Transplants and Transients: Idioms of Belonging and Dislocation in Inner-City Johannesburg

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Abstract: South Africa's economic and political liberalization have engendered new patterns of immigration and urbanization that find South Africans and foreign migrants converging on the streets of inner-city Johannesburg. As they interact, citizens and non-nationals have developed competing idioms for relating to one another and the space they share. For South Africans, this often means appealing to a nativist idiom that locates commonality amidst an allochthonous citizenry while attempting to prohibit foreign transplantation. Non-nationals counter this with an idiom of permanent transit, a way of positioning themselves as outsiders lodged in a superior and unrooted state. These idioms represent competing visions for the inner city's future. For South Africans, the idiom is a generative node of modern nationalist formation. For those permanently passing through the city, it is an idiom of a denationalized "nowhereville."

Résumé: La libéralisation économique et politique en Afrique du Sud a engendré de nouveaux modèles d'immigration et d'urbanisation qui font converger les Sud-africains et les nouveaux immigrants vers les rues du centre de Johannesburg. Alors qu'ils se côtoient, les citoyens et les étrangers ont développé des expressions propres pour décrire leurs relations dans l'espace qu'ils partagent. Pour les Sud-africains, cela veut souvent dire qu'ils font appel au discours nativiste qui envisage le partage commun d'une identité citoyenne allogène tout en refusant l'idée d'une transplantation étrangère. Les étrangers contredisent cet idiome avec une perception de transit perpétuel, une manière de se positionner en tant qu'outsiders logés dans un état supérieur et déraciné. Ces perceptions représentent des visions con-

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currentes de l'avenir du centre-ville. Pour les Sud-africains, l'idiome est une expression concrète de la formation moderne nationale. Pour les nomades permanents de la ville, leur idiome est l'expression d'une ville sans identité, dénationalisée.

Liberation, Liberalization, and Urban Nativism

Movements of people, ideas, and goods—new patterns building on and transforming the old—are challenging the criteria for social and political membership across the globe (see Castles & Miller 2003; Baumann 2002; Soguk & Whitehall 1999; Basch et al. 1996). As primary, if unwitting, actors in national and international exchange, urban populations are often the first to feel the threats that trade and travel pose to existing values, hierarchies, and livelihoods (see Castells 2004; Sassen 2002). Although responses to these challenges vary, they frequently take the form of nativist idioms: discourses and practices including everything from subtle forms of discrimination to extraordinary violence against "foreign" populations. In almost all instances, these serve to marginalize those considered alien. This process, however, reshapes the collective self-understanding of all involved. For autochthons, excluding visible others can strengthen loyalties to the space they occupy and ratify abstract notions of an indigenous nation (see Barth 1969; Hagendoom & Poppe 2004; Landau 2003). Those excluded as aliens often face severe and immediate consequences, including trauma, poverty, and violence—yet their reactions, or the ways in which these influence conceptions of space and collective belonging, have rarely been examined. This article attempts to do just that.

In exploring the nativist idiom that has emerged in postapartheid South Africa, the Comaroffs (2001) draw the analogy between antiforeigner sentiments and campaigns to uproot alien plant species and prevent others from taking root. For them, "aliens—both plants and people—come to embody core contradictions of boundedness and belonging. And alien–nature provides a language for voicing new forms of discrimination within a culture of 'post-racism' and civil rights" (Comaroff & Comoroff 2001:627). In exploring the interactions between citizens and non-nationals in Johannesburg, this article argues that the Comoroffs' metaphor is misleading for at least two reasons. First, it implies the existence of a preexisting, objectively defined (or definable) native community shaped by its physical environment. Due to the legacy of apartheid's spatialized planning, however, few black South Africans grew up within the city center. Rather, Johannesburg and other South African cities are being transformed and enlarged by a heterogeneous amalgam of domestic migrants

searching for a common language of belonging. As South Africans are increasingly urbanized, the majority of the country's population may soon live in places that they are not "from" (see South African Cities Network 2004). For South Africans, nativist discourses provide a means of transcending their allochthony by staking claims to previously forbidden sites (see Gotz & Simone 2003; Tomlinson et al. 1995). In this context, non–South Africans—*makwerekwere* in the local vernacular—serve a dual purpose. First, as scapegoats they help preserve the postapartheid project's legitimacy by providing convenient explanations for widespread crime, disease, and unemployment. More significantly, a reified and dehumanized foreign "Other" underscores South Africans' shared connection with one another and the national territory. Where Johannesburg's nativism (like nativism elsewhere) may be a response to globalization's superfluity and dissolving boundaries (cf. Mbembe 2004; Conversi 1999; Heilman 1998), it is also a reaction against South Africa's fragmentary past. Through their emergent nativist idiom, the city's black population is finding the means of claiming membership in a new postapartheid nation.

The Comaroffs' metaphor founders for a second, less obvious reason. Whereas "nonindigenous" plants cannot survive without taking root, Johannesburg's aliens are shaping their own idiom of transience with which they actively resist transplantation. By asserting membership among both the forcibly displaced and the elite "mobile classes" (see Baumann 2000), they claim a right to the city as victims of circumstance while hovering above the soil and its native population. From this vantage point, they look down upon South African citizens and prepare themselves for a future outside of South Africa. Rather than seeking a stable presence in their country of residence, many claim they never aspired to permanent settlement (i.e., transplantation) and would refuse such an opportunity if it were made available. For them, allochthony is not a shameful status. Instead, by valorizing it, they simultaneously claim ownership of their social marginalization and status as global players. Amidst a largely and perennially poor South African minority, their ability to do so allows them to assume an identity of difference and superiority.

The city's rooting and rootless idioms are shaped through mutual recognition and symbiosis, each depending on the other for its legitimacy and power (see Gotz & Simone 2003). Nevertheless, they also represent competing visions of the city's future. As citizens find commonality within diversity, Johannesburg is becoming a critical, generative site for modern South African nationalism. The activities and attitudes of uprooted and unrooted aliens, however, threaten to unmoor the city and leave it floating with them in a deterritorialized transience. The ultimate outcome of this contest remains uncertain. Likely results include new forms of status and of belonging, transformed ethnonationalist hierarchies, and continued tensions between those wishing to belong to the soil and those using it merely as a temporary site of nourishment.

This article attempts to analyze the competing idioms emerging within central Johannesburg in the social and cultural context of South Africa's economic and political liberalization, its commitment to universal freedoms, and movements of South Africans and aliens into Johannesburg. The South African responses to the convergence of citizens and non-nationals in the region's primary city include the emergence of the nativist discourse described above and various extraordinary (and often extralegal) efforts, which are legitimized by such discourse, to "uproot" aliens. At the same time, non-nationals, while rarely identifying themselves as a unified population, have devised a counteridiom of superior transience in which they draw on a shared discourse of self-alienation and permanent mobility. In doing so, they create distance between themselves and the nationalist project, the national territory they inhabit, and South Africa's autochthons. These competing idioms are at once claiming Johannesburg as part of the native soil and rendering it as the temporary quarters for a population en route to, and from, an indefinable and dynamic everywhere.

This article draws on data collected over a three-year period from secondary sources; formal and informal interviews with migrants, service providers, and advocates; and original survey research by the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in collaboration with Tufts University. The survey was administered in February and March 2003 in seven central Johannesburg neighborhoods with high densities of African immigrants and included 737 respondents (53% South Africans and 47% non-nationals).[1] This survey, the first of its kind on the African continent, provides insights rarely captured through other means into interactions among native and alien populations. The study also draws on work done by graduate students in Wits University's Forced Migration Studies Programme, many of whom belong to and live among the communities described in the following pages.

"Freedom" in a New Place

With Nelson Mandela's election in 1994, South Africa transformed itself into a country governed largely by members of its "indigenous" population, the last country in Africa to enact such changes. To overturn the economic and political isolation it suffered during apartheid, the country actively joined (or rejoined) the activities of social and economic exchange in the region, premising its success on reversing past injustices by aligning itself with the African continent. Then Deputy President Mbeki explicitly framed the new policies in his "I am an African" speech (delivered May 8, 1996) commemorating South Africa's postapartheid Constitution. This seminal address outlined a vision for a postracial, postapartheid South Africa comprising not only the nation's aboriginal population, but also migrants from Asia, Europe, and the rest of Africa. In celebrating their past contributions,

he thanked this diverse lot for "teaching me that we could both be at home and be foreign" and that "freedom was a necessary condition for... human existence." Indeed, to ensure that no one in the country would again be excluded on the basis of race, religion, class, or origins, the Constitution's preamble proudly promises that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it" without explicit reference to place of birth, ancestry, or immigration status. Although these pronouncements were partially motivated by efforts to include political exiles and non-"African" groups (especially whites, Indians, and mix-raced "coloureds") in the postapartheid project, they reflect the cosmopolitanism proclaimed by Mbeki and the intention to embed South African nationalism within a continental consciousness.

The African assimilationist agenda has surfaced again in South African support for the "New Partnership for African Development" (NEPAD), efforts to revitalize the moribund Organization of African Unity (reborn as the African Union), and talk of stirring an imminent "African Renaissance." In all these initiatives, South Africa's success as a political and social project depends on its positioning itself at the heart of continental trading, travel, and cultural networks. As the country's largest city and the center of national (and regional) economic activities, Johannesburg is the place where these ambitions are most visibly manifested. Indeed, the language used to describe the city's urban regeneration explicitly reflects the city's aspirations to become a "world class, African city": a South African community open to the continent's ideas, resources, and (presumably) its peoples.[2]

Johannesburg's role as a focal point for domestic production and international trade is not, of course, novel (see Mbembe 2004:375; Harries 1994). Until the early 1990s, however, the city's relationship to South Africa as a whole and to the rest of the region was filtered through international sanctions and apartheid's racialized pass and residence laws. Consequently, its central business district and immediate surroundings were designated for white-owned business and European immigrants, while its well-serviced suburbs remained an almost exclusively white reserve. Although the white (and to a degree, Indian) suburbs relied heavily on "African" labor, black, Indian, and coloured populations were relegated to poor, densely populated townships on the urban periphery. Paralleling these patterns of spatial exclusion, South Africa, too, was surrounded by countries whose labor and resources had built South Africa's wealth but whose citizens were denied access to its relative prosperity. With the end of apartheid, many of the barriers to movement and residence also fell, and previously forbidden territory in the city center was opened to all of South Africa's citizens and, unwittingly, to people throughout the region.

Although statistics for the city are difficult to find, the 1996 and 2001 censuses show that the foreign-born population of Gauteng Province (the location of Johannesburg and Pretoria) grew from 66,205 to 102,326 people, representing an increase from 4.8 percent to 5.4 percent of the total

population. These figures severely undercount the total numbers of non-nationals; a recent survey (n=1,100) in central Johannesburg, for example, found that close to a quarter of inner-city residents were born outside South Africa (Leggett 2003). They also fail to capture the dramatic changes in neighborhoods that became migrant enclaves. The coincidence of new patterns of human mobility with crime, HIV/AIDS, and persistent inequality has formed the seed of heightening antiforeign attitudes.[3] Indeed, the exact figures on migration are far less important than South African perceptions that the country is being flooded by unwelcome (read, black) foreigners (see Whitaker 2005; Handmaker & Parsley 2001; Crush 2000).

Although international migration may be a central focus of popular and political debate, it is impossible to understand reactions to it without recognizing that Johannesburg's demographic transformation is primarily due to the movements of South African citizens. The same survey that found that one-quarter of inner-city residents are foreign born also revealed that 68 percent of inner-city Johannesburg residents (three-quarters of whom are South African) had moved to their present household in the last five years.[4] In some areas, more than 42 percent of respondents had lived in their current residence for less than a year. Some of these newcomers had been living in other parts of the city, while most had moved from periurban townships or the South African "hinterland." Indeed, the 2001 census reports that Johannesburg grew by three hundred thousand people between 1996 and 2001, with newly urbanized South Africans accounting for most of this growth (see South African Cities Network 2004).

The urbanization of South Africans has created a city in which no single group can claim indigeneity. In the Wits-Tufts survey, for example, a plurality of South Africans identified isiZulu as their mother tongue, although this accounts for only a quarter of respondents. Surprisingly, almost everyone living in the inner city (close to 90% of both South Africans and foreigners) reported that English was required for participation in the city's economic and social life. Such reliance on a colonial language that is almost no one's mother tongue illustrates, more vividly than any other single indicator, the degree to which Johannesburg is a frontier zone, a community of strangers—some foreign, some citizens—living together in a place that is no one's "home" (see Bremner 2004). Rather than constituting an identifiable and bounded local population, most inner-city residents must now renegotiate their relationship to their place of residence. As they address their need for belonging in a context of prevailing unemployment, crime, homelessness, and disease, their heterogeneity provides an almost unlimited number of potential fault lines. Whether consciously or not, South Africans, to overcome their own allochthony, have made nationality rather than ethnicity or class the locus of conflict, exclusion, and identity formation.

Indigeneity and Exclusion

Despite the ambitions of postapartheid South Africa to overcome past patterns of exclusion based on arbitrary social categories, xenophobia remains a hallmark of the country. Attitudes vary, but one can safely report a generalized discourse of nativist exclusion. A national survey conducted in 1998 by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP), for example (cited in Segale 2004:50), revealed that 87 percent of South Africans believed that the country was letting in too many foreigners. In Johannesburg, 64.8 percent of the South Africans in the 2003 Wits-Tufts study felt that the departure or expulsion of refugees and immigrants would be a positive development, and many respondents supported drastic measures toward this end. Reflecting the focus of their exclusionary sentiments, few inner city residents—the vast majority of whom are black—see ridding the country of its white population as a priority.[5] West Africans (particularly Nigerians) are the archetypical antagonist and "Other," but South Africans ecumenically label almost any poor black from elsewhere on the continent as an alien or *kwerekwere*. Paralleling global trends, justifications for such sentiments include perceived connections between non-nationals and the country's visible social pathologies: HIV/AIDS, unemployment, and (most importantly) illegality in all its forms (Crush & Williams 2003). In Johannesburg—the country's crime capital—among the 85 percent of South African respondents in the Wits-Tufts survey who thought crime had increased in recent years, almost three-quarters identified immigrants as a primary reason (see also Leggett 2003). Citizens' accusations are not, however, limited to these concerns. Depending on whom you ask, aliens are: stealing South African women; overrunning hospitals, schools, and public housing; and eroding the moral values needed to build a new South Africa.

Exclusive nativist sentiments are not only an organic or spontaneous response to street-level tensions, but have also been shaped and legitimized by politicians, bureaucrats, and others.[6] The famously xenophobic minister of home affairs (1994–2004), Mangosuthu Buthelezi, is among the most accomplished in this regard. In addressing a meeting to discuss migration in the region, Buthelezi outlined a series of crises facing the country and then argued that "South Africa is faced with another threat, and that is the SADC [Southern African Development Community] ideology of free movement of people, free trade and freedom to choose where you live or work. Free movement of persons spells disaster for our country."[7] His efforts have been bolstered by the active and passive support of others. With a bit more nuance, Johannesburg's executive mayor reflected a widely held sentiment in his "State of the City 2004" speech in which he reported that "while migrancy contributes to the rich tapestry of the cosmopolitan city, it also places a severe strain on employment levels, housing, and public services." Given the lack of sound data, it is impossible to calculate the extent to which international migrants have contributed to these strains,

but their influence is likely to be minimal, given the scope and scale of domestic population movements. Nevertheless, sentiments linking international migrants to shortcomings in public service delivery have taken hold. These beliefs bolster a broader anti-alien discourse that draws not only on concerns about protecting the country's material resources, but also on generalized beliefs about rights to residence on South African territory. Although a small group of foreigners—academics, investors, doctors, and whites—are tolerated and occasionally celebrated as symbols of cosmopolitanism, the majority of those granted such rights have incontestable roots in South Africa's soil.

The sentiments outlined above have helped legitimate a set of exclusivist practices which combine as a nativist idiom designed to prevent the transplantation of non-nationals onto South African soil. This is perhaps most evident in the denial of legally mandated social services to certain groups and individuals and in the extraordinary levels of abuse and exploitation foreigners receive from the police. Section 5(1) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, for example, declares that, "a public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way." This provision, notably, does not distinguish between citizens and immigrants.[8] And yet a 2000 study on the Somali refugee community in Johannesburg found that 70 percent of school-age children were not in school (Peberdy & Majodina 2000). Little data exist on other groups, but although some schools have opened their door to foreigners, it is likely that this pattern appears among other communities as well. Meanwhile, officials continue to blame immigration for their inability to meet public demand, even though most of the city's newcomers are South Africans.

Exclusionist behaviors are also apparent in non-nationals' attempts to obtain health services, particularly emergency care. Sections 27(1) and 27(2) of the Constitution state that everyone has the right to health care, including reproductive services, and commit the state to taking reasonable measures to ensure these rights. Section 27(3) explicitly states that no one—regardless of nationality, documentation, or residency status—may be refused life-saving medical treatment. Refugees are legally entitled to have access to the same basic health care as South African citizens, although other noncitizens may be required to pay additional fees.[9] Nevertheless, foreigners are often denied access to health services, made to wait longer than South Africans before being seen, and are subject to other forms of discrimination from health-care workers. One respondent reports hearing nurses openly speaking about "foreigners taking government money and having too many babies" (Nkosi 2005). Non-nationals report hearing staff describe their hospital as "infested" with foreigners, or being denied the full course of a prescribed medication (Pursell 2005). These are not isolated incidents: a recent national study of refugees and asylum seekers found that 17 percent of all respondents were denied emergency med-

ical care (Belvedere 2003). If one could calculate this as a percentage of those seeking such care, the figure would be much higher. In one particularly dramatic incident, a pregnant Somali woman was refused service on the grounds that delivery, unless problematic, did not constitute an emergency, and that she could not pay the additional fee levied on foreigners (although as a refugee she was not required to pay). She consequently delivered the child on the pavement outside the hospital, only to watch it die a few weeks later (minutes of the Forced Migration and Local Government Working Group meeting, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Sept. 15, 2004).

The police have also capitalized on foreigners' unpopularity to bolster their reputation and bank accounts. Asylum seekers continue to be arbitrarily arrested and detained based only on their physical appearance, on their inability to speak one of South Africa's official "African" languages (of which there are nine), or simply for fitting an undocumented migrant "profile" (Algotsson 2000; Lubkemann 2000:58–59; Madsen 2004). Although instructed to respect non-nationals' rights, police regularly refuse to recognize work permits or refugee identity cards and may confiscate or destroy papers to justify an arrest (South African Human Rights Commission 1999:3–4). Non–South Africans living or working in Johannesburg consequently report being stopped by the police far more frequently than South Africans (71% against 47% in the Wits-Tufts survey), despite having lived in the city for relatively shorter periods. There are also numerous accounts (documented and undocumented) of police eliciting bribes from apprehended persons before releasing them. A Sierra Leonean man (in Palmary et al. 2003:113) described one such encounter:

> "The police asked me for my refugee paper, which had not yet expired. They say, 'f-k you' and then just tear the paper and seize my money and cell-phone. . . . So then, what they do is take me to the police station. I was shouting. . . [and] one of them just removed something like a little shocker. He was shocking me[,] . . . say[ing] that I was to shut up and if I [didn't] shut up, he was going to shock me until I die."

In early 2005, a Zimbabwean man in police custody (for undisclosed reasons) was killed and buried with no notification to his family or the designated authorities. When family members inquired about his whereabouts, they were informed that he had been transferred to the Lindela repatriation center (more on Lindela below), although the center denied ever having received him. Only after weeks of investigation (hampered by bureaucratic suppression) was the family able to locate the body and have it disinterred and returned to Zimbabwe for burial (la Grange 2005). Such extreme incidents are uncommon but nonetheless indicative of endemic patterns. Harassing non-nationals not only helps police officers meet periodic arrest targets but also is a relatively easy and socially acceptable way for

them to supplement their income.[10] Indeed, migrants are particularly vulnerable targets for extortion. Denied access to almost all formal banking services, even poor immigrants tend to carry cash (see Jacobsen & Bailey 2004), and with their tenuous legal status, poor documentation, and widespread participation in street trade, they have come to be seen by some police officers as "mobile-ATMs" (Templeton & Maphumulo 2005). In the words of one Eritrean living in Johannesburg, "As foreign students we are not required to pay taxes to the government. But when we walk down these streets, we pay."

In September 2003, a joint operation launched by the City of Johannesburg and the Department of Home Affairs deployed helicopters and almost a thousand private security officers in a crime-prevention and urban-renewal initiative that was a thinly disguised effort to rid the city of unwanted foreigners. After sealing an apartment block, officials confiscated four illegal firearms—modest by Johannesburg standards—and arrested 198 illegal immigrants; the success of the effort was proudly reported by a senior city official at a public meeting called, ironically, to help combat social exclusion.[11] This was not the only effort to rid the city of foreigners. Soon after South Africa's first democratic election, Alexandra Township (north of the city center) organized a campaign entitled "Operation Buyelekhaya" (Operation Go Back Home), which was an effort to rid the township of all foreigners (Palmary et al. 2003:112). South Africa's attempt to prevent alien transplantation has reached its extreme in the country's extensive and expensive deportation mechanisms. Those arrested for immigration offenses—at least those unable to buy their way out of police custody—are typically remanded to Lindela Repatriation Centre, a privately managed facility on Johannesburg's outskirts that serves as the focal point for the detention and deportation of undocumented and illegal immigrants from throughout the country. Reports of sexual abuse, violence, and bribery within Lindela are common, and there is evidence that its operators extend inmates' stay in order to maximize the daily payments they receive from the government for every person they accommodate (Ramjathan-Keogh 2004). In her ruling in *The Centre for Child Law v. The Minister of Home Affairs* (September 15, 2004), Judge Annemarie de Vos charged the private security company that runs the facility with turning the Constitution's lofty ideals into "hypocritical nonsense" through their treatment of minors (Landau et al. 2004). Reportedly detainees must even pay bribes to be deported—an absurb Kafkaesque detail that is only one of many.[12] According to recent accusations, detainees pay officials to poison them so that they may be transferred to a hospital from which they can more easily escape (person communication, August 18, 2005). There are suspicions that two Zimbabweans recently died attempting to use this route.

The deportation regime's evident ineffectiveness only highlights the power of the territorial fetish used to justify it. Most of those scheduled for

deportation—including some with the legal right to remain in the country and the occasional South African—are loaded onto trains making weekly trips from Johannesburg to the Zimbabwean and Mozambican borders. Those claiming more distant origins are repatriated, albeit less frequently, by airplane. Despite the expense and the fact that many of the deportations take place without following mandatory procedures, they show no sign of abating: in 1988, 44,225 people were deported; by 1993 that number had more than doubled (Maharaj 2004). The Department of Home Affairs' Annual Report for 2003 indicates that 151,653 noncitizens were "removed" during 2002. In the first nine months of 2003, 41,207 Zimbabweans alone were repatriated (17,000 were deported in all of 2001) (Innocenti 2004). As Martin Thomas observes in another context, the basic principle of civilized law seems to have seen a dramatic reversal, such that "proof of a criminal charge is a redundant complication—at least as far as foreign refugees are concerned" (in Baumann 2002:112; see also Arendt 1958: 283–84). Especially because many of those groups living in neighboring countries (including the Zimbabwean Ndebeles and the Mozambican Shangaans) were initially displaced from South African territory, such attempts to harden colonial borders, and thus to claim and protect the national soil, represent a particularly vicious wielding of coercive power.

Certainly administrative incapacity, ignorance, and avarice augment the kind of nativism described above. Even so, the palpable fear of foreigners suggests a deep, existential apprehension over the meaning of belonging. Such uncertainty is unsurprising, given South Africa's astonishing transitions and challenges: high levels of ethnic heterogeneity, the shift from authoritarian rule, the scourge of HIV/AIDS, and the collapse of both protected industries and the promise of full employment. As Gotz and Simone note, the hollowing out of old identities—some ascribed, some self-assumed—have resulted in reassertions of "a sense of connection in more defensive and particularized place-bound affiliations" (2003:123). The coincidence of foreigners' heightened visibility, citizens' economic and physical insecurity, and the pressing need to find commonality within Johannesburg's intensely diverse population has made popularly defined rights to the city's jobs, houses, and even its buses contingent on demonstrating one's indigeneity. Whether such distinctions are premised on physical appearance, language, or other markers, individuals bear the burden of revealing their native roots. South Africans whose skin is too dark or who cannot speak a "local" language may find themselves lumped together with the undifferentiated, foreign "Other." That some citizens have been arrested and deported illustrates the concrete dangers of such associations (see Mahamba 2005). While ethnic (and class) tensions persist, the fundamental point of distinction in the inner city is tied almost exclusively to nationality and, more than that, to indigeneity. In this sense, by linking their identities to a larger nationalist project, South Africans are able to fashion a collective, native identity that overcomes the dislocations that

produced their own allochthony. Recognizing that everyone is a stranger, they have developed an idiom that protects their claim on the city by making residence exclusively a native right. The assertion of such a modernist (if exclusivist) nationalism contrasts with the ephemeral, despatialized affiliations of those whom South Africans so fervently uproot and exclude.

Marginality and the State of Permanent Transit

It is worth emphasizing two distinctive characteristics of the South African nativist idiom. The first is its nationalism, the effort to transcend difference in a city of strangers. Whereas assertions of autochthony draw divisions elsewhere between peoples of different subnational or ethnic origins, the South African citizenry is largely unified in their dislike of an aggregated, reified, and recently arrived foreign population. Indeed, Johannesburg's nativism expresses a collective amnesia to both longstanding ethnic tensions and longstanding relations with other people throughout the region. While the Comaroffs' metaphor presents an image of South Africans as an indigenous species long adapted to its climate, current nativism stems from a relatively novel collective loyalty.

The second distinguishing trait relates to the nature of the "foreigners" themselves. The Comaroffs' plant metaphor is useful for understanding situations in which "foreigners" attempt to make permanent claims to a territory by assimilating into a country or a community's economic, cultural, and political affairs. Such analogies are largely apposite in describing Tutsis in Rwanda, the Congolese Banyamulenge, the Burkinabe in northern Côte d'Ivoire, and even Indians in Amin's Uganda. Amidst inner-city Johannesburg's high-speed transience, however, the metaphor has limitations. For many, Johannesburg is a site of trade and transit, of not belonging (see Glick-Schiller 1999). Rather than claiming ownership, many foreigners are chasing usufruct rights. Instead of integrating or assimilating (i.e., transplanting), they are rapidly forging a counteridiom that, to borrow from Said, fetishizes their position as the permanent outsider or wanderer "distanced... from all connections and commitments" (Said 2001:183; see also Malauene 2003; Simone 2001).

This idiom of transience is manifest even among non-nationals who have lived in Johannesburg for many years and have little practical prospect of returning home or moving elsewhere. During their time in the city, they may actively participate in local economic exchange, but they retain strong connections and loyalties to their countries of origin. In the Wits-Tufts survey, for example, more than half of the non-nationals reported communication with kin or family members in their country of origin within the previous month, and another 18 percent reported communication within the previous three months. Chamba (2004) speaks of one evidently well-resourced Cameroonian who traveled "home" three

times in a single year, first to commemorate the death of his grandfather, then for his village's annual celebration, and finally to celebrate Christmas with the family he had left behind. Many make similar pilgrimages to carry money, goods, or news to family and friends outside the country. For people living outside their communities of origin, these "homes" remain a critical, if not the primary, point of loyalty and reference. As Benedikt notes, these appear to be nomads "who are always in touch" (in Bauman 2000:78).

The aliens' orientation to spaces beyond South Africa's borders appears even among those who cannot visit or communicate directly with their communities of origin. About 60 percent of foreign respondents in the Wits-Tufts survey said they follow South African political affairs regularly or from time to time (interestingly, only 46% of South Africans responded this way), but almost three-quarters (72%) are at least passively engaged with affairs in their respective countries of origin; and 90 percent of those surveyed referred to their countries of birth as their homeland. Perhaps more surprisingly, 72 percent said they were proud to be citizens of those countries despite having left to escape persecution, conflict, or economic despair. They are, de facto, incorporated into local processes, but they remain unable or unwilling to accept substantive membership in South African society: that is, to transplant themselves (see Soysal 1996).[13] Indeed, more than three-quarters (76%) felt it important for migrants to retain their distinct identities and loyalties while staying in South Africa. Throughout the country, the Congolese, for example, make conscious efforts to avoid close personal relationships with South Africans (and, for that matter, with each other) (Mang'ana 2004; Amisi & Ballard 2005). Araia's (2005) study of Johannesburg also found this sentiment among Eritrean businessmen who own property and otherwise appear integrated. As one respondent noted, "South Africa is not the place for Eritreans. Look at it, there are none of them who live here permanently" (2005:34). Broader research reveals a generalized tendency to see Johannesburg as a site of temporary residence. Despite the expense and dangers that they suffered in order to relocate, only 40 percent of the non–South Africans in the Wits-Tufts survey predicted that they would even be in the country after two years.

While links to a homeland—real or imagined—undermine the metaphor of transplantation, we must not assume that migrants are simply using Johannesburg in preparation for return. Rather, a persistent orientation to yet unknown sites outside both South Africa and countries of origin reflects a more fundamental deterritorialization among migrant communities. When asked about future plans, only 20 percent of respondents thought they were likely to return to their countries or communities of origin, while 25 percent were planning onward journeys. Similarly, when questioned about where they hoped to raise their children, just over a quarter (26.8%) identified South Africa, while the rest were almost evenly divided

between the respondent's country of origin (30.3%) or a third country (32.1%). Critically, journeys home or onward often remain impossible for reasons of money, safety, or social status. This leaves almost two-thirds of Johannesburg's non-national population marooned in the city, but not wishing to take root within it. Johannesburg's non-nationals are not "an uprooted people who leave behind home and country to transplant themselves in a new terrain" (Glick-Schiller & Fouron 2001:3). They are rather an uprooted people determined to avoid establishing sustained connections with the new terrain.

This kind of permanent dislocation generates its own deficit of belonging. Given the inability or unwillingness of the non-national population to leave, this condition cannot be remedied through integration into the host community or other migrant communities. Instead, the sustained interactions between migrants and citizens have given rise to an idiom of transience and superiority that defines the migrants as much by what they are (migrants) as by what they are not (South Africans). The words of one Lesotho citizen and four-year Johannesburg resident reveal many dimensions of this discourse of nonbelonging:

> "I don't think any right thinking person would want to be South African. You can't raise kids in South Africa; it's a very unhealthy environment. South Africans are very aggressive, even the way they talk. Both black and white. Secondly, there is no sense of tradition and personhood. It's a lost generation. I don't know what's the word, it's a degenerated façade they are putting up, and you don't want your kids growing up thinking that is life. They are just so contaminated."

In a final condemnation of South African inferiority, she concluded that the only way she would live in South Africa "would be that I pack all South Africans into a loony bin." A Kenyan woman expressed a similar sense of living among a damaged population:

> "The responsibility for this insanity lies with Nelson Mandela, as revered as he is all over planet earth. When he was preaching peace and reconciliation, he should also have been handing out coupons for at least five years of therapy to each and every South African. South Africans have 'forgiven' and 'reconciled,' yet they have no legitimate place to take their anger, so they happily direct it to those they perceive as less than them."

A Mozambican man, also in Johannesburg for four years, similarly reflected the dual sentiments of self-exclusion and superiority:

> "There is no way that I could ever really belong here. I'm very patriotic to my country; wherever I go I always say I want to go back home; I don't even think of staying. When I was 15 or 16, I was supposed to go to East Ger-

many... but I didn't want to go to a white man's country. South Africa is not a white man's country, but there is still an attitude left over from apartheid [that causes] some resentment towards South Africans, and that's not going to dissipate in the near future."

Although migrants are careful to avoid offending their South Africa hosts lest they heighten existing xenophobia, almost all express deep suspicions of South Africans' inherent character. Ironically, foreigners often accuse South Africans of the same offenses that usually are ascribed to the non-natives themselves (dishonesty, violence, and the spreading of disease) along with a host of other deficits: ignorance and disregard for education, promiscuity (particularly female promiscuity), moral decadence (especially regarding tolerance of homosexuality), and indifference to religion. The words of a Burundian refugee who has lived in Johannesburg for three years are both comic and revealing of these sentiments:

> Compared to our country, South Africa is too liberal. For example, if the police find you hitting someone, or breaking into someone's house, they are going to read you your rights, and you'll speak to your lawyer, and you'll take years to be tried. So there is no punishment, it's not efficient. At home, even the police can beat you up. It's too liberal, maybe for a people who are not ready yet.... We also don't have this issue of boy- and girl-friend. It's not allowed. It's not like I'll take my girlfriend home and spend the weekend together and my parents will bring me tea in bed. Here having an affair, even if you are married, is not a problem. It's not allowed in our society.... It's also surprising to see someone who has finished secondary school in South Africa who says that if you speak French, you must come from near Paris. In terms of general knowledge, we think that South Africans are ignorant. (Personal communication, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, July 15, 2005)

This counteridiom of transience and superiority is widespread, although it does not represent the formation of a consolidated, subjectively accepted exile/migrant category. Mang'ana (2004) and Misago (2005) both report that even people from the same country carefully avoid close association with other "exiles." Although there are instances in which migrant groups assert forms of collective (usually national or ethnic) identity, these are typically short lived (see Amisi & Ballard 2005; Gotz & Simone 2003:125). These associations do not articulate a unified identity to South Africans or other migrants, but rather use combinations of national, ethnic, and political affiliations for strategic ends while carefully avoiding standing obligations or relations that might facilitate (or demand) permanent settlement. Central to migrants' status in Johannesburg is the tendency to escape all territorial limitations of nationality, and this position is what distinguishes them from the "modern," nation-building South Africans among whom they live. As South Africans forge a national identity

to overcome their own dislocations and allochthony, those displaced by war and economic deprivation—or the inability to achieve social status at "home"—have shaped their own idiom. Through their words and actions, they justify their presence in Johannesburg as victims of circumstance while positioning themselves above a society that does not welcome them and that they fervently deny wanting to join.

Conclusion

The Comaroffs accurately note the parallel obsessions of ridding South African territory of alien plants and people. If nothing else, this article questions the extent to which this organic metaphor should frame our discussions of allochthony and autochthony in environments characterized by fluidity and transit. While investigating the sources of autochthonous idioms, we must avoid assuming that these articulations are solely responsible for a group's becoming allochthonous. In an era in which transnational links can provide both status and material rewards, self-exclusion and a lack of interest in transplantation may themselves become resources to be treasured and protected.

   Through their economic activities, political involvement, and continued orientation to sites beyond South Africa's borders, Johannesburg's aliens have created a space in which they live semipermanently in Johannesburg, in a subjective space somewhere between "home" and the site of an undefined future. In doing so, parts of Johannesburg have become *nowherevilles*: extraterritorial spaces that are "in" but not "of" South Africa (see Baumann 2002:111). At the same time, as migrants denationalize these sites, citizens are vigorously asserting their membership in a South African nation and claiming previously prohibited parts of the city as their exclusive patrimony. As such, efforts to rid the city (and South Africa at large) of non-national allochthons can be seen as an articulation of a modern nationalism, yet one that has developed partially to disguise South Africans' own fragmentary histories and allochthony. Through the exclusivist idiom of citizenship, Johannesburg has become a critical node in the development of a postapartheid South African unity. In this context, the aliens' transnationalism (or non-nationalism) is both a threat to the "national order of things" (see Malkki 1992) and also, paradoxically, a key component in the building of a new nationalist order.

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Notes

1. The survey was conducted in Berea, Bertrams, Bezuidenhout Valley, Fordsburg, Mayfair, Rosettenville, and Yeoville. Fourteen percent of the total sample were from the Democratic Republic of Congo; 12 percent from Angola; 9 percent from Ethiopia; 8 percent from Somalia; 2 percent from the Republic of Congo; and 1 percent from Burundi. For additional details on the survey and the methods employed, see Jacobsen and Landau (2003).

2. According to the Gauteng Economic Development Agency, Gauteng generates 10 percent of the African continent's gross domestic product (GDP) and one-third of South Africa's GDP (www.geda.co.za). In a press conference held on April 2, 2001, the Johannesburg city manager, Pascal Moloi, reiterated pledges made in the Joburg 2010 policy agenda: "Determination is absolutely critical if Johannesburg wants to be a world class African city by 2010" (cited in Hamnca 2001). See also Kihato (2003).

3. In 2003, the South African Department of health estimated that almost 30 percent of Gauteng (Johannesburg's provincial home) residents were HIV positive (www.avert.org/safricastats.htm). See Legget (2003) and Palmary et al. (2003) for more on crime in Johannesburg.
4. Having recognized the flaws in their own data, Statistics South Africa (the country's census agency) is currently working on a monograph in which they are attempting to outline a more accurate estimate of the number of international and domestic migrants in the country.
5. In the Wits-Tufts study, fewer than 5 percent of South African respondents thought it would be positive if most whites left South Africa. Three-quarters (74.8%) thought it would be bad or very bad if they left.
6. For example, the head of Johannesburg's Street Traders Association recently outlined the acute dangers foreigners pose to citizens' lives and livelihoods ("The Big Question," July 17, 2005, on SABC 2).
7. Full text of the speech is available through the Southern African Migration Project website at www.queensu.ca/samp/sampresources/migrationdocuments/speeches/mgb/200697.htm.
8. Article 27 (g) of the Refugees Act 130 of 1998 states that: "Refugees as well as *refugee children are entitled to the same basic health services and basic pri-mary education* which the inhabitants of the republic receive from time to time." See Stone and Winterstein 2003.
9. Section 27 (g) of the Refugees Act 130 of 1998 (see also s 27 [b]).
10. Private communication (May 7, 2004).
11. The statement was made by Yakoob Makda, director of Johannesburg's Region Eight (i.e., the inner city) during a poverty alleviation work workshop organized by the Joburg Development Agency (JDA): "Poverty and Exclusion in the Inner City," Johannesburg, May 14, 2003. It is worth noting that these efforts are not limited to Johannesburg. In 2002 Du Noon Township outside Cape Town also passed a resolution expelling all foreigners and prohibiting them from returning (see Southwell 2002).
12. "When people want to go home, they don't let you be deported until you pay them money. Home Affairs wants you to pay 100 to 400 Rands, whatever you've got. Otherwise, you just stay here [in detention]. They let people go without ID, just give them some money." Quoted by Human Rights Watch (1998:59).
13. See also Kronenfeld's (2003) work on Russophones in the former Soviet republics in which he emphasizes the need to disaggregate social and identitive forms of integration.