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At Home in Johannesburg? Rethinking Cosmopolitanism through *TJ/Double Negative*, the Joint Project between David Goldblatt and Ivan Vladislavić

James Graham

Abstract: This article examines the cosmopolitan character of *TJ/ Double Negative* (2010) and argues that the prize-winning photography book, co-produced by the South African photographer David Goldblatt and writer and editor Ivan Vladislavić, is both a symptomatic expression of uneven development and a self-conscious interrogation of that unevenness. The book comprises two parts: Goldblatt's iconic photographic series, *TJ: Johannesburg Photographs 1948–2010*, and Vladislavić's novel *Double Negative*, a metafiction that refracts the story of modern Johannesburg along with Goldblatt's career and the concomitant genre evolution of South African photojournalism from local "documentary" to world-renowned "art," as *TJ* reconstructs it. This experiment in interdiscursivity is significant not simply for being the first of its kind—"a unique event in publishing" ("TJ & Double Negative"), as the publisher, Contrasto, declares in its marketing blurb—but also because through this collaborative yet multi-modal venture a new mode of critical cosmopolitanism in world-literature might emerge.

Keywords: Ivan Vladislavić, David Goldblatt, cosmopolitanism, photography and literature, publishing

What does it mean to feel at home in a city as unevenly developed as Johannesburg? What might one have to avoid or repress—or indeed what might one have long repressed—in order to "inhabit" cosmopolitanism as a structure of feeling (Lazarus 133) in a space often described as Africa's most advanced global city, which is nonetheless haunted by a legacy of almost unparalleled social and geographical inequality? These questions are the central concerns of *TJ/Double Negative*, a joint project by two South Africans, the world-renowned photographer David Goldblatt and the rising star of world literature Ivan Vladislavić,[1] published by the Italian art publishing imprint Contrasto in 2010. The photographs in *TJ* are selected from an exhibition of Goldblatt's lifelong project to document the people and places of Johannesburg and are accompanied by his signature captions. These vignettes contextualize and humanize the often opaque "straight" images captured in the photographer's urban peregrinations; they provoke critical self-awareness in the viewer (Bester 158). Vladislavić's invited response to the Johannesburg photographs in turn supplements Goldblatt's photo series and takes the form of a novel, *Double Negative*. Through the narrative reflections of its central protagonist, the photographer Neville Lister, *Double Negative* refracts not only the story of modern Johannesburg but also of Goldblatt's career and of the concomitant genre evolution of South African photojournalism from local "documentary" to world-renowned "art," as *TJ* reconstructs it.

In this article I argue that the experimentation of this book—what I choose to describe, following David Atwell's work on "situational metafiction" (20) in the postcolonial South African context, as its interdiscursivity—amplifies a highly localized and politically charged worldliness that is a common feature in the work of both individual authors. The unavoidable social and geographic facts of Johannesburg's uneven development since the 1950s emerge throughout Goldblatt's reportage; likewise what has been described as the "rise of the surface" by Sarah Nuttall in South African cultural production in the era of neoliberal globalization is thematized in Vladislavić's fiction (de Kock).[2] But the book is more than the sum of these parts. A self-conscious awareness of its cosmopolitan character in the context of what Pierre Bourdieu would describe as a "field of restricted production" (320) saturates each part of the book. We can see this from the positioning of the opening photograph in *TJ* in which a 1950s portrait photographer turns his seemingly primitive apparatus back toward the reader (see fig. 1), obliquely returning and unsettling his or her scopic gaze, to Neville Lister's musings in *Double Negative* on the role played by photography in not only shaping but distorting memory in the post-apartheid nation. But more so than the modernist narrative strategies that Rebecca Walkowitz traces in the work of canonical British writers such as Conrad, Joyce, Woolf, Rushdie, Ishuguro, and Sebald, the self-conscious criticism of cosmopolitanism in *TJ/Double Negative* is by design. The art of the book is orchestrated through very deliberate interdiscursive and paratextual strategies (such as the unboxing experience dictated by the book's packaging, mimicking the emotional hooks of retail brand design) that require the reader to reflect on the text's status as a material object—in fact a highly fetishizable commodity—that circulates in a rarefied strata of a globalized economy and mediates a structure of feeling that might, somewhat ironically, be described as *critically* cosmopolitan.

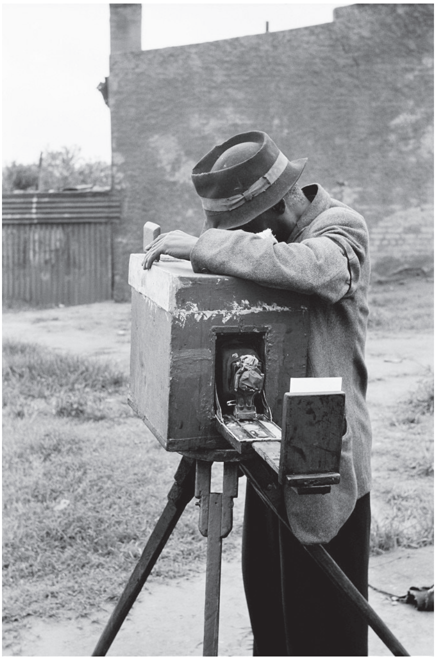


Fig. 1. "Portrait photographer, Braamfontein 1955," Goldblatt, *TJ* 16.

The cosmopolitan character of world-literature is shot through with contradiction.[3] It appears in the symptoms of a normative socio-economic logic on the one hand—globally circulated commodities and commodity-signs that efface the material conditions of their production—while promising or projecting a convivial subject position, what Cesar Dominguez in his overview of the debates around world literature and cosmopolitan studies terms "planetary humanism"[4] (Dominguez 248), which might escape this logic, on the other. For those writers and artists who are ethically invested in the relationship between their work and the fractured or uneven social reality it addresses but who also, eventually or possibly necessarily, produce this work for markets beyond this context, the contradiction presents a profound quandary. As Robert Spencer puts it, "[a]ssuming that some form of political and institutional cosmopolitanism is both necessary and feasible, how are cosmopolitan sentiments to be engendered? How, in other words, are we to move from the uncosmopolitan present to a cosmopolitan future?" (37).

The question of how a globalizing culture might move from an uncosmopolitan present to a cosmopolitan future is central to the work of both Goldblatt and Vladislavić. In their joint project, the vexed status of cosmopolitanism under conditions of capitalist globalization is distilled into a single, overriding concern: what does it mean, what does it take, to feel at home in a city as diverse but also as unevenly developed as Johannesburg? This is the question—or rather the challenge—we are presented with from the moment we encounter the book's front cover (see fig. 2).

The cover photograph shows two black figures on a street, standing with their backs to a wall and staring mutely at the camera. They hold a detached car fender with a "TJ" prefixed number plate—the code for the Johannesburg area prior to its reinvention as Gauteng province in 1994—with just enough care to suggest that it has some kind of value for them; in turn, this gesture might hold some kind of larger significance. They present the fender as if it were a totem, articulating a sense of place, yet not in a way that necessarily enables a sympathetic identification in the reader. It seems to represent something they wish to lay claim to, or perhaps it holds some claim over them. We are caught in a disconcertingly direct yet impassive gaze. There is something defensive about the stance of the two figures—shoulders held high, backs to the wall—that is in turn amplified by the connotations of the fender. The number plate, affixed to the fender and held in the centre of the frame, hovering above the title box, communicates belonging whilst simultaneously establishing a boundary. It is a code that clearly means something important to the figures, at home in their world, yet it lacks significance for anyone unfamiliar with the specific geographic and historic denotation of the area code. What does it mean to communicate a sense of place in such a challenging way, and why do Goldblatt and Vladislavić make this cryptic totem (and also this particular photograph, which reappears with explanatory caption in the front matter of *TJ*) so central to the experience of reading the book?

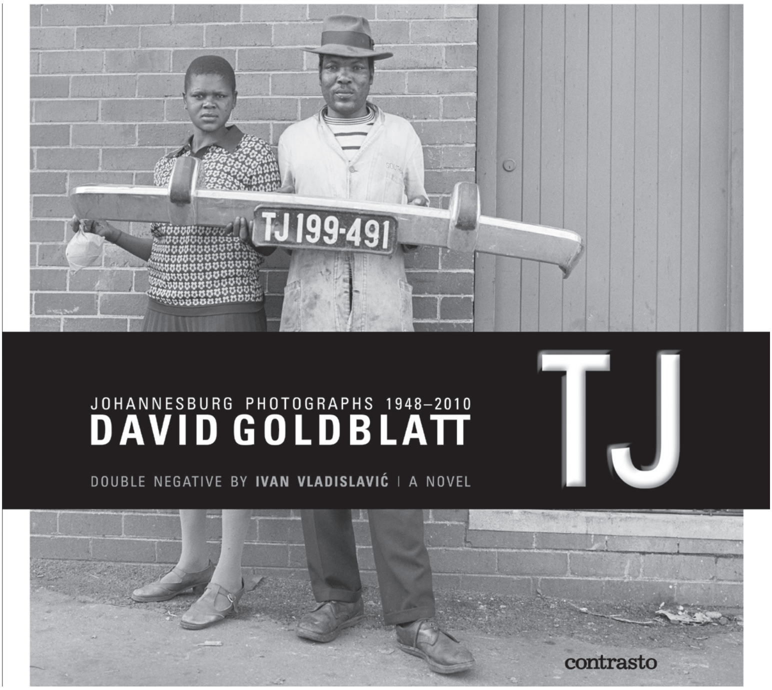

TJ 199-491
JOHANNESBURG PHOTOGRAPHS 1948–2010
DAVID GOLDBLATT
DOUBLE NEGATIVE BY IVAN VLADISLAVIĆ | A NOVEL
TJ
contrasto

Fig. 2. Cover page of *TJ/Double Negative*, Goldblatt and Vladislavić.

I. Interdiscursivity and Estrangement

In his introduction to *TJ: Johannesburg Photographs 1948–2010* (the full title of this part of the composite book, as it is paratextually announced), Goldblatt explains the origin of his title in a way that provides an interpretive frame not only for his own photographic material but also for its relationship to the book's other part, Vladislavić's novel *Double Negative*:

> Johannesburg is a fragmented city. It is not a place of smoothly integrated parts. And it has a name that does not roll easily off the tongue. Unsurprisingly, the people of its fragments, which are severely divided by class, culture and, particularly, race, have their own names, elisions, diminutives and linguistic transliterations for the place. Some of these names are carried into this book. The 'main name' is TJ, but you are unlikely to hear it on the street or see it in any listing. It comes from our old motorcar licensing system. (Goldblatt, *TJ/Double Negative*)

TJ/Double Negative documents the modern history of Johannesburg, sub-Saharan Africa's most global city with respect to international flows of commodities, ideas, and people. But it is also a city of extremes, dominated, as Goldblatt tells us in his introduction, by an "almost irreversibly fractured geography resulting from a century of racist administration." As such *TJ/Double Negative* is deeply concerned with the relationship between language and place, and in particular with the processes and politics of how such a fractured social experience is first "transliterated" and then "carried into" the world of the book—from the transformation of official discourses through everyday speech and practice to the incorporation of this interdiscursive world through the photographic, literary, and paratextual forms that make up the book. As Stefan Helgesson stresses in his reading of the book,

> it is *through* form, not despite it, that they [Goldblatt and Vladislavić] make distinct historical, social, and material aspects of Johannesburg apparent. Their collaboration could, therefore, be described as a double, triple, or even quadruple exposure of the visual and the verbal *within* the photographs,

> *within* the novel, *between* photos and captions, and *between* the paratext and main text. (54; emphasis in original)

The critical premise of such experimental interdiscursivity is encapsulated by the title of what the front matter describes as the "fictional" part of the book, *Double Negative*. Freighted with linguistic, philosophical, and photographic connotations, perhaps the first image called to mind when one thinks of a double negative is the distorted double exposure that hallmarks analogue-era photography. This image—typically the most memorable yet unloved in the family albums of this time—provides an apt metaphor for addressing the different ways in which both photography and fiction, as representational media, simultaneously capture and overwrite memory. The double exposure connotation is extended through the key narrative device that Vladislavić deploys in his response to Goldblatt's photography: ekphrasis. The novel is narrated in the first person by Neville Lister, a commercial-turned-art photographer on the verge of national and international consecration in his field, and is structured around a series of descriptions of photographs and other artworks that have played a significant role in his own development as a photographer. His ekphrastic narrative superimposes additional layers of meaning and inference onto those representations (i.e., the double or multiple exposure of the photographic negatives) and in doing so provides an oblique but powerful engagement with realism as a highly politicized representational idiom in South African cultural history.[5]

In an example of the kind of interdiscursive ekphrasis that for Helgesson typifies the book's experimental aesthetic, Lister describes how his first encounter, when he was a young man, with Saul Auerbach's work titled *Accidental Portraits* defamiliarized his everyday world: "To be honest, it was disturbing to see my own world presented so coldly. For the first time, the houses I lived in, the people I passed in the street were at the right distance to be grasped fully. They looked so solid, they were so *there*, I felt I knew them all" (Vladislavić, *Double Negative* 151; emphasis in original). This passage comes from Lister's interview with a young web journalist in the final section of the book, "Small Talk"—the post-apartheid moment of the narrative telling, which I examine in more detail in the conclusion—when he is on the cusp of being recognized as an art photographer in his own right. Lister's interviewer is keen to draw out the influence of Auerbach in his work, but at this stage in his career, a heightened, postmodern self-consciousness has taken hold and Lister is quick to question the assumption of a straightforward connection between the photographs, memory, and historical fact:

> "But I'm speculating. I might be making it up. I *must* be making some of it up, because I can only imagine what I saw the first time I looked at an Auerbach. They've been stored in the darkroom of my memory for too long, reproduced a hundred times for a hundred different reasons, packed away again under the tissue papers of living, and I'm not sure at all what they revealed to my younger self." (152; emphasis in original)

Yet despite dismissing the influence of Auerbach's work, the uncanny, discomforting feelings Lister remembers from his encounter with the work in his youth are in turn transmitted to the reader when he goes on to recall his participation, during his apprenticeship, in one of Auerbach's most iconic photographs from the apartheid era. In the first section of the novel Lister recalls how, having dropped out of university, his father arranged for him to work with the documentary photographer, who at that point in the 1980s was a respected photojournalist but not yet a star on the global art scene. On Lister's first day they pick up a journalist called Gerry Brookes and drive from the Central Business District of Johannesburg out to the suburbs in search of a subject. "'I'm like you,' Auerbach tells Brookes, 'I wait for something to catch my eye'" (41). The photograph Auerbach eventually takes is a portrait of a woman in her home in Bez Valley, significant as much for the arbitrariness of how he selected the subject as for the story contained within the photograph itself—the same story that we are told in full in the book's opening section, "Available Light."

This story constitutes a kind of ur-image/text. Retold by Lister in different configurations and contexts, Lister's memory of the day the photograph was taken, along with his participation in it, haunts its narrative reconstruction. In the middle section of the book, "Dead Letters," Lister describes his return to the location of the original photograph to take a portrait of a person living in the adjacent house to the one where Auerbach took his portrait—the house that was *not* chosen by Auerbach on that first occasion. He recollects a series of events that becomes increasingly fabulous in the telling, culminating in a magical scene where the woman Lister wants to photograph from the neighbouring house opens a sheaf of unsent ("dead") letters that had been saved by her husband, and their correspondents set free ("she unfolded a small girl into a shady corner of the garden" [131]). The segue from a seemingly realist first person narrative to a magical or marvellous crescendo at the end of the section seems to follow a logic internal to the situation Lister describes. What Michael Niblett might describe as an "eruption" (23) of irrealism[6] into the text issues naturally from Lister's attempt to subject his memory of the original event (the house that was *not* chosen by Auerbach, the story that was *not* preserved in the iconic form of Auerbach's photography) to multiple exposures through his own photographic enterprise as well as its subsequent narrativization.

When considered as a single book, *TJ/Double Negative* transmits the affective estrangement Lister remarks on and the irreal quality of his ekphrastic narrative to the reader in the act of reading. As Vladislavić put it in an interview with Goldblatt and Bronwyn Law-Viljoen to promote the book, "[i]f you've bought the package, you can't read the novel without certain descriptions in it triggering memories of the photographs you've seen. . . . What I wanted was to create a field of references to the photographs, to images produced by David or by other photographers, and in so doing create in the reader a certain discomfort" (Amanda). The "certain discomfort" afforded by *Double Negative*'s uncanny interdiscursive relationship with *TJ* is integral to what I am arguing is the book's critical cosmopolitanism. It is important to note, however, that the novel does not insist on or even institute a critical space beyond or outside of its "negative" (*TJ* specifically but Goldblatt's métier more generally) in order to articulate this. Rather, this affective strategy relies on the creation of the interdiscursive relationship between the separate parts of the book—its visual and fictional parts. In the interview with Law-Viljoen, Goldblatt states that

> [t]here is no doubt in my mind that literature—sometimes a piece of non-fiction, perhaps a sentence I've read somewhere, perhaps a whole book—continuously rubs off on the way I am working and what I am seeing. . . . I see my photographs as paragraphs of writing. They need to be as carefully considered, word for word, constructed and then finally put together as a good piece of writing. (Amanda)

These comments return us to the choice of the cipher "TJ" and of the corresponding photograph that introduces and, in a sense, frames the complete book. As Jan Steyn remarks,

> [t]he book's name thus resurrects one of the now-erased signs of the old divisions and dispensation. The cruelty of photographs is that they do not change over time. Their meanings may change, and we may choose which to display and which to keep in the drawer, or to discard completely. Nevertheless, barring physical destruction or decay, individual photographs retain their imprints better than memory: they do not change focus, reframe their object, or alter its details.

In its resurrection of the discursive structures of apartheid culture, *TJ* explores and exposes the structures' (often suppressed) legacy in contemporary life.[7] But as Steyn points out, the "cruelty of photography" is that the very testimonial qualities that enable historical knowledge and might inform ethical action also threaten to trap the reader in what Goldblatt in his introduction to *TJ* calls the "almost irreversibly fractured geography" (10–11) of the moment. How a cosmopolitan future might emerge from this particular discursive form is thus fraught with difficulty.

Njabulo Ndebele examined the same dilemma, albeit in relation to the other discursive form under discussion, novel writing, in his essay "Guilt and Atonement: Unmasking History for the Future": "At this time when the spirit of reconciliation is supposed to bring South Africans together, South Africans don't know one another as a people. Can we as a nation write the novel of the future under these conditions?

If so, what are the preconditions for such novels to be written? What does it take for us to know one another? What *will* it take?" (151, emphasis in original). What *will* it take? How can texts that address past iniquities but also facilitate a discomfiting awareness of their continuity in the present moment foster new forms of understanding? In an essay that accompanies Goldblatt's first career retrospective exhibition and book, *Fifty-One Years: David Goldblatt*, Okwui Enwezor argues that this body of work is suffused with "the immanence and imminence of conflict in much of what passes for the everyday in South Africa" (27). For Enwezor, Goldblatt's response to the dilemma facing photography is thus already in the (double) negative form of his published works: photographic series, complete with contextualizing or counterpointing text, that deliberately provide no means of escape from the discomfort that comes from a newfound consciousness of history and its immanent conflict. By distancing himself from this uncompromising project (whether the reader takes this to refer to Auerbach's work or that of Goldblatt), Neville Lister is eventually able to take some comfort from adopting a cool, postmodern attitude that reconciles him to a life lived on—or rather *with*—the surface of things, as opposed to their unresolved or immanent conflicts. *TJ/Double Negative* affords no such innocent comfort to the reader, however. The interdiscursive traffic between the two parts of the book punctures the ideological surface of Lister's narrative by involving the reader in the writerly creation of meaning. The reader forms involuntary associations, and these associations cannot be suppressed or negated precisely because they are new.

TJ/Double Negative is by no means the first time Goldblatt has sought to amplify his photography by soliciting a literary counterpoint for inclusion with his work in its published format. Vladislavić is the latest in a long line of literary interlocuters, just as Goldblatt is one of the many visual artists with whom Vladislavić has worked.[8] However, some of the talks and interviews following the publication of *TJ/Double Negative* reveal that while Goldblatt gave Vladislavić an open brief with the *TJ* project and anticipated a significant creative response, he was nevertheless surprised that he took so long and eventually sent an entire novel that pastiches both him and his métier (Gilbert; van Niekerk; "The

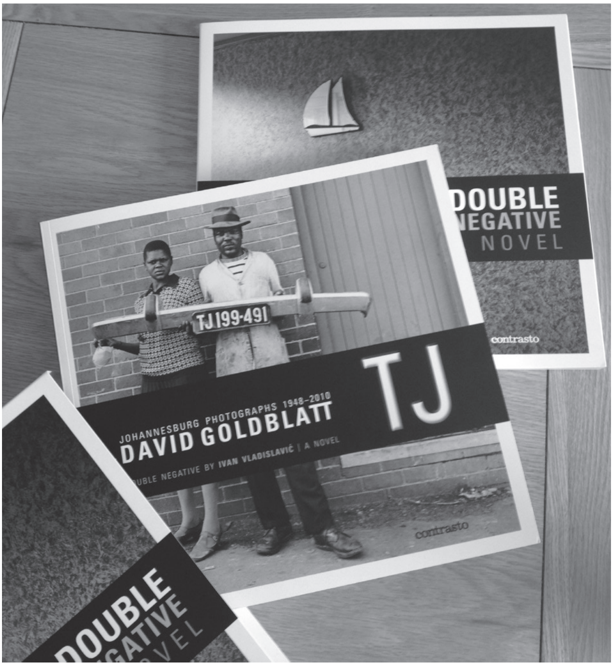
Restless Derby"). *Double Negative* might accurately be described as a "situational metafiction" (Atwell 20) in this regard: a novel composed of intertextual references and interdiscursive devices that playfully refract Goldblatt's life and work as well as the coterminous aesthetic and political debates during this period. Most notable is the perspective this metafiction provides on the trajectory of South African photography during this period, shifting from a local tradition of hard-hitting reportage that developed between the 1950s and 1980s to photography's emergence and eventual consecration internationally as "art" in the post-apartheid era (Law-Viljoen, "South Africans," 81). In this respect both parts of the book cover the same, uneven territory: their narratives reproduce Johannesburg's social and geographic development from the apartheid era to the present day, echoing through their internal organization as well as their proximate "apartness" the fragmentation that Goldblatt writes of in the introduction to *TJ*. Although each part of the book works in a different and seemingly diametrically opposed register—crudely, with *TJ*'s realism and *Double Negative*'s postmodernism—they both self-consciously seek to undermine such generic conventions. Both parts of the book cultivate an effect of estrangement, which, as discussed, is amplified through the form of the interdiscursive "whole." Such formal and aesthetic experimentation is intrinsic to what I describe as the critically cosmopolitan character of the book. Presented to the reader as a "beautifully produced book-as-object" (Law-Viljoen, "Sailing a Smaller Ship" 434), *TJ/Double Negative* is a designed art-object to be *experienced*, indeed quite deliberately to be fetishized as such, as much as a book that might simply be *read*.

II. The Art of the Book

Hyperbolically described as a "unique event in publishing" in Contrasto's marketing, *TJ/Double Negative* was knowingly produced for a niche international audience ("The Restless Derby").[9] It was not, however, conceived as yet another weighty and worthy volume documenting Johannesburg's tragic/heroic struggle through and beyond the apartheid years. Rather it is an undeniably (and seemingly unashamedly) *sexy* book which was designed to offer a new way of approaching this familiar narrative and indeed of reading the city itself. A significant aspect of the book's formal experimentation in this regard concerns the way it self-consciously mediates the affective experience of reading. I have previously discussed how the interdiscursivity of each part of the book provokes what Vladislavić calls a "certain discomfort" in the reader, and I have argued that this is intended to facilitate a critical cosmopolitanism. The book's paratextual design produces similar effects. Any attempt to thumb through *TJ/Double Negative* is necessarily prefaced by what those working in the field of emotional design refer to as the "unboxing" experience (Walker).

Simply getting to either of the main texts that make up the book involves a level of visual and tactile engagement with the physical object that is significantly more involved than handling even the most lustrous or heavily embossed of traditional coffee table tomes. It is another world away again from accessing a digital file. The book is in fact a package, or rather, a series of packages. The two separate parts are contained in a tightly fitting slip-case, which, when removed, reveals two separate objects (see fig. 3): a black and white photobook of obviously high production value (though not bound in a coffee table-friendly hard cover) and another meticulously designed card box—a "dummy book" as Vladislavić has approvingly referred to it in an interview ("The Restless Derby")—that opens to reveal a nesting tray containing a compact paperback (see fig. 4). Simply getting to the interior of this object, to what in the front matter are described as its "visual and fictional elements," is an event in itself and all the more pleasurable for it.

The packaging of *TJ/Double Negative* has been designed to offer both tactile and scopic pleasures. The peep-hole in the dummy book (see fig. 5) seems to play on the idea that opening the book and its various components is tantamount to a bibliophilic strip-tease. For those familiar with Vladislavić's writing, editorial work, and collaborations with other writers and visual artists, the presentation of *TJ/Double Negative* as an art-object to be experienced as well as simply read will come as no surprise. Sally-Ann Murray argues that Vladislavić's entire literary *oeuvre* constitutes a form of "conceptual art" that reflexively explores the world of books:


DOUBLE
NEGATIVE
NOVEL
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TJ 199-491
TJ
JOHANNESBURG PHOTOGRAPHS 1948–2010
DAVID GOLDBLATT
UBLE NEGATIVE BY IVAN VLADISLAVIĆ | A NOVEL
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Fig. 3. Unboxing *TJ/Double Negative*: front cover (bottom), *TJ: Johannnsburg Photographs* in slip case (centre), "dummy book" containing *Double Negative* (top).

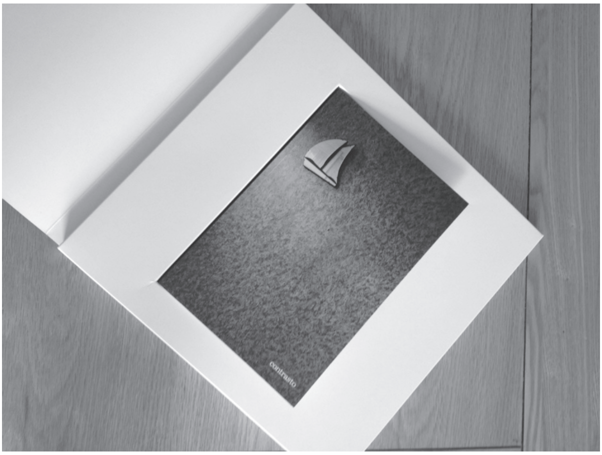

Fig. 4. *Double Negative* inside the "dummy book."

> Vladislavić's writing career has developed in relation to a mobile disciplinary affiliation, and . . . this has enabled his imagination to write across visual and verbal 'worlds'. And yet books, the product of the world of 'writings', continue to constitute the pre-eminent focus of his professional and creative attention. He makes a living in books, even lives to an extent inside books, although perhaps not by the book, and his interest in art is conveyed to his readers through the art of the book. (17)

Perhaps the best example of Vladislavić's interest in the "art of the book" is in his monograph on the artist Willem Boshoff. He argues that the viewer of Boshoff's art objects and installations

> is better understood as a reader. Boshoff is a writer. Not only is much of his sculpture and installation centrally concerned with language and books, but he has also written concrete poetry

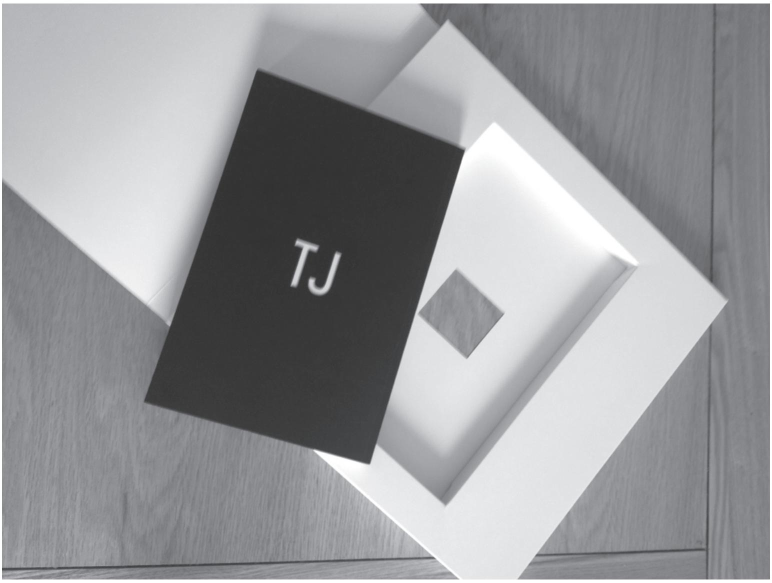

Fig. 5. The back cover of *Double Negative*, the "dummy book" recess with peep-hole (through which the "TJ" on the back cover of *Double Negative* can be seen).

> and dictionaries, and extended commentaries on his own work and processes. The borders between these writings are porous and their meanings seep through and run together. All of them might be regarded as passages in a discontinuous text. For three decades he has been researching, writing and annotating a long shelf of books. (Vladislavić, *Willem Boshoff* 6)

Conversely, one might justifiably argue that for three decades Vladislavić has been researching, creating, and curating a series of exhibitions, where readers as well as collaborating visual artists are all writerly participants in the performative art of his books (Graham 342). Despite having established an international reputation for working within a more confined, sober, and sometimes quite stark documentary idiom, an audience familiar with Goldblatt's work may have been only slightly more surprised to discover such an arch assemblage with the publication of *TJ/Double Negative*. The documentary label Goldblatt is typically associated with belies a similarly creative, but also a more forthrightly auteur-like interest in the production and reception of his work through "the art of the book."

In a discussion of the 1973 photo-book *Some Afrikaners Photographed*, Rory Bester argues that Goldblatt deliberately and precisely "orchestrates" (154) his photography through the medium of the book with the purpose of examining and unsettling the culture it addresses as opposed to that which it documents, an approach that is primarily artistic rather than ethnographic in conception. What *Some Afrikaners Photographed* "makes visible" is not so much a "hidden" reality that is disclosed within the images of rural and suburban Afrikaners (as well as their black servants) going about their daily lives. Rather, the book mediates the underlying conflicts and tensions that constitute the culture (Bester 153). Bester's argument is supported by the essay-responses from some of South Africa's leading critics and writers whom Goldblatt commissioned for the 2007 reissue, *Some Afrikaners Revisited*. Ivor Powell writes: "As I recall my own early encounters with it [*Some Afrikaners Revisited*]—in all-night endless-cup coffee shops—it was all but incandescent with tension and revelation, with a sense of souls held up to scrutiny, of skins being peeled away" (22). Antjie Krog further observes that

> Goldblatt destabilizes. He suggests porous definitions. Initially the black people in the photographs seem nothing more than per chance presences—they are there because the whites are there. But suddenly a family walks from a church. They are coloured. But by using the same spatial grouping, with the same expressions as the Afrikaner family some pages before, they tear the membrane of the definition. (33)

Despite poor reviews and a failure to sell out its modest initial print run (even when remaindered at one tenth the original price), the fact that *Some Afrikaners Photographed* was published in book form was vital for that set of photographs—and Goldblatt's photographic project more generally—to assume iconic status in the post-apartheid period:

> The book form enabled Goldblatt's photographs to lie quietly pulsating in the public domain, pressing down into the public sphere, refusing to evaporate. It is a testament to Goldblatt's huge investment in the form of the book—including design and layout, paper, printing and editing—that *Some Afrikaners Photographed* itself became hard to dismiss over the archive of time. (Bester 164)

What Bester argues to be the unique achievement of Goldblatt's work therefore derives not just from its testimonial power as reportage so much as the way in which it is imbued with a "ruminatory" quality that works to "destabilise or unhinge the viewer's expectations," creating a "disturbance . . . [that] demands the viewers' engagement rather than simply their consumption" (156). The forms of "rumination" that Goldblatt orchestrates through the art of his books is thus integral to the affective estrangement that *TJ/Double Negative* causes: it is a book that requires its reader to pause, reflect, and enter into a conversation with the photographed culture as the book mediates it.

III. Writing for a World Market

Towards the end of his article on the design of Goldblatt's books, Bester comments on the significance of the changes and additions to the 2007 reissue of *Some Afrikaners Revisited*. His paratextual reading suggests a major shift in Goldblatt's attitude to his international reception:

> [I]t is perhaps not surprising that Goldblatt's refiguring of a local archive for global consumption includes internationally renowned intellectual and writer Krog, whose *Country of my Skull* (1998) was not only a widely acclaimed personal account of reporting on the TRC process, but was also published by Random House. (163)

Law-Viljoen suggests that Goldblatt's entry into the world art market comes sooner than this, following a series of international exhibitions in the 1990s ("Sailing a Smaller Ship" 433), and I would agree. In 1998 Goldblatt published *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, the culmination of a fifteen-year project that documents the physical and symbolic structures underpinning South African life from its colonial beginnings to the post-apartheid present. The publication accompanied a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the first time a South African had been given this privilege. The exhibition afforded Goldblatt unprecedented global exposure but also marked a turning point with regard to the previously anti-cosmopolitan character of his books. The rationale for this shift in approach emerges in an explanatory note Goldblatt added to the 2007 reissue of *Afrikaners*:

> The New York experience [pitching the original *Afrikaners* to publishers there] was crucial to a deeper understanding of what I was doing in my photographs and, indeed, what I was doing in South Africa. It became clear that the photographs I was interested in making were a kind of dialogue with my compatriots, with people who were steeped in what I have called 'the life, the ways, obsessions, graces, laws and particulars of this place and people'. If that dialogue was not accessible to other people—mostly those 'overseas'—then so be it. ("Notes on How" 14)

Given that international eyes were drawn so keenly to the travesty of apartheid in this period, Goldblatt's early books are boldly uncompromising in their design and subject matter: the grainy murk of *On The Mines*; the banal matter-of-factness of *Some Afrikaners Photographed* and *In Boksburg* (1982); the interjected fragments of Nadine Gordimer's stories in *Lifetimes under Apartheid* that thicken rather than explain the world of the photographs. None of these books invites the outside world in. Goldblatt's South Africa is either obtusely parochial or forbiddingly dark and different.

Where his books had previously been produced without compromise with regard to their viability for international publication, *The Structure of Things Then* registers South Africa's re-emergence into the world market through precisely such a compromise. The orchestration of material for publication in this book is a rather drawn-out affair. Goldblatt's introduction is lengthy and recapitulates his personal biography while offering an abridged history of the Rainbow Nation from 1652 to the present day. His signature captions are appended to the rear of the book, but these occupy almost a third of the page count and in many cases come in significantly extended versions that are closer to essay than traditional caption length. And while it is not the first time any of his books has included a glossary, the extent of the one in *The Structure of Things Then* is again telling. In the following paragraph from the introduction, Goldblatt remarks on his reticence to provide this extra detail, and in doing so he also registers a palpable discomfort:

> Although this introduction and extended captions are more explicit and detailed than I would like, they are no more than an attempt to give, for the reader who wishes it, an extremely condensed, highly selective insight into the 'structural context', the densely complex matrix of cultural, social, political and economic interaction from which the subjects photographed emerged and in which they had their 'being'. (10)

Goldblatt is evidently uneasy with some of the compromises imposed by marketing considerations for a global audience, yet that these are accepted and incorporated in the book suggests that the end of apartheid marked an opportunity—perhaps even a duty—for Goldblatt to open up the internal dialogue with South African culture that he had long orchestrated through his work. The 1994 elections and the subsequent dismantling of the apartheid state represent a cosmopolitan moment in South African history that might be interpreted in Goldblatt's work as a (structure of) feeling that the time had come to open the world of his books to international readers. If *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* marks a shift in the cosmopolitan character of Goldblatt's photographic orchestration by engaging an international audience rather than challenging a national one, the playfulness of *TJ/Double Negative* signals a further shift to more properly cooperative and interdiscursive forms of cultural production on the one hand as well as a more reflexive mediation of cosmopolitanism *as* a structure of feeling on the other. *TJ/Double Negative* frames a dialogue that is no longer confined within the reading public of a national culture but instead has, for over twenty years, been carried out across a global mediascape.

The story Goldblatt tells through his photography books of South Africa's globalization in the immediate aftermath of apartheid is integral to Lister's narrative in *Double Negative*. Reflecting on the experience of voting in the 1994 elections at South Africa House, London—with symptomatic irony, not in South Africa itself—he notes how "we became a tourist attraction" (76): "The end of apartheid put my nose out of joint, I must confess. Suddenly the South Africans were talking to one another. They wouldn't shut up. . . . After a decade of willfully excluding myself, I felt left out of the club" (75). With this burgeoning cosmopolitanism materializing in everyday experience but also as a media spectacle, so too come its attendant contradictions: "Now that South Africa had rejoined the global community, Auerbach's reputation was on the rise. He had become collectable. The experts were beginning to say he was more than a photographer; he was an artist" (Vladislavić, *Double Negative* 113). It is this contrary aspect of South Africa's globalization—market incorporation intersecting cultural recognition and eventually artistic consecration—that provides the narrative rationale for *Double Negative*. The occasion of Lister's *Künstlerroman* narrative is the moment his work—along with his personal life—is about to be projected into the global mediascape, and possibly also the world market, by a young art blogger, Janie Amanpour. The questions concerning the relationship between photography, memory, and public culture that Lister raises in the course of his ekphrastic reminiscing are in a sense profoundly rhetorical and arguably derive from the observation Janie leads with in her initial interview:

> 'I'm with Neville Lister at his home in Kensington, Johannesburg. Just to fill you in, you're part of a work-in-progress series—we call it Riding Shotgun, not my idea—so I'd like to focus on what you're up to now. But seeing that people won't necessarily have heard of you, I though we'd start with some basic stuff about your background. I googled you but didn't find much.' (Vladislavić, *Double Negative* 143)

Lister is barely a digital trace at this point in his career, yet ironically it is his contribution to a group exhibition called "*Public/Private*" (comprising pictures of walls) that sees his imminent projection into a vastly expanded and variegated public sphere. Just as photography represents one of the most important (and of course, as Lister points out repeatedly, problematic) cultural prisms for a pre-digital generation, throughout his narrative he also refers somewhat resignedly to the emergence of the Internet and its potential for opening previously closed worlds whilst at the same time flattening the vastly expanded cultural archive it mediates. The kind of informational cultural economy this gives rise to is, on the surface, more cosmopolitan in its restless search for new audiences than the more materially and politically constrained print culture during apartheid. And yet this discussion is conveyed through an exclusive art-object that confounds the imperative for digital dissemination. As Law-Viljoen observes in her 2012 survey of the art book market in South Africa, "it would seem—perhaps paradoxically—that it is precisely the digitisation of books in general that is making art books in particular more desirable" (423). Goldblatt and Vladislavić are not only cognizant to the irony of their work being incorporated as "art" within international markets, they make of this a position for reflexive critique.

Lister's conversation with Janie in "Small Talk," the final section of the novel, seems quite deliberately to refract the cultural flatness that attends technologies of digital reproducibility as well as the emergence of a consumer culture that has allegedly become more protean as a consequence. It is perhaps not surprising that a large part of this conversation involves both the artist and the critic reflecting on the way their interactions with other artists and critics inevitably informs their work, most particularly in relation to Simeon Majara, an artist contemporary with Lister (profiled by Janie the year previously, she tells him) but who, in a playful intertextual sleight, first appeared in Vladislavić's 2004 novella *The Exploded View*. The interdiscursive relationship between Majara's art and the photography of Lister and Auerbach anticipates (and so arguably participates in) recent debates on the relationship between depth and surface in South African culture (Nutall, de Kock). "[W]hat do you like about his work?" Janie asks. "[S]light, light and minimal, quote unquote as if you don't know" (157) is Lister's knowingly meta reply, which he offers before explaining how Majara combines and reconstitutes art and non-art objects in his work in a way that incorporates the often violent history embodied within objects and practices so that their deeper significance is subordinated to their surface appearance. This conversation and the "Small Talk" section seem to anticipate the concerns Sarah Nuttall raises in "The Rise of the Surface: Emerging Questions for Reading and Criticism in South Africa." She calls to task both critics and writers who have yet to grasp the changing zeitgeist, which is characterized by the work of young black artists for whom consumerism and the perceived depthlessness of popular culture are no longer held as some kind of original sin: "While a younger generation of artists and writers draws increasingly on notions of the literal, the surface and the skin, an older generation remains at times wedded to a depth hermeneutic that considers current aesthetic languages to be degraded forms, rather than different kinds of conceptual vocabularies" (416). Nuttall cites Vladislavić alongside the likes of Gordimer, William Kentridge, and J. M. Coetzee, members of this "older generation," all of whom write in the "mode of the symptom" (415). Kentridge's *Mine* (1991) and Gordimer's *The Conservationist* (1974) exemplify this mode by working "along a continuum, moving between metaphors of descent into the earth and the idea of death as having risen to just below the surface" (Nuttall 415). Intriguingly Goldblatt is not named among this group, despite his well-known connections with these authors and the similar concerns of his own work, whereby the social conflict immanent within apartheid surfaces through the juxtaposition of photographic and literary frames—most memorably in his collaborations with Gordimer (figures 6 and 7, original from *On the Mines* and reproduced in the first section of *TJ*).

In the orchestration of *TJ*, Goldblatt evidently "remains wedded to a depth hermeneutic" (416) as Nuttall terms it: a technique that melds formal composition and paratextual design to facilitate a ruminatory awareness of the social, economic, and political "symptom" of apartheid, which could not be more manifestly evident in the contrasts between these two photographs, arranged on facing pages. In the former the corporeality of the attendant mimics the voracious appetite of the furnaces that loom behind him. It is a brutal metaphor for the white-controlled industry's appetite for undifferentiated black labour—what Achille Mbembe has termed Johannesburg's "aesthetics of superfluity"—which is absent in the image yet called to mind through the metaphorical extension. The mine captain's office presents an absolute contrast. This is the industry as it wished to be viewed: a spartan "surface" belying the dirty and dangerous work being carried out deep underneath. It is prim, trim and proper—except for the neat set of lists and charts on the wall where the symptoms of apartheid and capitalism materialize in the form of a seemingly benign and neutral bureaucracy.

Given Goldblatt's concern with surfaces as well as structures, it is strange that Nuttall ignores Goldblatt in her discussion; it is even stranger that her particular argument on how Vladislavić and his work exemplify this outmoded aesthetic is buried in a footnote:

> Even as Vladislavić examines the surfaces of the city, its truth lies in all that is hidden and unrecoverable, and in a lens that for all its sophistication, amounts to a nostalgic vision of the Johannesburg of his childhood. For Vladislavić, the truth of the city is largely to be found in its underneath—a literal underneath, its history, his own memory, its figures of marginality, its psychic effects and an archaeology of words in its written texts. His is a vocabulary of critical excavation. (420n8)

Against what she perceives to be the dominance of the "symptom" in such work, Nuttall proposes that the "rise of the surface" in South African culture might be more appropriately understood on its own terms: "It would be worth thinking, for example, of the many possibilities that the lives of things might carry in twenty-first century South Africa: might some of the pre-eminent voices than *can* cross some of our constitutive disjunctures be the voices of commodity objects (the narratives of a cell phone, for instance)?" (417; emphasis in original). The forms and practices that I think Nuttall has in mind are in fact anticipated by Vladislavić's fictional artist-figure, Majara, and further elaborated in the conversation between Lister and Janie in "Small Talk." Such work, so this argument goes, *unreflectively* inhabits the contradictions of a consumer culture, whether that be the commodity fetishism that enables individuals to stylize their selves or the flattening of difference in

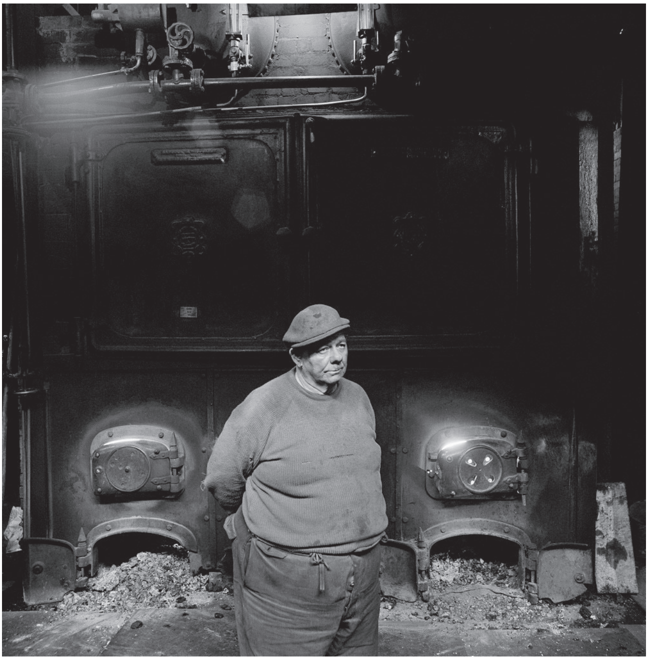

Fig. 6. "Boiler-house attendant, City Deep Gold Mine. 1966" Goldblatt, *TJ* 52, reproduced opposite "Mine captain."

its endlessly protean cosmopolitanism. In his response to Nuttall's claim that literature fails "to capture the reach and affective charge of 'surface'" (8), Leon de Kock refers to how *Double Negative* "rather uncannily does *precisely* what Nuttall suggests 'the literary' cannot do—it invokes the hunger for 'surface reality', indulges it in its characters and in the novel's reader-spectators, and then goes one step further by placing such (perceived) surface reality effects into an implicit dialogue with issues of representation" (8; emphasis in original).

In this article I have argued that, as a joint project, *TJ/Double Negative* goes even further than de Kock's suggestion. Goldblatt and Vladislavić have produced a fetishizable art-object that, through its experimental interdiscursive form, acts out the cosmopolitan character of a cultural product designed for the world market. But rather than eschew the "depth hermeneutics" of supposedly outmoded forms of creative prac-

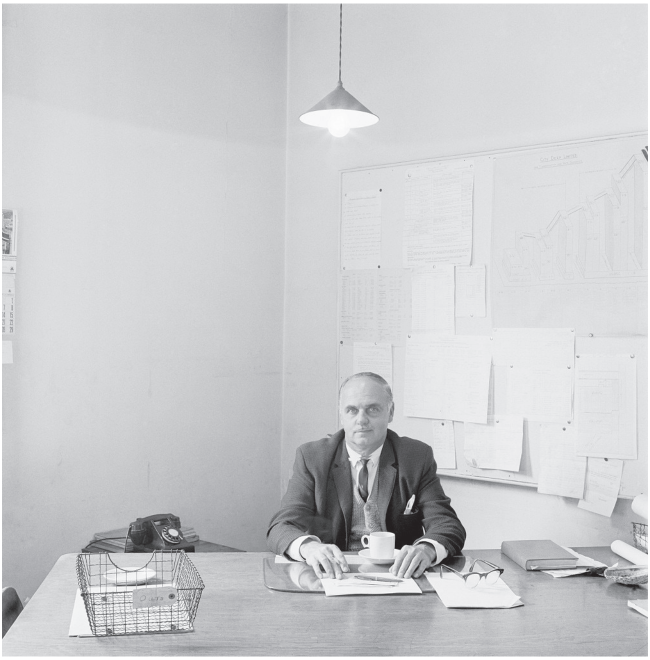

Fig. 7. "Mine captain, City Deep Gold Mine. 1966" Goldblatt, *TJ* 53, reproduced opposite "Boiler-house attendant."

tice, *TJ/Double Negative* demonstrates how the surface of the culture it mediates has become its own symptom; how Johannesburg *remains* a fractured geography; how just as some things may appear to change, much still stays the same.

Notes

1 Since *TJ/Double Negative* won the Kraszna-Krausz Best Photography Book Award in 2011, Vladislavić has gone on to win the prestigious $150,000 Windham Campbell Prize in 2015 for work that "explores the uncomfortable aftermath of apartheid through inventive meditations on the complex intersection of history, politics, and art" ("Ivan Vladislavić"). He was also closely involved in the production of the 2015 Deutsche Börsche-winning photography book *Ponte City* by Subotsky and Waterhouse (describing himself as its "creative editor"—see "The Restless Derby").

2 The significance of Vladislavić's engagement with this theme is neatly summarized in the title of South African academic Leon de Kock's 2012 article "So, What Should Academic Critics Be Doing, on the Edge of the Now—Skimming the Surface or Plumbing Those Depths?" which takes the Umuzi edition of *Double Negative*—published as a standalone novel in 2011—as its main example in rebutting Sarah Nuttall's provocative and influential article "The Rise of the Surface: Emerging Questions for Reading and Criticism in South Africa."

3 World-literature (with a hyphen) describes a literary work "in which the world-system is not a distant horizon only unconsciously registered in immanent form, but rather consciously or critically mapped—that is, to literature that is in some way world-systemic in its perspective" (Graham, Niblett, and Deckard 468).

4 Dominguez uses the term in referencing Walkowitz's study of cosmopolitan style in British modernist writing. Planetary humanism as Walkowitz and Dominguez deploy it in their respective discussions derives from Paul Gilroy's use of the term in *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?*

5 The classic discussion of realism in South Africa is J. M. Coetzee's 1988 essay "The Novel Today." For a more recent discussion see Jeanne-Marie Jackson's *South African Literature's Russian Soul: Narrative Forms of Global Isolation*.

6 In "The Current of Critical Irrealism" Michael Löwy defines irrealism as the negative critique of *mimesis*, as discussed in Erich Auerbach's seminal work of that name. Irrealism "is not an alternative, a substitute, or a rival to critical realism: it is simply a different form of literature and art, which does not attempt, in one way or another, to reflect reality" (223). For how this concept has been deployed in other discussions of world literature see Benita Parry's article "Aspects of Peripheral Modernism."

7 This is a deliberate strategy, more obvious in the title of the original exhibition from which the photographs in the book were selected—*TJ: Some Things Old, Some Things New and Some Things Much the Same*.

8 See Helgesson's article for a fuller list of Goldblatt's collaborations

9 Speaking in the semi-formal context of a research seminar that also served to promote both the UK publication of *The Restless Supermarket* by And Other Stories as well as the international publication of Subotsky and Waterhouse's *Ponte City*, Vladislavić noted that Goldblatt was able to use his international reputation and personal contacts to secure publication with the high-end photobook publisher Contrasto. Neither Vladislavić nor Goldblatt has confirmed this on record, but it is reasonable to assume that without leveraging Goldblatt's symbolic capital in the world art market it is unlikely that any publisher would have been prepared to carry the risk of a project with such high production costs.

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