabel Palmer's 1930 speech to the Society for the Advancement of Science (cited in Wylie, p. 100) points out, even if it was only a “temporary expedient designed to introduce the native a step at a time, to money economy”. Wylie shows (p. 200) how the malnutrition syndrome became, especially in the highly modernizing 1950s, a “societal metaphor” that secured to African culture as intrinsically “rural”<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> It is perhaps interesting to relate both white and black iconographies of poverty in relation to a particular trope that permeates the symbolic and metaphorical, as much as the literal world of migrant miners: that of eating and being eaten (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1987, p. 197, Wylie, 2001, p. xiii, Coplan, 1995, p. 6, Moodie, 1994, p. 106).

In similar ways, the question of the rural space and of forms of mobility is explored in Du Toit's (2006) analysis of the Carnegie report on 'poor whites' and the question of the 'interior' articulated in the well-known motif of *binnelandse reise*, or domestic inland travel. This romanticized, middle-class white male pictorial tale of the *platteland* points to the production of a *grond* onto which the urban Afrikaner sense of belonging in the rural, interiorscapes is forged. "While...photographs of professional men combining work and leisure in the countryside comprise a more consciously aesthetic framing of landscape", Du Toit (2006, p. 68) claims, "the platteland [is depicted] as wide, empty space traversed by white modernity". What is interesting to note is how the trope of the interior, as I have tried to show, informs different understanding of the photographic gaze, as it tries to pictorially grasp "a corrugated iron wall, a small ill-furnished room" (Du Toit, 2006, p. 56). The interior of the houses points to the incapability of poor whites to build an appropriate home, a home for nourishment in the strict sense but also in relation to emotional and familial ties.

The interior of the poor white home seems to be as penetrable and corruptible by the similarities with the kind of rural up-rootedness through which they were imaged and imagined. In fact, the poor white 'impermanent' rural dwelling was a "shadowy threshold" of impermanence: the daughter of the *volk* comes to stand as a figure of un-homeliness, a "slum-maker": precisely the symbolic and material boundary of the poor white home is referred to as *kaja*, a word from the Afrikaans colloquial for black servants' quarter or shack (Du Toit, 2006, p. 61). The uprootedness of the blacks indexes the impossibility rather than the incapacity of home, while the corruption of the Afrikaner resides precisely in the fact that impermanence is not 'proper' to that particular 'ethnic' group, in other words, the impermanence, the form of involuntary *passing* of the Afrikaner poor is constantly contrasted to the white middle class voyageur gaze of the Kodak photographs, whose form of *passing* is that of a cosmopolitan explorer through the wild country interior. Thus the ethnic traits of the poor Afrikaner seem to be exacerbated by the 'othering' gaze which places the white

poor forms of economic and social mobility, now romanticised – in the figure of the *trekker* – now pathologized as *armblanke*. Both of these characterizations and the indexicality of the poor white photographs seem to calibrate different expressions of *verkeffering* as *bywoners* trying to build a proper modern household and at the same time that their aspiration to make claims on the land arouse urban middle-class fear of white racial (and sexual) degeneration.

The lack of economic mobility of poor whites seems to be the cause, not the consequence, of their psychological malaise, something that the report was, as Du Toit (2006, op. cit.) points out, “careful not to suggest [as a sign of] *intrinsic* difference”. So mobility and poverty seem to index the risk and benefit of mobility to justify and produce an imagery of black and white poor, but of which only the latter clearly bears the “uneasiness about the blurring of class and racial boundaries” (Du Toit, 2006, p. 58). In fact, the difference, even if extrinsic, as it were, had to be associated with the pathos of the white poor’s geographic and rather ‘intimate’ boundaries, or lack of:

At worst, people made homes ‘under the impulse of sex urge’. They were alum-makers in poor neighborhoods and on ‘the open veld’ and lived like the ‘more backwards among the coloured people’. Rothmann also argued that the isolation typical of itinerant farmers, sharecroppers and day labourers ‘fail to preserve any necessity or advisability of intercourse with other homes or communities’ (Du Toit, 2006, p. 59)

Thus it is hardly surprising that Wilcocks’ “Psychological Report” on the ‘poor white’ starts its archive with photographs of a Foucaudean stance of ‘heterochronia’, as he points to types of poor and poor dwellings as “Disappearing Types”. These were photographs of “itinerant farmers, sharecroppers and transport riders”, photographs whose curation indexes different kinds of cultural and spatial (dis)locations and gives us a sense of what Du Toit calls “their [the poor’s] supposedly characteristic roving spirit” (2006, p. 52). Such images, Du Toit claims, seem oddly “anti-photographic”, in the sense that they point not to a photographic ‘thereness’ but to a time gone. In

other words, using Barthian terms, the ‘clearing house’ of this archive shows “anteriority” against interiority.

Du Toit points out how Malherbe’s attempt to produce a eugenic exposé informed by an assemblage of portraiture composites<sup>8</sup> with different types/faces of racial degeneration and juxtaposition of “blandly impenetrable...subjects of research...seems to lack the ‘here-now’ – the specificity of place and time – of photographs presenting people and places that once *were*” (Du Toit, 2006, p. 52). The space and time dislocation allow the positioning of the Afrikaner poor ‘face as race’, through what Du Toit has termed as the “systematic, visual construction of typologies of similitude”. By gaining modern contours, this form of ethnic framing distinguishes itself from the form of “racial impoverishment” (Du Toit, 2006, p. 76) associated with black poverty. In the latter’s case, as Wylie (2001) points out, poverty is often produced as failure of the black in being modern whereas white poverty is produced against, and as “crossed” by the modern in nefarious ways.

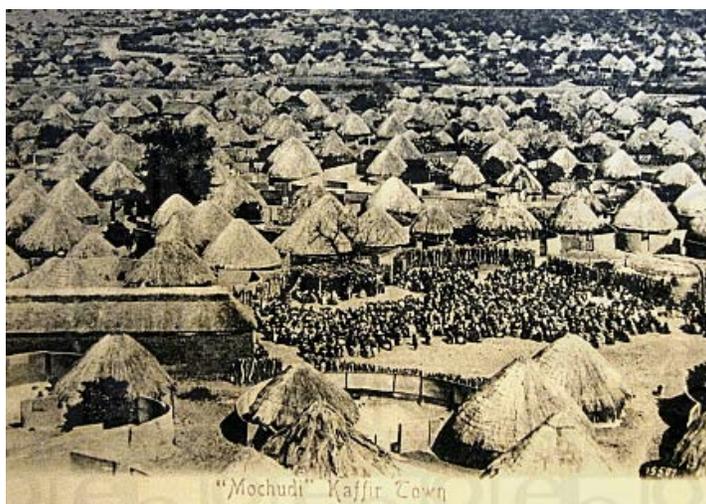


Figure 43: Old postcard of Mochudi ‘Kaffir town’, Gaborone National Museum, Botswana

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. chapter 2

Du Toit's study of photographs of "poor whites" points to how the very portraying of particular white 'boundness' to rural spaces and time seems to be a distinct quality of white poverty (Du Toit, 2006) against representations of black poverty (Wylie, 2011). While one can relate space and time as framing these forms of representation, in other words, interiors of houses seem to reflect the subject of representation, the idea of mobility and temporality seem to differ considerably. Whereas white poverty points to the threats of backwardness, and misplacement which are articulated in *verkaffering*, black poverty seems to point to the threat of capitalist modernity to the ways of the native, and therefore, the rural home becomes a safe haven. Class mobility here seems to be the white's way out of undignified nomadism, whereas for the black, nomadism is controlled as long as the umbilical connection with the rural, or original nature, is not lost. Ethnicity – meaning, the emphasis on salient ethnic forms of visibility – seems to be what replaces the white poor 'otherness', but is also what turns the black miner into a stranger in his own place.

If Ernst Cole, in order to make the photographs that gave life to the evocative *House of Bondage*, had to "exile himself" (Cole cited in Hayes, p. 144), the compound, the *pondokkie* and the township appear in South African imagery in between both Foucault's notions of heterotopia and utopia: the township is the space of ambivalence, as Jacob Dlamini points out, precisely when it indexes a past of bondage even though it is against this particular image that a vision of the future is produced. Nostalgia, in Hook's (2012, p. 237) words, is a psychological "protective device—a way of screening history—that preserves select elements of the past while enabling a structured forgetting of others". This holds true even when writers such as Andile Mngxitama (2011, np) find the township tales to be an 'Oprahesque' attitude towards individual resilience, and Eric Miyeni describes the township as an 'unnatural environment', and compares it to the underworld of the sewer, something akin to the 'filthy' inhospitable subterranean world of the mines. "To think

nostalgically about the streets on which I grew” Dlamini (2009, p. 55) suggests, is a longing for presence in a space of absence.



Figure 44: Zwelethu Mthethwa (2002) *Untitled*

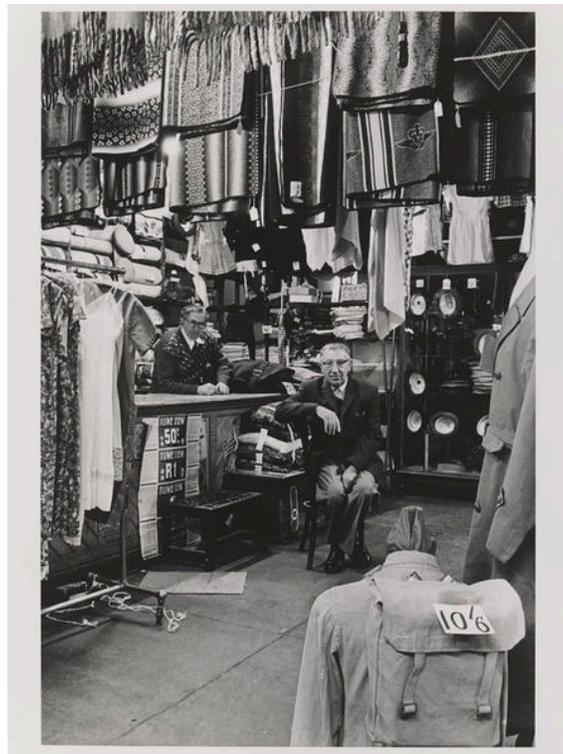


Figure 45: David Goldblatt (1966) *Concession store keepers, Rose Deep Goldmine, Germiston.*

## CONCLUSION

### Mining nostalgia and the longing for presence

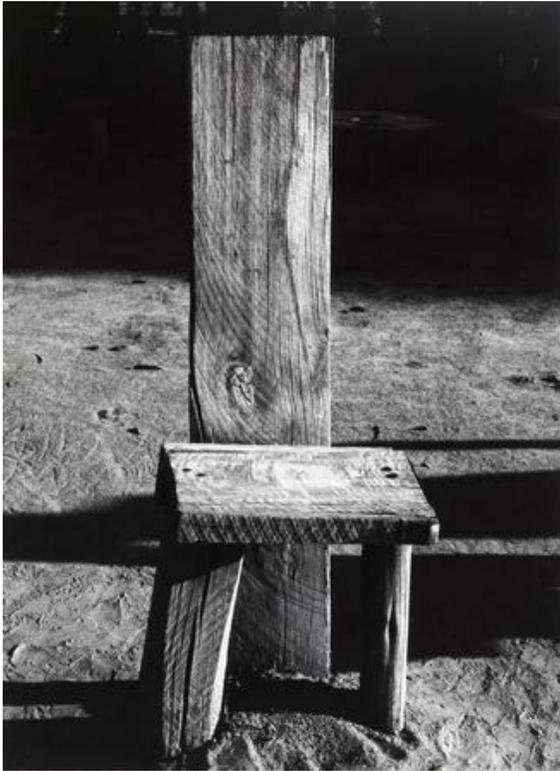


Figure 46: David Goldblatt (1965) *Barber's Chair of Mining Timbers*

*And I dreamed a dream. I dreamed I saw a land. And on the hills walked brave women and brave men, hand in hand. And they looked into each other's eyes, and they were not afraid. And I saw the women also hold each other's hands. And I said to him beside me, "What place is this?" And he said, "This is heaven." And I said, "Where is it?" And he answered, "On earth." And I said, "When shall these things be?" And he answered, "IN THE FUTURE".*  
(Olive Schreiner, 1915, p. 69)

*[A]rchaeology is not just about the past, but about desired futures too.*  
(Michael Shanks, David Platt, William L. Rathje, 2004, p. 64)

*How do I align myself with a future, a possibility, in which I believe but of which I have no clear image?* (Athol Fugard cited in Walder, 1993 [1986], p. xxix-xxx)

“However long I might remain a slave in form”, so Fredrick Douglass (1851, p. 68) famously stated, “the day had passed forever when I might be a slave in fact”. Following the provocation Douglass offers, in this thesis I have explored form, investigating the connection between the appearance of race and capitalist social value in the photographic medium in twentieth century Johannesburg mines. Approaching this form as at once “material” and “subjective”, I have shown that photography establishes a dialectical relation between what is “in form” and what is “in fact” and that the form of value has come to stand for visual mediation of skin, body and interior in representations of early capitalist modernity. In examining these photograph, I have also considered the “fixity” of race as it appeared in South Africa mining photography – especially in the first half of the twentieth century – and argued that this fixity of race should be read as a nostalgia for a pre-money economy, which is imagined as fixed in opposition to the fluidity and instability of money as bearer of value. This nostalgia, I have suggested, also imagines a time and space as opposed to a world where value appears increasingly borderless and colourless.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis is a contribution to what Garth Stevens et al (2013, p. 1) have termed a postapartheid “anti-racist project” precisely by teasing out the material and abstract underpinnings of race using blackness as a conceptual leverage. But, within such project, my thesis also makes a methodological claim, arguing that the very conceptual tools must be approached reflectively; in other words, the means of interpretation must be historically specified in the same manner as the object of interpretation. For this, the very notion of the

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<sup>1</sup> Commenting on Peter Stallybrass’ influential reading of the coat Marx kept exchanging for money while writing *Capital*, Raengo (2013, p. 92-93) considers how pawning a coat speaks on the notion of value form, as “thrown into the sphere of exchange...the contingent materiality of Marx’s coat dissipates.” Not unlike Balzac’s “wild ass’s skin”, or Yeats’ embroidered coat, Marx’s coat dissipates in transaction and re-appears ‘tangible’ at the pawnshop “unchanged by its temporary transformation into cash”. For Raengo (2013, p. 93), value form is precisely Marx’s “unavoidable response to this process of constant metamorphosis of the ‘sublime’ body of the coat” into something else.

‘psychosocial’ as an analytic proposed by Stephen Frosch (2013, p. 10) appears part of a historical process, one I argue is rooted in capitalist modernity. Similarly, I have made use here of a Benjaminian notion of literary montage juxtaposed with an assemblage, or curation, of particular images so as to present them as within a “racial iconography” (Nash, 2009, p. 23). Following this method, I have tried to account for blackness as both material and abstract, and the effects for subjectivity of what Hook (2013, p. 41) has called an “embodied absence”.

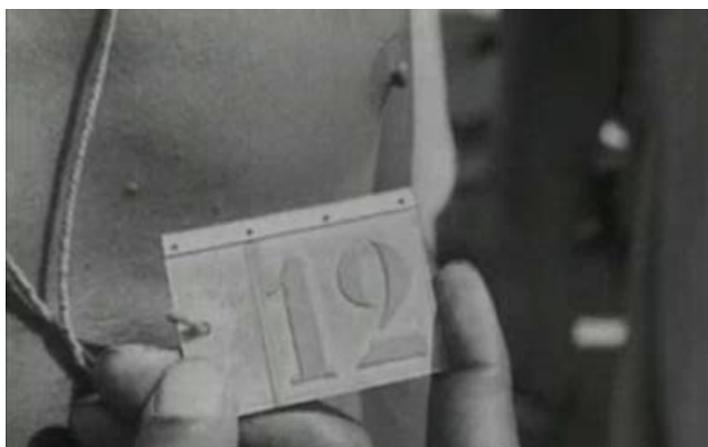


Figure 47: Still from “Natives X-Ray Issue Title The Young Idea” (British Pathe, 1942)

In my thesis, I have attempted to show how a theory of race from the vantage point of psychology strives to avoid what Adorno (2001, p. 146) has termed an “anthropological materialism”: that analytic whereby the body becomes “the measure of all concreteness”. Instead, the body is precisely in my thesis a historical register that troubles, “distorts the decisively concrete”. The risk of what Adorno (2001, p. 147) has termed the “overexertion of the dialectic” is that we assume reification to be simply “a behaviourist ‘test’ for the body...merely an inverted image of the undialectic ontology of the body”, and therefore producing the sort of tautological position, as Hook (2004, p. 120) has warned, that racism

explains racism<sup>2</sup>. In twentieth century South Africa, money signifies difference precisely because it negotiates social boundaries as *natural*: it mediates between social categories, between different kinds of goods, and different conditions without which production and exchange would not be possible. To allow the constant negotiation that gives meaning to difference and to self-evident truths money itself must be stable. But if the money becomes unstable, so do the boundaries it helps define.

Investigating the vocabularies of money and race between 1830 and 1900 in the United States, cultural historian Michael O'Malley (1994, p. 371) finds precisely this contradiction “between the ideal of freedom in self-making” which money helps to produce and, at the same time “the comfort of fixed identity” which it seems to destabilize. By restoring the intrinsic value of nature and its timeless natural qualities embodied by gold money, the possibility of containing the “shifting sands of identity and value” is envisioned. So what O'Malley observes as the ‘timeless’ value of gold money is precisely related to restoring a sense of essence, of interior in a sense, and in America that meant the sovereignty of whites over territory, the domestic space as genuinely female, and the essence of race as leveraging ideas of ‘natural’ purity and thus of ‘naturalized’ forms of racial subjectivity. Money and value seem to be in the hands of an external, civil authority, as much as the value and identity of the slave could now be self-valorizing, inflated. Equality, O'Malley (1994, p. 379) claims, as an expression of political or cultural authority, was similar to a congressional declaration that “the value of paper money could give the paper value”: “All that is necessary for a government to do to

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<sup>2</sup> What is at stake, and implicated in my definition of body, is an avoidance of what Marx calls a bourgeois fantasy of origin that imagines the ‘primitive’ as natural, and thus, not a result of history, but “its starting point”. In other words, the transformations in society, which are engendered within the increasing transformations capital bestows upon the land and labour, are to be seen as result of nature rather than history (Marx, [1843], 1998).

create money...is to stamp upon what it would change into money 'its image and superscription,' and it will be money."<sup>3</sup>

Thus what O'Malley describes as 'essentialism' in the matter of gold is not devoid of a sense of nostalgia, one intimately related to a projected future. If the times of unregulated currency allowed for a free, self-making market, it paradoxically sought to 'restore' racial difference as a fixed and non-negotiable currency of essence that could back its circulation. The intertwined discourse of race and money seem to suggest the need for racial categories that "resisted exchange or renegotiation" and grew more as capital advanced. O'Malley (1994) suggests that this form of race discourse was thus not tangential to capitalist economy but indeed that turn-of-the-century anti-black racism was contemporary to "a political obsession with gold and silver and the 'intrinsic value' of specie".<sup>4</sup>

In my thesis I have attempted to account for the relations between value and race in twentieth century South Africa, in a manner that resonates deeply with O'Malley's project. However, I do not assume that race occurs as stamping upon the immediate, pre-given black skin, as a mark of value. Instead, following Marx, my approach considers exchange value as a specific, definite *social form* of expressing the amount of labour bestowed upon an object, and therefore that nature has no more to do with it than it has in "the rate of exchange" (Marx, [1887] 1976, p. 176). It is the fixity of the object of gold, the 'metal' expression as the quality

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<sup>3</sup> To quote O'Malley (1994, p. 372) more extensively: "Consider, in this light, the common root of the word "specie," meaning coin or precious metal, and the word "species," meaning "of a kind." Both originated in attempts to create stable classificatory systems, to find scientific and objective definitions of the meaning of difference. Specie, like species, signified a belief in irreducible difference and final identity, or at least the dream of finding it."

<sup>4</sup> O'Malley observes how the term "carpetbagger" given to Northern abolitionists perfectly illustrates the conflation of an anxiety of gold and of race, as it purposely associates the trope of civil rights and the issue of money to "to speculative endeavours of dubious character" during American Reconstruction. Compare Du Bois (1966, p. 407-408) and Marx [1887] [1976], p. 377), with the latter offering an important discussion of the black freemen's labour time and labour value during Reconstruction alongside the class conflicts over the definition of the working day.

of that commodity and not the fluidity of money that grants skin what Marx calls a ‘strange social property’, a mystique.

The adherents of the Monetary System did not see gold and silver as representing money as a social relation of production, but in the form of natural objects with peculiar social properties. And what of modern political economy, which looks down so disdainfully on the Monetary System?...How long since the disappearance of the Physiocratic illusion that ground rent grows out of the soil, not out of society? (Marx, [1887] 1976, p. 176).

Thus for Marx ([1843] 1998, p. 174), following Hegel, money realizes itself through metal, the ‘exigency’ of the thing which is the matter of money. In other words, the natural attributes of a thing-turned-into-money are matter of money itself, in a way that Marx claims is denied to other objects ie., equal numbers of cattle or grain.

But if cattle’s natural properties cannot fulfil what is required to become a subject of money, it can still be a subject of money relations. Ferguson (1985) explores the ways in which in Lesotho, a form of ‘bovine mystique’ appears, even though cattle may be seen as a traditional, intrinsic value the ways in which cattle help define social relations place tradition in increasing modern registers. In such a case, cattle appear to be posited outside objective mediation. Comaroff and Comaroff (1990, p. 15) have shown that among 19th-century Tswana “cattle were like commodities”: for they linked processes of production and exchange, embodied a social order of meaning and relations, and were endowed with the capacity to reproduce a total social world. Indeed, it could be argued that a desire to control capital was played out in the contradiction “between beasts and money” that animated parallel ‘fixed cash’ currencies such as “cattle without legs” (1990, p. 17): in a country increasingly dominated by money, cattle “bore the imprint, a part of the essence, of their owner”. Just as capital is the soul of the capitalist for Marx, cattle for Comaroff and Commaroff “that belonged (or had

once belonged) to the ruler was to have the presence of the sovereign himself in the midst of [a man's] personal property". And, thus, much like gold's metallic mystique, cattle "naturalized sovereign authority", meaning, it reimagined nature as the subject of money.

Thus value, even though mediating social relations and claiming the equivalence of natural properties of things is thus more likely to be nostalgically imagined as de-estranged, as part of nature rather than history, a kind of nostalgia that is present even in the language of our most 'futuristic' endeavours<sup>5</sup>. Value is to be dug out of earth in the same way in which social reproduction is to be fixed in a form of biological, natural property and so appear escaping somehow a money economy for its atavistic capacities. As a semblance of money, the figure of the black miner embodies such a nostalgia, as I have shown, not unlike the slave. Exemplifying this conflation, Fredrik Douglass' (1851, p. 59) account shows how children of slaves are an addition to the slave-owner's wealth, prompting him to imagine that "in the absence of slaves there would be no wealth". His account necessarily posits the 'preserve of blackskins' as we see in O'Malley, a preserve against capital infiltration, and a means of control of currency.

It is not surprising that because of Johannesburg's political economy in which gold has figured so centrally, Ivan Vladislavic (2006, p. 173) calls it "a frontier city". It is also not surprising that, for all the ambivalence the township indexes, a heteropic home, *unhomey*, it becomes the most appropriate space for Dlamini's (2009, p. 163) 'native nostalgia'. Holding such places' ambivalence as a platform for racial subjectivity, instead of attempting to eliminate it as a by-product of a past era, would allow, Dlamini observes, for an understanding of what it means for "blacks...[to] remember their past under apartheid with fondness". But this

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<sup>5</sup> As it is the case of the virtual currency bitcom: the trope of "mining" is used as a synonym for acquiring value.

assumption begs the question: how would nostalgia fuel future expectations and images? Charles van Onselen (2005), in a foreword to the second edition of his classic social history of the city, speaks of Johannesburg as a place that does not provide fertile ground for the imagination, and casts it as a quintessentially “unlovely” place. It is thus striking how the imagination of freedom, in a time where we are formally free of racial boundaries and yet remained dominated by capitalism, remains racially marked.

In conclusion, my thesis shows how, in the twentieth century, the photographic gaze appears on the Witwatersrand, framing the nostalgia for value and fueling both an idea of escaping capital while promoting anti-black racism. Placing images alongside the development of capital and race is not an attempt to dissociate them, but to think through what conditions the possibility for them to appear as *likenesses*. My project is thus not “anti-fetishistic”, nor does it expect from the works of the unconscious to reveal what is “beneath” purported illusions.

On the contrary, I took to heart Adorno’s (2001, p. 93) proposition that the form of mediation between psychology and modern society is to be found not in the family, but in the commodity character. The standpoint of my critique was first, to place blackness in capitalist modernity as pivoting a crisis of value and thus of subjectivity, and second, to develop a form of dialectic enquiry of the photographic mode of seeing that is in itself reflective. My thesis signals, ultimately, new possibilities for critique in psychology when the modern image of our discipline finds itself arrested by scales, stats and graphs: precisely the time when the weapons of our criticism cannot, as Marx reminds us, replace criticism with weapons.

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