

WORLD, CLASS, TRAGICOMEDY: JOHANNESBURG, 1994

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Happy are those ages when the starry sky is a map of all possible paths—ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars.

—György Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*

1. THE NOVEL AS EVENTS

The end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994 was the culmination of years of organizing, negotiating, and struggling, both overtly and covertly, within the region. In addition to being a local event, however, the end of apartheid marked the conclusion, if not the completion, of a world-historical process of postcolonial independence in the twentieth century. This wave of decolonization had begun in the wake of the First World War with revolutionary struggle in Egypt and Ireland in 1919, accelerated with the emergence of numerous nation states in the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, and Africa in the decades following the Second World War, and drew to a somewhat belated close in the years following the fall of the Berlin Wall with Namibia securing independence from “administration”

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