Mapping Abjection: Dissecting Racial and Sexual Boundaries in Mark Gevisser's *Lost and Found in Johannesburg*

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Abstract

This article details the deconstruction of social identity in Mark Gevisser's memoir *Lost and Found in Johannesburg*. It does so by emphasising how the city's design reflects racial and sexual segregation through the construction of borders and boundaries that are nonetheless nebulous and artificial. In Gevisser's memoir, his recollections are interspersed with the narratives of other marginalised individuals and groups. I employ Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection to understand how systems of exclusion function not only to exclude, but paradoxically, how they allow spaces of inclusion. I argue that the apartheid city can be read as a social body that can be analysed in a similar manner to how the individual subject distinguishes itself from others. The social body therefore creates subjective boundaries between racialised and sexualised others to maintain its sense of autonomy.

Keywords: abjection; memoir; race; sexuality; Mark Gevisser; Julia Kristeva

Introduction

Mark Gevisser's memoir, *Lost and Found in Johannesburg* (2014), largely explores the apartheid past and the reciprocal creation and destabilisation of identity and subjectivity in the city of Johannesburg. In this article, I argue that the memoir maps abjection through its depiction of a seemingly fixed city space that is undermined by the construction and policing of tenuous boundaries between self and other. Gevisser explores his personal history as a gay Jewish man in South Africa, revealing how, due to the experiences of queer people in the centre and peripheries of the city, as well as the topographical construction of the city itself, rigid borders cannot be maintained, and limits are often breached. In the memoir, the city itself is a space of hegemonic power, functioning metonymically as the embodiment of the apartheid state. Johannesburg can be read as a social body that *necessarily* includes marginal identities and sexualities, despite statutory attempts to exclude them. *Lost and Found in Johannesburg* reflects on the attempt by a white supremacist government to delineate its margins against queer and racialised others through the construction of spatial boundaries and limits. The boundaried construction of Johannesburg is revealed by the memoir to be a fallacy; Gevisser shows how the boundaries of the city—and the social body—are persistently undermined in both cartographic and discursive ways.

As a child growing up during apartheid in the 1970s, Gevisser was obsessed with a street guide called *Holmden's Register of Johannesburg*. He made a game out of exploring the maps in the register, which he "retroactively" calls "Dispatcher" (Gevisser 2014, 7). The *Holmden's* not only mapped the city's physical geography but also revealed its stark spatial and racial divisions through its exclusion of entire black neighbourhoods. Gevisser's exploration of the *Holmden's* is not only a mapping of the city but also a mapping and exploration of the city as a social body. The memoir explores these binary divisions (black and white, heteronormative and queer, self and other) while examining the influence of physical space on individual lives. *Lost and Found in Johannesburg* ventures beyond Gevisser's own circumscribed narrative to explore the experiences of marginalised people and where these political and personal histories intersect. Jennifer Upton (2018, 171) observes that Gevisser's text is both a "memoir of the city" and an "excavation of the self," which explores Gevisser's upbringing while situating it within the larger context of the apartheid city. The memoir simultaneously scrutinises Gevisser's personal experience and the marginal experiences of queer and black people at both the centre and on the peripheries of the city, thus emphasising the topographical construction and partitioning of the city itself. Gevisser continuously explores the crossing of boundaries, both ideological and urban, that reveal the tenuousness of fixed racialised and sexualised identities, despite apartheid's attempts to separate the self—an imagined "heteronormative whiteness" (Carolin 2017)—from the other. Despite and because of this focus on oppression, Gevisser details the various ways in which people across racial, class, and economic lines expressed their sexual selves "illicitly," thus destabilising the apartheid master narrative of racial and sexual "purity." As Hedley Twidle (2014, 48) astutely observes, Gevisser provides "fascinating histories of other

gaps in the urban stitching of apartheid: spaces of cross-racial intimacy that range from Hillbrow nightclubs to Bachelor's Cove on the Atlantic seaboard in Cape Town." He considers specific localised spaces within the broader space of the South African city: the graveyard, suburban garden, swimming pool, beachfronts, and the Fort (a former detention centre within Johannesburg). The episodes that Gevisser narrates, as Upton (2018, 172) argues, "recast the narrator, which in turn recast and re-form the Johannesburg he is writing about" from a "closed" to an "open city." In this article, I explore how Gevisser interrogates the normative tropes associated with these spaces to show how they were inherently unstable.

Abjection in *Lost and Found in Johannesburg*

This article draws on Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection that she lays out in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). Kristeva elucidates the concepts of the abject and abjection in her proposition that socialised identity is constructed in the process of the exclusion, rejection, and repudiation of those aspects of the self that would otherwise be considered anti-social or repulsive, and thus threatening to the self. These aspects, which Kristeva calls "abject," relate, for the most part, to the conceptual borders separating the inside from the outside of the body. The abject refers to aspects of the self that traverse the borders of the body, forming a part of it, but also existing outside of it as waste. Kristeva (1982, 1) argues that "there looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated." In this sense, abjection functions as a process necessary for the formation of a stable identity separate from what it repudiates (which, crucially, emanates from or also exists within it). Abjection is thus a process of constructing borders, boundaries, and limits between the socialised self and that which it abjects in the process of becoming and maintaining a fully formed and socialised subjectivity. Noëlle McAfee (2004, 45) defines abjection as the state born of "abjecting or rejecting what is other to oneself—and thereby creating borders." However, the process of abjection is never final and complete. The subject continues to recoil in horror from that which it constructs and separates as abject, which threatens its sense of itself as a discreet, "clean and proper" (Kristeva 1982, 8) entity. Abjection is thus a haunting reminder of one's ambiguous identity.

I use abjection to understand the construction and deconstruction of marginal identities within a social order and the city space. The abject is necessarily repudiated by the subject, yet it is a constituent part of the self that must be perpetually rejected and othered for subjectivity to be bolstered. Bridget Grogan (2012, 95) observes that abjection is the "primitive process that initiates and maintains the construction of subjectivity." The subject is consequently perpetually unstable and paradoxical: because the abject is rejected in order for the subject to come into being, subjectivity in fact depends on it and therefore cannot expel it entirely without simultaneously undoing itself. I argue that the lines demarcating the individual's subjectivity extend to construct

the imagined white, heterosexual social body. In a similar way, Derek Hook analyses racism in South Africa using Kristeva's theory of abjection. He foregrounds the "virtual omnipresence of the body in racism, that is, to racism as a mode of reactivity that has been routed through the dreads, aversions, and 'nausea' of the body" (Hook 2004, 685). Racism, according to Hook (2004, 685), is corporeal and engenders negative "affective responses of fear, hate and revulsion at their most visceral." These affective responses, Hook notes, arise as racist and homophobic affects in the individual subject and are politically manipulated and exploited by the state representing that which it deems social "waste" and excess. Racism is then inherently about the body and affective responses translate into laws that repudiate and regulate the subjects of the state. This policing of a seemingly pure and homogenous body politic is achieved (albeit imperfectly, as the memoir and history show) by law enforcement, segregated public life, influx control, forced removals, and public shaming for sexual "deviance." Hook (2004, 682) maintains that, in the apartheid system, "we have social structures that explicitly sanction inequality and domination, where racism, sexism and heterosexism lay on the very surface of discursive consciousness, and can be unrepentantly stated at this level." I therefore posit that the apartheid regime may be read as a social self (because subjectivity is policed in relation to rigid yet permeable notions of boundaries) and the oppressed subject is the other (the abject threatening the self yet nonetheless a constituent part of it). In this article, I posit that, by continuously ascribing marginality to certain identities to secure the boundaries of heteronormativity and racial purity, abjection paradoxically establishes the grounds for its own deconstruction.

As *Lost and Found in Johannesburg* shows, social structures comprised apartheid institutions that attempted to maintain the law of what the regime regarded as the orderly conduct of its oppressed citizens. The state's revulsion translated into oppressive laws that sought to expel racialised and queer others. Crucially, as Grogan (2018, 144) writes, "[a]bject bodies exceeding the normative imperatives of society are repulsive and compelling because they represent the potentially liberating corporeal possibilities that convention disallows." The keyword here is the "horrifying" prospect of "liberating" the social body, a prospect that the state fervently abhors. Applying the theory of abjection to my understanding of the social body, I examine how subjectivity is socially constructed and destabilised within the context of the memoir and apartheid South Africa. The memoir reveals the multitude of instances that contradicted and undermined the master narratives—explicitly white and heterosexual—of apartheid.

Gardens, Swimming Pools, and Cemeteries

Focusing on the crucial issue of spatial and urban separation, Jayne Rogerson (2017, 98) argues that the "national government sought to regulate racial contact in public spaces by separating amenities such as park benches, public toilets, beaches, swimming pools and even graveyards." In a chapter titled "Ulysses Is about Us," Gevisser describes the ways in which the apartheid government constructed racial identities in life as well as, absurdly, in death. The presence of a multiracial—albeit racially

segregated—cemetery within the apartheid city infects and disrupts the homogenous and stable "white" social body. Gevisser (2014, 47) describes the layout of Johannesburg's "Old Cemetery," a landmark he describes "visiting" via the *Holmden's* in his "early dispatching days." With this example, he expounds on the fragility of whiteness and how the concept of race is used to maintain power. The social body, in the context of apartheid, can be understood as a collective white and heterosexual subject and, for the subject to conceive of itself as a consolidated identity, differentiation from others must occur. The racist and hierarchical topography of the cemetery indicates the space allotted to the various racial groups. Gevisser (2014, 48) identifies how the Jewish section is "a large buffer, running to almost the full extent of the cemetery," which separates "the two portions" ("white" from "black," indicating the marginal "not-quite-white" status of Jewishness)—not unique in the history of whiteness globally. It is worth noting the irony of this attempted separation of races. Even though the graves are separated according to race, bodies are nonetheless contained within one cemetery. Here, the self and other are inextricably bound by geography and death (which, in its finality, makes categorisation absurd). The Old Cemetery functions as a microcosm of the multiracial city space that Gevisser broadly discusses. In death, factors such as race, religion, culture, and heritage are surely irrelevant: all bodies are dead; corporeality and identity cease to exist apart from their everlasting influence on the living, reminding us of the ultimate inconsolability of death. Kristeva (1982, 3) notes that "corpses *show me what I* permanently thrust aside in order to live." The spatial omnipotence of the multiracial graveyard incessantly horrifies the living body's signifiers of difference and categorisation. Indeed, Kristeva (1982, 3–4) argues that the "corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything"; "it is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life." Gevisser thus indicates and mocks the ubiquity of apartheid's segregationist policies. He indicates the distinct, physical boundaries between people, which map onto the psychological and ideological borders of abjection, seemingly maintaining order and the cohesion and hierarchy of racial identities. Inevitably, the complete and final segregation of the graveyard is a failure because of death's unifying effect; the physical reminder of the decomposing body, as represented by the cemetery, alludes to Kristeva's notion of the "somatic symptom," which is "a language that gives up, a structure within the body, a non-assimilable alien, a monster, a tumor, a cancer that the listening devices of the unconscious do not hear" (Kristeva 1982, 11). In other words, all signification becomes obsolete; in the symptom, "the abject permeates me, I become abject" (11). This stark and perpetual reminder undermines the subject's compulsion for delineation.

Despite the structural ways that identities were distinctly categorised and consolidated by the apartheid social body, interconnectedness between black and white lives inevitably and necessarily occurred. In his descriptions of white suburban gardens, Gevisser observes how structural segregation was flouted in these domestic spaces. Much like the cemetery and Johannesburg as a whole, the suburban garden is a (sub)liminal space of abjection. The memoir presents abjection as paradoxical: both the corporeal and social subject, in order to attain a sense of selfhood and independence

from others, ejects from itself that which is other to itself. The government, with its rigid laws, regulates its autonomy by constituting racial boundaries. However, I argue that, because of the inherent contradictions of abjection, this is an ongoing process, resulting in a *sujet en procès* (subject in progress), never cohesively achieving a stable social self. In the chapter titled "Fringe Country," Gevisser discusses an article published in *Drum* in 1961 by black intellectual Nat Nakasa: "Fringe Country: Where There Is No Colour-Bar" (Gevisser 2014, 101–104). An image of the article is reprinted in Gevisser's text, illustrated by photographs visually representing aversion to state oppression. In the article, Nakasa details the following contraventions of apartheid legislation taking place at the time such as "black guests at a white wedding, a white pianist in a black jazz band, blacks and whites on tennis courts and in swimming pools together" (Gevisser 2014, 104).

Despite apartheid's complete adherence to racial segregation to maintain white supremacy, Gevisser maps the ways in which it was characterised by the breaching of boundaries and the blending of that which was deemed abject to the white apartheid social body. Gevisser presents the exclusivism of the garden but also foregrounds its paradoxical inclusiveness. Additionally, the suburban garden is an "interzone between 'nature' and 'culture'; between wilderness and the tamed; between agriculture and aesthetics, utilising, blending, critiquing and redefining all these categories" (Wylie 2011, 74). In the apartheid context, the suburban garden is an isolated "white" utopia, but as an "interzone," it is also an amorphous space and meeting place, in the instances that Gevisser describes, where racial boundaries are transgressed and redefined. Chris Jenks (2003, 2) argues that to "transgress is to go beyond the bounds or limits set by a commandment or law or convention, it is to violate or infringe." The subjectivity of the hegemonic social body is infringed upon through such intimate corporeal gatherings and sublime encounters. The laws were continuously transgressed as is evident by "black guests at a white wedding," musicians making jazz music, swimming, playing tennis, and having intellectual conversations (Gevisser 2014, 104). The other and self converged at various sites of abjection, thus reinscribing difference as sameness. Jenks (2003, 7) argues that transgressive behaviour "does not deny limits or boundaries, rather it exceeds them and thus completes them." In other words, rules and prohibitions depend on transgression for their constitution. Jenks (2003, 7) posits that every "rule, limit, boundary or edge carries with it its own fracture, penetration or impulse to disobey." In Kristeva's concept of abjection, the self is obsessively attracted to the other, while simultaneously attempting to push it away. For Jenks, a rule carries the impulse to break it. Jenks (2003, 7) notes that transgression is a "component of the rule"; for the rule to be cohesive, it requires transgression. Nonetheless, transgression shows up the fragility of rules and boundaries. It reveals that the self relies on the other for its own constitution and thus emphasises the grounds on which ideological and subjective boundaries may be deconstructed.

For Gevisser, the suburban garden, as a borderline space of transgression, exemplifies how racial identity is both emphasised and subverted, indicating how rigid

"compulsory" identities may be transgressed. He underscores another example from Nakasa's article that reveals the transgression of fixed identities within the suburban garden. Paradoxically, the walled garden confines freedom in a "bounded paradise" (Gevisser 2014, 119); it is a space that alludes to Kristeva's notion of the sublime as a "divergence, an impossible bounding" (1982, 11) of self and the abject. Within its boundaries, and essentially its privacy, freedom of racial integration is obscured from the view of apartheid social control. Gevisser (2014, 82) observes that in the suburban garden the "other, the outsider, [is] woven structurally into the Johannesburg of [his] childhood." The interconnectedness of the other with the self is a transgressive act in which interchange could happen "across the suburban backyard, a place of encounter across race and class, no matter how much the laws and authorities of the country tried to deny it or patrol it" (82). For Jenks (2003, 7), society needs to "know the collective order, to recognise the edges in order to transcend them." *Lost and Found in Johannesburg* explores and malleability of the borders that delineated apartheid and is thus able to transcend this social order, showing the inevitable blurring of the imagined selfhood of the apartheid state and that which constituted the abject. Gevisser (Gevisser 2014, 110–111) describes pictures in Nakasa's article that foreground this racial transgression within the garden space in Johannesburg. The image is of "a young couple in the water, a black man and a white woman […] in a suburban swimming pool, eyes ecstatically closed, held by the silvery late-afternoon sun on the rippling water" (111). These examples depict the contradictions of the suburban garden as a (sub)liminal space where seemingly divergent subjects convene and they illustrate how the apartheid body politic created borders to maintain its sense of white supremacy and sexual repression; however, these identity borders could not be maintained and were continuously redefined. Indeed, sublimation, as Kristeva (1982, 11) conceives it, "is nothing else than the possibility of naming the pre-nominal, the pre-objectal" where the "abject permeates me, I become abject" and the "abject is edged with the sublime." The suburban garden is thus not only an "interzone" but the city's "erogenous zone" in which the body feels desire and pleasure; it is a concealed space within the city that Gevisser now explores and reveals. For Kristeva (11), the sublime has a "cluster of meaning, of colors, of words, of caresses, there are light touches, scents, sighs, cadences that arise, shroud me, carry me away, and sweep me beyond the things that I see, hear, or think"; the sublime "expands us, overstrains us, and causes us to be both *here*, as dejects, and *there*, as others and sparkling. A divergence, an impossible bounding."

Raids, Prisons, and Sex Parties

In addition to racial boundaries, *Lost and Found in Johannesburg* explores sexual identity and how the apartheid body politic abjected the queer subject to the boundaries of public life. Andy Carolin (2021, 89) notes that it was the white supremacist state's "preoccupation with sex that drove the violent and brutal attempts to eradicate all traces of non-conformity from the hegemonic racial order." The state thus oppressed queer people in various ways. Gevisser reveals how the state erected boundaries to limit the freedoms of queer people within heteronormative society. Carolin (2021, 89) notes that

"apartheid ideology demanded stricter controls over desire in order to police the boundaries of an imagined idealised heteronormative whiteness." Gevisser, however, indicates the porousness of these borders by showing how queer people, despite the oppressive apartheid regime, expressed their identities within the city. Thus, the sexualised other cannot ultimately be abjected; Johannesburg, as a social body, repudiated the abjected other, which is nevertheless a constituent part of it.

Gevisser recalls in the chapter "Yidden" how he became aware, as a young boy, that the school system under apartheid separated genders. He recalls realising that he was "not like other boys" (Gevisser 2014, 80) but that he was socialised to conform to masculine ideals. He remembers how the "boys and girls were separated at break" (80). Gevisser recalls, in a description suggesting his later "border crossings" and his incipient gender transgressions, how he always found himself at the margins, "lingering around the runnel of sorts that formed the frontier between the two sides of the playground—[his] reverie might have even carried [him] across the boundary" (80). However, a teacher soon "pounces" on him to keep him from crossing the strict gender barrier. From these childhood experiences, Gevisser learns that "if [he] was going to fit in, [he] needed to appear to accept the boundaries set for [him] while transgressing them silently, underground or in the ether, beyond the patrol of adults" (80). These examples illustrate his initiation into heteronormativity and how queer identity is marginalised from an early age. However, as Gevisser's memoir demonstrates throughout, and as I argue, the queer subject is never completely written out of existence but is initially transposed to an internal life "inside the closet" before the queer subject is rendered visible. As a young child, Gevisser learned and embodied Michel Foucault's (1995, 136) "docile body," a body that is "manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces." He became "skilful" at hiding his "otherness" and obeyed the commands of his teachers and other adults.

Nevertheless, his initial feeling of "otherness" in relation to other boys is identified as he became more aware of his sexuality. In the chapter "Psychopathia Sexualis," Gevisser describes how he became aware, as a young adult, of his sexual identity when looking through books on sexuality in his parents' library. One particular book sought to reassure concerned parents that "boys who engaged in mutual masturbation […] would grow out of it" (Gevisser 2014, 106). Gevisser (106) notes, however, that he was not going to outgrow his "homosexual desires"; he would instead "need to find a way to clothe them." He admits that the "suit didn't fit perfectly then and neither does it today, but [he] understood that [he] needed to be dressed in some identifiable way in a society that polices the runnels so rigidly" (106). In this, Gevisser describes his understanding of his sexuality as socially abject and that he consequently had to hide it to conform to the heterosexual ideals of the state and civil society. This example illustrates the complexity of abjection: the oppressive regime abjects undesirable others to conceive itself as a cohesive (white and heterosexual) self. This abjection, in turn, creates within the abjected other an internalised compulsion to expel undesirable aspects of the self to establish the same sense of cohesion and acceptable identity within social

life. Gevisser (106) felt that his body "needed to be dressed in some identifiable way" to mask his queer sexual expression.

He provides further examples, beyond his own experiences, of the various ways the apartheid government sought to control and eradicate queer subjects. The media, the church, and the police were apparatuses used to expose and punish queer subjects for their lawless transgressions to keep others "in the closet" and thus on the margins. Carolin (2017, 113) notes that subsequent amendments to the Immorality Act in 1969 "shaped legislative restrictions on prostitution, drag performances, displays of same-sex eroticism in public, and even sex toys." The Immorality Act, as Carolin (114) considers, served the dual prohibition of "interracial sex and sex between men" because these acts were "hyperbolically positioned as threats to white civilisation in general, and the privileged status of Afrikaner nationalism more specifically." The amendment to the Immorality Act enacted in reaction to "same-sex relations between men was precipitated by a highly publicised moral panic about the threats posed by gay men to South African society" (113). The moral outrage by the figurative heteronormative white self against the abjected gay men incited the "famous police raid on a house party in Forest Town," which was a state-sanctioned method to intensify the regime's "moralist control of sexual bodies" (113). Gevisser (2014, 162), for his part, describes what happened at this house party. He quotes part of an article published in the *Rand Daily Mail* on 22 January 1966 under the headline "350 IN MASS SEX ORGY": "A 'queer' party had been raided in Wychwood Road, in the Johannesburg suburb of Forest Town; nine men had been arrested for 'masquerading as women' and one for 'indecent assault on a minor.' It was, of course, a garden party; it took place, of course, around a swimming pool" (162). Interestingly, this queer party took place in a suburban garden around a suburban pool. Like the "interracial" pool party depicted in Nakasa's *Drum* article, this queer party was contained within the suburban garden. However, as the *Rand Daily Mail* article illustrates, it was infiltrated by the police. Kobus Du Pisani (2012, 192) notes that the church and the state were the "protectors of public morality" and as such "endorsed heterosexual masculinity as the norm" and consequently warned of the threat of homosexuality against the nation. Media coverage, as described in the newspaper article, revealed the "extent of white homosexuality" and in response a circular was sent to "all police divisions in the country and appealed to them to act firmly against white homosexuality" (192). The police used the law against "masquerading" to capture queer subjects. Publishing their names, thereby publicly shaming the queer partygoers, rendered them others to the imagined selfhood of white apartheid society. This public shaming that Gevisser's memoir documents sent the message that queer identity was improper and unacceptable in social life. This violent act of repudiation of the other is the "primal repression," the "ability of the speaking being," which is the normative social body or subject, who is "always already haunted by the Other, to divide, reject, repeat" (Kristeva 1982, 12). The social body must repress those "unwanted" aspects of self, to divide itself from that which threatens it, to reject it, and to repeat this process until death destroys the necessity for differentiation.

Combining forces, the police and media thus worked in tandem to suppress queer identities under apartheid. One of those whom Gevisser focuses on in his memoir is a hairdresser named Michele Bruno who was at work when "he heard his name announced over the radio news. The humiliation and distress of this public exposure was the worst moment of his life" (Gevisser 2014, 164). Bruno remembers being arrested and forced to strip: "They tell me to strip, until I am standing just in a black bra with a red suspender belt holding up the stockings, and the cottonwool sticking out of the bra. And men's underpants" (163). Bruno notes that it was "somehow better to be caught wearing men's underpants" (163). Wearing men's, as opposed to women's, underwear somehow mitigated the queer subject's otherness, suggesting that the individual is still a man being "kinky" instead of a man "transgressing" into wholly "being" a woman. This reveals the abject horror of betraying the patriarchal heterosexual state's idea of normative gender identity. What becomes clear, through history and Gevisser's descriptions of sexual identity under apartheid, is that the state, through its corrective apparatuses constructed and then controlled its citizens' sexualities—or at the very least, attempted to regulate the physical embodiment of their sexual identities. *Lost and Found in Johannesburg* reveals how, despite state intervention in queer life, sexual boundaries have continuously been transgressed; such is the process of abjection. For Grogan (2012, 33), the "archaic, subject-forming process of abjection extends to social governance, explaining the primitive and often nameless horror inherent in the maintenance of ideological boundaries." Despite the laws and regulations placed on queer subjects, in addition to the abjection they experienced, they still found ways to express their identities and corporeal desires in liminal spaces.

In his chapter titled "The Fort"—which focuses on a Boer-war era prison at the heart of Johannesburg—Gevisser describes an instance revealing the instability of fixed and imposed identities within the city. Cecil Williams, "the gay white communist theatre director," was "detained at the Fort during the 1960 State of Emergency" (Gevisser 2014, 127). Williams and other prisoners were removed from "clean" and "proper" life and marginalised to a prison as societal "waste." If we read the apartheid city as a body, then prisoners like Williams (as a gay man) and the other prisoners (who were mostly black) are excrement that nevertheless represents aspects of the self that traverse the borders of the body, forming a part of it, but also existing outside of it as waste. Kristeva (1982, 1) argues that within abjection looms "one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated." The prisoners symbolise this bodily waste that must necessarily be expelled owing to the horror that it represents to the self's subjectivity. Williams was thus rendered unassimilable yet observed the city from without. Gevisser (2014, 127) describes what Williams saw from the courtyard of the Fort looking at adjacent buildings: he "observed a 'queer' party in progress with people hanging over the balcony as they sipped their *parfaits d'amour*. The partygoers themselves occupied their own partitioned space in society somewhat invisible to the mainstream" and "looking straight at Cecil Williams but unable to see him. He had crossed into the

void" (127). The function of a prison, such as the Fort, is to isolate and abject such people from society to a void, yet within this void, the Fort becomes the city's eyes, a vantage point from which it perceives itself and its desires and pleasures. Despite being rejected by the "mainstream" because of their sexuality, the partygoers nevertheless had some freedom, and certainly economic privilege, within the oppressive city. Within the city as self, queer partygoers are able to express their sexuality in a bounded paradise in the partitioned space of the flat. They gather in the flat—which, like the suburban garden, is a liminal space—where their queerness is contained and therefore expressed, albeit momentarily, before they venture into the oppressive city once more.

It seems, however, that these voyeuristic scenes depict a city of simultaneous oppression and liberation. Gevisser (141) observes profoundly in the chapter "Jim Comes to Joburg" that, "like all cities, this city could also be, paradoxically, a place of liberation." A 1963 photograph provided in the memoir illustrates this paradox. Gevisser depicts a sense of watching, not necessarily of surveillance, but a sense of voyeurism and a recognition of similarities of the observers. The photograph in the memoir depicts Michele Bruno, "a cross-dressing man" (142)—who was also the hairdresser arrested at the infamous Forest Town gay gathering in 1966—and his friend Louis, who is transgender. Gevisser (142) describes the scene captured in the photo taken in 1963: "Michele is captured walking down Rissik Street with his friend Louis; two young, white, gay men in their early twenties" (142). Michele is dressed in a "tapered feminine pantsuit" with a "long thin feminine cigarette" hanging from his lips (142). This image was taken at the "height of apartheid's darkness" and represents Michele's "code-switching" (142), or the transgression of a socially dictated "proper" gender performance on the part of Michele who dons feminised clothing. By emphasising this image and others that foreground queerness, I argue that Gevisser deconstructs apartheid heteronormativity while reinscribing queer subjectivity.

In addition to noting the display of queer identity, Gevisser describes a black couple in the background of the photograph. Behind Michele and Louis is "an older woman in a cap and somewhat shapeless coat, holding the hand of her man, out of the frame" (143). Gevisser (143) notes that this picture is from 1963 and the woman "would have had to carry a pass. She would have to leave by the last train. She had no cause to be on these streets, save to come and go to work." The woman nevertheless takes up space in the city: "she, too, like Michele and Louis, is finding space in the city; claiming her ground. She is holding her man's hand" (143). The subjects are suspended—in time—within the borders of the frame; they are marginalised, abject others within the apartheid city, yet the picture and the memoir recentre the subjectivity of the marginal subjects by observing them and placing them at the centre of recognition. The state disavowed their existence and attempted to remove their subjectivity, yet their casual stroll is displayed in the openness of the city, captured by a camera, which becomes the city's eyes, thereby bringing into question the coherent subjectivity of the state.

The oppressive nature of the city paradoxically allowed it to become a space of confined freedom in a bounded paradise. Gevisser (165) interviewed a now older gay black man from Soweto named Phil who described "how he shuttled between his straight life in Soweto—he was married, with children—and his gay life in the city." Phil was known as "Mr Soweto" because of his "popularity with the young men, a trail of whom were always in his wake" (165). Phil's story illustrates the paradox of the oppressive and punishing city nonetheless opening up space and allowing for marginal freedoms. Gevisser (196) observes that Phil and Edgar (another gay man and Phil's friend from Soweto) were, "as the township expression goes, 'After Nines': gay only 'after nine,' once the wife was in bed and the kids asleep." Ironically, Phil and Edgar had *sexual* freedom in the racist city: "they found a new level of freedom. Or perhaps, more accurately, they learned how to play a new game of cunning and courage, taking advantage of the opportunities now available to them while avoiding the double-jeopardy of being black and being gay" (197). The white suburban garden, owing to its intentional reclusiveness, acted as a shield (although not always successful, as the Forest Town raid reminds us) against government invasion.

Edgar and Phil had a white friend, Roger, who threw "gay parties" that they often attended at his house. Gevisser (198) again makes connections between the boxed-in suburbia of his childhood and the freedoms that queer people had in similar spaces: "When I visited [Roger], I thought immediately of the suburban boundaries that had both contained and confined me as a child." He recalls the suburban garden and pool that contained whiteness within its walls but simultaneously, because of its seclusion, became a bounded paradise. He marks how Roger planted foliage intended to further obscure outsiders' view of the "illicit" activities that might occur in his home and garden: "Roger had planted borders of soaring cypresses, entirely obstructing the house's magnificent view over Johannesburg. This was quite deliberate, he told [Gevisser]: he needed to make a refuge for himself and his own black partner, and for their black friends, by preventing the possibility of people peering in" (198–199). Again, the suburban garden is a liminal space that separates and confines. Originally designed to abject unwanted others, it became a space of sublimity within its very borders. As Gevisser (199) remarks, "Edgar became uncharacteristically dreamy when he talked about Roger's garden: it seemed to him, as a younger man, nothing less than Eden itself."

Conclusion

Lost and Found in Johannesburg deconstructs the systems that create abject subjectivity in the oppressive apartheid city. Gevisser foregrounds the fundamental and structural ways that identity borders were consistently crossed. The memoir is part of a renewed and revisionist trajectory of rearticulating queer subjectivity. I argue that Johannesburg metaphorically represents the apartheid "body" and may thus be viewed as a site of abjection, or more precisely of sublimity, which erects rigid borders between racial and sexual others, yet the social body is perpetually undermined by the other which threatens

its coherence. I considered how Kristeva's theory of abjection may be used to understand the structural ways in which the city and the state sought cohesion of self. The apartheid regime, therefore, separated and contained the white self—with which it identified—in the "town" or the centre (Swilling 1991, xiv). It consequently relegated abjected others to the "countryside" or peripheries of the city (Swilling 1991, xiv), thus constructing ideological and physical borders, a theme Gevisser explores. The regime asserted and maintained dominance and power over its white population and to uphold its racist, patriarchal, and heteronormative ideology of eradicating racial and sexual plurality. The suburban garden with its swimming pool is presented as a space that insularly "contains" and "protects" whiteness and heterosexuality with its symbolic laagering, yet Gevisser provides images and descriptions of instances wherein the "protective" garden hosted transgressive instances of racial mixing and queer gatherings. Geographical borders separate the white supremacist heterosexual social self from the embodied racialised and sexualised other. However, the text exposes the fragility of this ideology. An unintentional consequence of this kind of "spatial apartheid" is that clandestine "bounded paradises" were created, thus revealing that boundaries are ambiguous and the other can never be repudiated from the self entirely and finally. The memoir deconstructs the process of individuation by emphasising the structures that create identity—such as the state's foregrounding of racial identity and heteronormativity through oppressive legislation. By underscoring the structural elements that form identity, Gevisser indicates the ways these structures were continually breached to emphasise that the subject—whether it is the state as a homogenous social self or the individual within society—is always *en procès*.

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