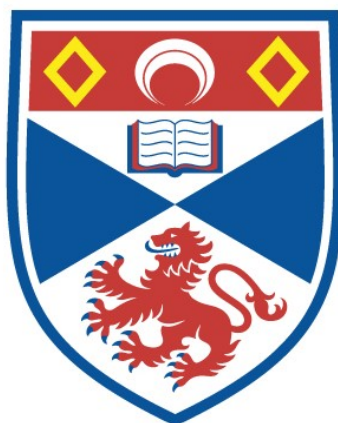


RACIALISED VIOLENCE IN WHITE-AUTHORED  
POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

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A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil  
at the  
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Racialised violence in white-authored post-apartheid  
South African literature

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University of  
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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis I discuss the racialisation and spatialization of violence in Heidi Holland's *Born in Soweto*, J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, and Elaine Proctor's *The Savage Hour*. The three spaces I discuss this within are the rural space of the South African farm, the urban space, and the liminal travel or transport space. Whiteness is a key lens through which these spaces might be interpreted, and over the course of this thesis I examine how whiteness functions to skew black experience to the reader. Legacies of colonialism and apartheid function heavily within my considerations of the spatiality and racialisation of violence, as well as theories surrounding the alleged "culture of violence" which surrounds not only South Africa, but more pertinently also South African blackness.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the average time it takes to read this thesis, five people will be murdered in South Africa<sup>1</sup>. Testimonies of violence in South Africa are too numerous to include here: Funlola Olojede claims that South Africa has ‘become a breeding ground for physical violence in various forms and unprecedented degrees’ (259); Stephen Ellis discusses the ‘general atmosphere of violence’ (287) around the fall of apartheid in 1994; writing in 2020, Darshan Vigneswaran posits that ‘In contemporary South Africa... violence is a very “public” problem’ (569). Indeed, it is reputed worldwide that a so-called “culture of violence” allegedly functions in South Africa.<sup>2</sup> My thesis is concerned with how this violence is racialised and represented in white-authored, post-apartheid South African literature, and whether the “culture of violence” that operates within the literature I examine is in fact constructed by and through the whiteness of the authors of my primary texts, and to what extent the spatiality of the violence itself affects this reading.

### Key Texts

The three texts that form the basis of my analysis are *Born in Soweto* (1994) by Heidi Holland, *Disgrace* (1999) by J. M. Coetzee, and *The Savage Hour* (2014) by Elaine Proctor.

While these authors share a common experience in their whiteness – and this whiteness, and its associated privilege, heavily influences the content and tone of their writings – two

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<sup>1</sup> According to Cohen and Vecchiatto, in the most recent period for which there are official figures (March 2019 to March 2020), 58 people were murdered per day on average, or 21,325 in total, which is the highest number in more than a decade, with a murder rate of 36 per 100,000 people. This equates to 5.3 people per 132 minutes, which is the average time taken to read 40,000 words. Cohen and Vecchiatto also outline how the ‘number of rapes, sexual offenses and car hi-jackings also increased’ in the 2019/2020 period. The inspiration for this statistic to start my thesis is taken from Kimon de Greef’s opening line in his article “An elite helicopter force is fighting South Africa’s carjacking epidemic”: ‘In the time it takes to read this story, two more cars will be hijacked.’

<sup>2</sup> This will be more precisely defined later in this introduction.

are female and one is male, which nuances this experience further. Furthermore, the three texts span the twenty years which follow the fall of apartheid in South Africa, meaning that a range of temporal positions are offered on racialised violence, and how its portrayal in literature has changed as South Africa allegedly moves away from state-mandated apartheid. It follows that the texts tackle racialised violence differently, according to the privilege, prejudice, and angle of their writers, as well as the socio-political climate of the time.

Heidi Holland's *Born in Soweto* offers portraits of individuals and communities within Johannesburg's township as it starts to move out of state-mandated apartheid in 1994, through the eyes of a white female visitor. This text differs in genre to my other key texts, as it is a political sketch of Soweto, in which the author interviews township residents and provides her own descriptive literary analysis of places, people, and histories. *Born in Soweto* focuses most closely on the urban township space, while also referencing the liminal travel or transport space. Holland frequently – and problematically – projects aspects of her white experience onto the scenes, and the experiences of blackness, which she describes but cannot fully understand. Furthermore, Holland's selection of the interviews and testimonies she includes in *Born in Soweto* is not neutral, as in writing the text she constructs a narrative about the space, the essence of which is rooted within a white understanding. She very rarely reveals the questions she asks her interviewees to the reader, even though many of the long interviews appear to follow prompts,<sup>3</sup> meaning that

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<sup>3</sup> For more than two pages, George Resenga appears to speak without interruption or prompt, although he discusses topics as wide-ranging as his youth and employment, alcohol problems, family life in Soweto, and violence towards police cars (28-30). After a two-sentence interlude of Holland's narration when she explains that George's grandchild enters, he speaks for another two pages (30-31).



she could be posing pointed or loaded questions so that the subjects' answers comply with her artistic interpretation of Soweto.

J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* follows the story of David Lurie, a professor of communications at the Cape Technical University, who becomes "disgraced" after his rape of a student and flees the city to stay with his daughter Lucy on her smallholding in the Eastern Cape; Lucy is raped by three black men after his arrival. The novel moves between urban, farm, and liminal spaces.

Elaine Proctor's *The Savage Hour* focuses on the white matriarch Ouma's South African farm, and the happenings within her family and associated (black and white) community of friends and farm workers after her assisted suicide. This novel also considers urban, farm, and liminal spaces. As the most recent of my three texts, *The Savage Hour* portrays a more recent portrait of South African race relations, but I argue that the temporality of racialised violence and its memories which space persistently evokes require the consideration of older perspectives (such as 1994's *Born in Soweto* and 1999's *Disgrace*), alongside analysis of more recent interpretations.

### Three "Spaces"

This thesis is structured by the three crucial "spaces" which I argue racial violence functions around and through. These are the space of the farm (Chapter 1), the urban space (Chapter 2), and the liminal travel or transport space (Chapter 3) in South Africa. I have selected these spaces as a framework due to the close link between space and violence in South Africa and its literatures, a link which is rooted in both colonialism and the apartheid-era

policing of space. I have used the word “space” to describe these locations in accordance with my agreement with Yi-Fu Tuan’s assertion that “Space” is more abstract than “place” (6), but also because space is ‘the outcome of human actions, hence human actions and spatial forms exist in dialectical tension’ (Mmadi 896); space, I believe, is much *more* than place, and racialised violence in South Africa speaks to – and gets a response from – the places it is enacted in.

In the first chapter, I consider the farm space, the farm novel and the Afrikaans *Plaasroman*, farm attacks, and the specific use of rape and sexual violence, before turning to writings on dogs, and animalisation and dehumanisation. In the second, I confront victims, perpetrators, and bystanders of violence, with a particular focus on youth violence within urban education spaces. In the third, I discuss train and railway spaces, the space of the road and its associated personalities, the car, its status and danger, and carjackings. Overall, space and spatiality function to promote and provoke the definition and enactment of racialised violence, although my three spaces have a differing relationship with the violence which occurs within each.

#### Definition of key terms used:

##### 1. Culture of violence

My definition of the alleged “culture of violence” in South Africa is centred around its very origin: ‘A culture of violence is said to develop in a context where acts of violence are perpetrated with impunity... In other words, protracted use of violence has consolidated itself into a culture’ (Olojede 255). So many of the accounts which claim some kind of “culture of violence” concern areas such as townships. Marks Chabedi introduces the notion

of the alleged “culture of violence” within the townships (358) in “State Power, Violence, Crime and Everyday Life: a Case Study of Soweto in Post-Apartheid South Africa”, and Don Foster discusses the “perpetuation” of ‘a sub-culture of violence on the Cape Flats’ by ‘young violent boys’ who ‘take up... gang-inspired macho masculinities’ (43). The origin, however, appears to be through the ‘state sponsorship of violence’<sup>4</sup> which ‘further undermined the rule of law’ in townships; South Africa has ‘nurtured a culture of violence that has reproduced itself ever since’ (Kynoch 644-5). This origination of a “culture of violence” in a township<sup>5</sup> renders any such culture, if it exists, to be fundamentally racialised and in conversation with the spatiality of (colonial and apartheid) violence-gone-by in South Africa. Furthermore, the “culture of violence” is established in, and therefore relies upon, the belief that violence is rooted in blackness, and that blackness comes from a place of violence. Both of these are problematic perceptions which only serve to perpetuate the “culture of violence” through suspicion and prejudice.

## 2. Liminality

The term “liminal” is defined severally: the OED has it as something ‘characterized by being on a boundary or threshold, esp. by being transitional or intermediate between two states, situations, etc.’ (OED adj. 2). Les Roberts describes how “liminal” is ‘derived from the Latin word for “threshold” (*limen*)’, which is ‘an etymological reminder of the important spatial underpinnings to the concept’, and how it has been ‘argued that structure and order is derived from liminality – from the crucial middle or “in-between” states that facilitate ritual

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<sup>4</sup> ‘... police actively encouraged township violence by assisting criminal gangs involved in conflicts with community policing organisations linked to nationalist movements’ (Kynoch 634).

<sup>5</sup> The township is incidentally also reportedly the site of the first carjacking, too: ‘The first hijacking of a vehicle occurred in a township in South Africa during 1976 when an individual was approached by four males carrying knives’ (Davis 174).

passage from one social stage to another' (Roberts 36). Both definitions are useful: the former for pointing out the word's significant spatial etymology, and the latter for highlighting the societal implications which emerge from the way in which liminal spaces are both seen and interpreted. Although liminality and the idea of a "liminal space" can be interpreted and defined broadly, I use the term "liminal" in Chapter 3 to refer to both physical and social travel and transport spaces, but also to emphasise the racialised nature of how liminality works there, and how prejudice can in fact accentuate the liminality of those occupying those spaces.<sup>6</sup> The study of travel routes and liminal spaces relates to the study of racialised violence, due to the way in which societies and personalities are so often configured by their inverses, and by the negative space they inhabit: just as in the construction of race, the construction of space requires an "other" against which to define itself.<sup>7</sup> In-between journeys and areas, furthermore, which often represent unspoken societal boundaries, are frequently areas of difference and of conflict, too:<sup>8</sup> in South Africa, this confrontation is regularly racial and sometimes violent.

### 3. Nativity and Humanity

In the case of the black African native, nativity and humanity are often defined in opposition to each other by the white coloniser, whose employment of dehumanising and animalising

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Roberts' ideas of "'spaces in-between", spaces both geographic... and psychosocial.' (32). Roberts confesses that his 'interest in liminality was initially stoked by spaces, places and non-places of travel (border zones, airports, motorways/highways, seaports, railway stations, roads and tracks, as well as different modes of transport)...' (Roberts 33).

<sup>7</sup> 'I moved toward the other... and the evanescent other, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared' (Fanon *TFOB* 112).

<sup>8</sup> 'Why is the placing of violent death in marginal spaces such a common thing? Where does this trope originate from? First, on an absolutely practical level, these are much more likely to be sites of violence. Because anything can happen in the margins, they often do.' (Raychaudhuri 91-2); there is an 'important but often overlooked characteristic of the liminal phase' which is 'its association with danger' (Roberts 38); 'A study investigating crime and crime prevention on public transport in South Africa... directly links the heightened threat of violence with the idea of inbetweenness' (Gunne 144-5).

rhetoric, and narratives of inferiorization, only serve to assist this definition. Although I discuss these kinds of ideas and the prejudice which is associated with them, within this thesis the term “nativity” is defined as the perception of the “native” individual as being “native” to South Africa due to their blackness and presumed lived experience of “tribality” and lack of knowledge of “civilization”. The experience of “nativity” is often subjugated by the white coloniser,<sup>9</sup> his descendants, those who support the views or motives of the colonial regime, or even those who do not appreciate the reality and harm their whiteness can perpetuate upon the “native”. The term “humanity” is defined to include the lived experience of being human, and to that end the experience of being seen as deserving of respect, safety, attention, and love – an experience from which the “native” is often shunned.

## Contextual Information

### Chapter 1

My discussion of the farm space in Chapter 1 is closely tied to the political history of South Africa’s rural lands, as ‘colonialism is based on a spatial as well as racial relationship’ (Staples 45), which is relevant to all three of the spaces I discuss here. To briefly summarise South Africa’s colonial history, in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch had the ‘largest trading enterprise’ in the world, and the long and dangerous journey by sea to ‘their most important trading partners’ in the Indian Ocean necessitated the construction of a ‘refreshment station for the passing ships at Table Mountain’ near what is now Cape Town (Oliver & Oliver 4). Although South Africa had been colonised “unofficially” by migrants

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<sup>9</sup> ‘The white man wants the world; he wants it for himself alone. He finds himself predestined master of this world. He enslaves it’ (Fanon *Black Skin White Masks* 128).

from the north' (Oliver & Oliver 5) before, this was its first colonisation from Europe. After many years of Dutch occupation, and fighting at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British eventually took the Cape in 1806 (Pooley 29-30); from 1961 there was 'an internal colonisation of the country by the white Afrikaners, which ended in 1994 when the country became a Democracy' (Oliver & Oliver 7). Ever since, rural spaces have been saturated with the struggle for land which occurred there,<sup>10</sup> especially since the management of rural land under occupation vastly 'excluded rural Africans' (Pooley 3) and paid no attention to their knowledge and expertise. Even though the lands' goods and earning potential were attractive to colonisers, South Africa's black roaming native livestock farmer was fundamentally misunderstood by them, too, as the coloniser saw the temporarily unoccupied land not as 'uninhabited', but rather 'under-used or under-cultivated' (Boucher 14). Thus, as well as the argument that colonialism concerned and required the act of inferiorization,<sup>11</sup> the native African's farming was deemed by the colonizer to be incorrect, ungodly, and 'morally derelict in failing to fulfil their obligation to God in making the earth bountiful, and of failing to establish civil societies to ensure efficient exploration of the soil' (Boucher 17).

That both the space of the South African farm and the black African farmer's identity is fundamentally "native" is fundamental to the coloniser's justification of their subjugation. However, since the fall of colonialism, black and "coloured" farmers have continued to assert that white claiming of land was a particular atrocity since their [black farmers'] 'DNA

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<sup>10</sup> The coloniser and his intermediaries represent 'the bringer[s] of violence into the home and into the mind of the native' (Fanon "Concerning Violence" *TWOTE* 37).

<sup>11</sup> This is an idea which is extended upon in Fanon's "Toward the African Revolution" – 'It is not possible to enslave men without logically making them inferior through and through' (40) – and later in this thesis.

is connected to this land' (Smith). More recently and specifically, black and coloured farmers have extended that they 'lived and worked "more naturally" with the landscape than white farmers did, they believed that they existed in harmony with nature and with the native rooibos ecosystem in particular' (Ives 701); the rooibos crop 'embodied both violent racial histories of dispossession and celebratory narratives of belonging to a beloved ecosystem' (Ives 698). Colonialism, and with it the white seizure of white farmland and stoppage of African farming practices, incited furious racial tensions, the fallout of which the space of the South African farm still sees sometimes today. Farm attacks are exemplary of this: they have formed 'a so-called epidemic' (Steyn 59) and have even sparked protests,<sup>12</sup> even though the terms themselves "farm attack" and "farm murder" 'are often racialized and only applied to cases where the victims are white' (Steyn 59). As defined within the Rural Safety Strategy, a South African farm attack

includes all violence against people living on farms and smallholdings, as well as persons who work there or visit the premises... crimes such as murder, rape, robbery and causing bodily harm... all violence aimed at destroying farm infrastructure and property... [includes also] smallholding owners involved in a farming activity, emerging farmers, farm workers, their family members and visitors.

(Visser 2)

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<sup>12</sup> 'Black Monday' allowed South Africans to 'articulate their frustration' about the farm attacks which 'since the dying years of apartheid', have 'swept across the nation' (Steyn 59).

Indeed, killings of white farmers have been regularly highlighted in the international media<sup>13</sup> of the past few years, though the light in which such attacks are sometimes regarded has been widely condemned by critics of white privilege.<sup>14</sup> Building on the aforementioned demonization of nativity, an inherent lack of civilization is sometimes applied to the instigators of violence – both in the case of farm attacks and other forms of rural violence – who are presumed black.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, to discuss a “farm attack” and to fail to mention the fact that whites are not the only victims would not only be characteristic of white privilege but also fundamentally incorrect. Indeed, discussions of both black peril *and* white peril are equally important to the consideration of literary narrative versions of the South African farm attack. The article “Black Peril vs White Peril: A Postcolonial Criticism on J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*” states that black peril ‘served as the signifier for a range of emotions, ranging from sexual jealousy over the seduction of white women by black men to general apprehension of native rebellion’ but ‘was most commonly understood to refer to the threat of Black rape’ and ‘suggests the colonizers’ fear of “the other”’; white peril, meanwhile, ‘refers to the *hidden* sexual exploitation of black women’ (Beiranvand and Liena 56, emphasis mine).

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<sup>13</sup> In the Muldersdrift farm attack in August 2020, a ‘group of men broke into a Muldersdrift property in Guteng and raped the wife and two young daughters of an elderly man, who was himself badly beaten during the horrific incident’ (Meyer).

<sup>14</sup> Bernadette Hall, the victim of a farm attack in 2012 during which her husband was shot in the head by a mob of five black attackers, offers a more progressive line of thought. In an interview for a 2019 ABC news article, she acknowledges the existence of racial hatred, but concurrently chooses to shun rather than heed it, stating “I can’t hate a whole nation for what five people did.” But she does believe that racial tensions are real and that the hatred of her race led to her husband’s death’ (Smith).

<sup>15</sup> Shelley Davidow discusses in more detail the establishment of white privilege in South African society, and the resulting blame culture bestowed upon black individuals, in her *Guardian* article “Memo from a South African: Peter Dutton is entrenching racist white privilege”.



## Chapter 2

The colonial restriction of urban movement is centred around the space of the township,<sup>16</sup> which functions as the urban Bantustan<sup>17</sup> in its successful segregation of the black African apart and away from white middle- and upper-classes' urban suburbs and cities. White and black urbanities are polar and in conflict, so it is impossible to point to a single experience of urban space, as existence and violence within it represent a constant struggle against an historic power structure.<sup>18</sup> While the experience of racialised violence is different for black and white individuals, much of my analysis in Chapter 2 is centred around the space of the township and the urban education space. In the township, a 'low socio-economic status (SES) neighbourhood', violence 'in the lives of youth and adolescents is ubiquitous' (Hoosen et al. 886), while 'violent crimes such as rape, assault and murder are common' (Mills 72), and 'the denial of violence seemed to be a vital strategy to manage daily life' (Bähre 92). Much of my discussion of the township focuses on Soweto, a township south-west of Johannesburg, which 'is home to an estimated 1.3 million people' (Grønlund 218) and the 'epicentre of... civil resistance in South Africa' (Grønlund 221).<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, in the urban education space, Gouws and Kritzinger and Orth et al. have highlighted the problem – even "culture" – of rape and sexual violence plaguing South African universities.

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<sup>16</sup> 'Townships represent the "exclusion by design" of large portions of the South African citizenry.' (Pernegger & Godehart 6).

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the township and the Bantustan functioned historically as 'the two officially institutionalized systems of control' (Mills 65).

<sup>18</sup> 'Spatial relations, the basis of space syntax, are power relations in society. Patterns of domination and resistance are firmly inscribed in the plans of buildings and cities...' (Mills 65).

<sup>19</sup> Justice Malala astutely recognises how Soweto is a 'black labour reserve'.

### Chapter 3

The colonial restriction of movement affects not only the right of occupation or access to a space, but also the act of moving itself. Modes and routes of travel and transport (which make up the liminal space I investigate in Chapter 3) demonstrate not only the memories, but also the enduring physical manifestations, of these governing mechanisms. My third “space” – the liminal travel or transport space – concerns itself with the space of the train, the road, and the car in turn. During apartheid, black Africans were forced ‘to carry a dompas (permit) at all times to show cause to be’ in urban spaces (Malala), and this politicisation of movement renders the liminal space, and any violence which may occur there, fundamentally racialised. While public transport spaces were constructed by and because of apartheid politics, there has been an ‘overwhelming resilience of apartheid’s transport infrastructure, signalling its resoluteness and resistance to change’ (Thumbran 22). These same spaces have been targets of political and criminal violence since pre-1994 apartheid resistance. In “The Urban Transport Crisis in Emerging Economies”, the authors detail that ‘... the trains were targeted for violent attacks in the 1990s, as part of the United Democratic Front’s campaigns to make the city ungovernable’ and that this ‘pattern of crime and vandalism... has continued ever since 1994’ (Todeschini & Dewar 234).<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, between 1990 and 1993, around 600 cases of train violence caused around 572 deaths<sup>21</sup> (“Train Violence”). Online newspapers chronicle several detailed and

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<sup>20</sup> Mmadi clarifies that ‘the history of workers organising on the trains dates back to the 1970s at the height of labour unrest in South Africa’ (904), and in Chapter 3 I extend upon how train violence is by no means unique to South Africa.

<sup>21</sup> The article continues that ‘What started as unplanned group attacks and individual killings became more frequent planned, orchestrated incidents involving large groups of people. Gunmen would open fire from railway station platforms or spray commuters with bullets from inside coaches. Perpetrators of such attacks were intent on causing general terror rather than achieving a clear political objective’ (“Train Violence”).

emotional reports of massacres of many people in 1990 and 1991,<sup>22</sup> and similar political violence has continued to occur on trains, with some reports as recently as July 2021.<sup>23</sup> The train appears to have been used as a stomping ground of those choosing violence to explain and protest, or to simply alleviate, their troubles and angers.

Thobela and Gibberd consider ‘the colonial and apartheid engineering standards used to design roads in South Africa’ (1), how ‘apartheid planners purposefully used physical infrastructure elements [such as roads] to divide or control neighbourhoods’, and how ‘within cities, roads divided areas allocated for different racial groups’ (2). The road is thus as racialised as the violence enacted in its liminal space: apartheid roads signify a route along which violence was historically enacted through segregation and prejudice. The car is similarly politicised in South Africa, functioning as both proxy and signifier for the self, and the individual’s social status. ‘Vehicular violence’, a term taken from Greg Culver’s *Death and the Car: On (Auto)Mobility, Violence, and Injustice*, is key to my argument in the final chapter, as it encapsulates how, in their power to dictate violence, cars and transport systems have the power to produce ‘landscapes of fear and anxiety, and hence social and physical exclusion, marginalization, and immobilization’ (Culver 162). Although carjackings are not so direct a political response to the apartheid space of the road as train attacks are

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<sup>22</sup> As well as discussing a gruesome attack on 13<sup>th</sup> September 1990, in the article “South Africans Protest Violence on Trains”, John Battersby details how ‘taking the train from Soweto to Johannesburg is a gruelling experience. The trains are in a state of disrepair. More than half the hydraulic doors are broken and almost all the glass in the windows has disappeared. In winter, commuters face icy winds that rush through the crowded carriages’. The article also states that one man who is ‘really afraid of travelling by train’ says ‘God help me, please’ every time he makes the journey. Furthermore, the *Los Angeles Times* describes how one 1991 attack – which was a revenge response to a police killing – began when ‘a noisy red-and-gray commuter train braked to a halt at a central Soweto station on its way to Johannesburg. The doors opened, more than 50 armed men on the platform climbed aboard, and another South African massacre began. Commuters were slashed and hacked with machetes’ (Kraft).

<sup>23</sup> ‘Metrorail has suspended train services in South Africa’s Gauteng province following the escalation and spread of violence which erupted following the arrest last week of former president Jacob Zuma’ (Maromo).

to the railway space, the frequency of the experience of car theft, vandalism, and vehicular violence remains important to the racialised liminal space. 'It is estimated that a motor vehicle is hijacked every 40 to 54 minutes in South Africa', implying that 'more than 25 motor vehicle drivers become victims of hijackings daily' (Davis 174); Davis even proposes that 'a separate code' was even 'allocated for vehicle hijacking [in South Africa] in 1991' (Davis 174). Culver's assertion that 'violence [is] a fundamental aspect of mobility' (Culver 160) is key to my discussion of all types of travel and transport within the liminal space.

## CHAPTER 1 – THE SPACE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN FARM

### Introduction

The South African farm has been reimagined at length in the literature of its peoples and observers, as a space which so frequently appears to be either immersed in, or teetering on the edge of, a state of violent conflict.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, within South African literature and criticism of several decades of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, the farm is perceived to be a distinctive and central part of South Africa's so-called "culture of violence". In this first chapter, I examine the space of the farm, which is what I argue to be the primary (and, to an extent, the origin-giving) space of racial violence in white South African literature. Within my two key texts which confront acts of violence within the space of the farm most directly – *The Savage Hour* (2014) and *Disgrace* (1999) – I examine how literary representations of acts of racialised violence are written to evoke elements of fraught race relations whose origins are directly traceable to the colonisation of South Africa. Coetzee and Proctor's whiteness comes into consideration in this respect, due to their lack of neutrality of tone and experience, and their curation of white narratives. It is furthermore important to note that this chapter deals with Coetzee both as an essayist and a novelist. Although I do directly compare and collate *Disgrace* with Coetzee's more theoretical writings on the farm when they are inter-productive, I approach this with

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<sup>24</sup> In his discussions of violent crime in *Freedom on a Frontier*, de Kock acknowledges that 'social violence in the [apartheid] transition period... manifested in the form of criminal behaviour, [and] was in fact "epidemic" by comparison with most other countries' (63), and goes so far as to state that 'crime, with or without the scare-quotes, has over the past two decades replaced "apartheid" as one of the country's most conspicuous, and most contested, terms' (61), demonstrating the perpetuity of prevalence of doctrines of violence in South Africa since the so-called "transition period" from apartheid. In "Crime" Steinberg extends and concurs that 'it is no exaggeration to say that almost every South African, whether poor or rich, has either had a gun shoved in her face, or has witnessed the trauma of a loved one who has had a gun shoved in her face. These encounters with violence circulate by word of mouth until they become *a part of lived experience*' (27-8, emphasis mine). The prevalence of violence – and indeed its multifaceted, complicated, levelling nature – are indisputable in South Africa, and the space of the farm offers one lens through which this violence is experience and written about.

caution and in full knowledge that neither form of writing is conducive to understanding Coetzee's own personal ideas in full. In this chapter, I intend to reveal the authors' whiteness from within their presentation of racialised acts of violence, and hope to clarify the significance of both spatiality and historical colonialism to the acts of violence themselves, as 'colonialism is based on a spatial as well as racial relationship' (Staples 45), and 'violence in one era' can very possibly be 'grafted onto memories of another... as stories are layered upon other stories, the categories of history and myth collapse into each other...' (Das et al. 5).

### The Farm Space

The construction – and understanding – of the space of the farm as a violent one is rooted in the fact that the South African farm has, historically, been under attack. As well as the initial claiming of land by white settlers – to which the 1913 Natives Land Act<sup>25</sup> and the myth (then theory) of Empty or Vacant Land<sup>26</sup> were vital – the “farm attack”<sup>27</sup> is an occurrence which runs the risk of being seen as frequent, universal, and “normal” to the space of the farm, rather than occasional and tragic, when written about in fiction. Both *Disgrace* and *The Savage Hour* present at least one “serious” act of violence in the farm space – a rape, and a murder and an assisted suicide, respectively – and both also consider “less extreme” acts of violence scattered at intervals within the novels. However, the novels' overall

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<sup>25</sup> The Natives Land act laid 'the foundation for apartheid and territorial segregation and, for the first time, formalised limitations on black land ownership' (Kloppers & Pienaar 680).

<sup>26</sup> 'The myth of the Vacant Land arose from the fusing and imbedding of the stereotype of the African in the “fact” of geographical emptiness' (Crais 257-8). 'Nor was the idea of the African as Other merely a settler fantasy or sinister plot that would vanish as easily as it first appeared out on the veld. Creating the Other was all about the creation of enduring boundaries which involved questions of power and social definition' (Crais 268).

<sup>27</sup> This will be outlined in more detail in a later section of this chapter.

treatment of the two farm spaces are very different. In *Disgrace*, Lucy's farm fulfils at once Lurie's preconception of the farm as a dangerous space – a preconception which is expected from the reader, too – as well as his suspicion of black farm workers and their families, and his anticipation of the worst from these people. In this way, the attack on the space of the farm is constructed by Coetzee to be “exemplary” of a farm attack. The farm attack and its fallout dominate Lurie's narration (and life) for the rest of the novel; Proctor's portrayal of Klein Samuel's attack on Dumisane represents a tragic and unnecessary act of violence. However, Proctor does sometimes show the reader moments of violence within the farm space to signify small changes for the better. These moments include adjustments to the social order, in the very ownership of the farm space, and of the sense of community amongst races which persists at the end of *The Savage Hour* despite the very violence which occurs there.

Any violence which occurs on the farm is connected to the history – and associated ‘myth’ (Das et al. 5) – of the farm space. Lurie's suspicion demonstrates his constant ‘spirit of uncertainty and even distrust’ (Vorster 483)<sup>28</sup> of the space of the farm: “‘Aren't you nervous by yourself?’” (60); ‘Does Lucy really intend to spend her life here? He hopes it is only a phase’ (64); “‘... There are times when I feel anxious about my daughter all alone here.’” (64). This suspicion is racist in its presumption that a white female will be attacked by black individuals if she is alone on a farm, and speaks to another racist historical opinion that the colonised and ‘conquered... African societies were presented as intrinsically violent and

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<sup>28</sup> In a 2005 piece, Vorster discusses how, in later 20<sup>th</sup>-century Zimbabwe, ‘The chaotic and immoral expropriation of land... owned by white farmers, and the trepidation of the Mbeki government to denounce this kind of illegal behaviour, created a spirit of uncertainty and even distrust among the white community’ (483).

barbarous' while 'the conquerors... were conjured as essentially peaceful' (Beinart 457). In this way, Lurie – wrongly – sees himself as 'essentially peaceful' even in his perverse sexual "conquest" of Melanie, while maintaining racist opinions (Coetzee 60, 64) which presume black individuals will at some point attack. Lurie's problematic preconceptions of the farm (and, by extension, of blackness) as a violent space are upheld by Coetzee, to the extent that Lurie's snideness and sarcasm when he first enters the farm space<sup>29</sup> transforms into a downright request to Lucy: "I plead with you, leave the farm before it is too late" (200). To Lurie, the space has been confirmed as dangerous, and therefore his prejudice has been validated, too.

Conversely, Proctor presents a happy and cooperative multiracial community within *The Savage Hour* which partially refutes the need for such suspicion and hostility within the farm space. Even in short moments of conflict, the space of the farm is shown to be able to empower individuals:

Does Ilse not realise that the old lady is now a landowner? Word of Gogo's good fortune has spread fast amongst the workers at the pig farm. It elevated her in their eyes.

...

"Did you hear me?" hisses Ilse. "Tell her [Cheetah, to go]!"

Gogo's blow knocks the breath out of Ilse's body. The younger woman caves inward and releases a whistle of air.

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<sup>29</sup> "Give Petrus a hand. I like that. I like the historical piquancy. Will he pay me a wage for my labour, do you think?" (77).



It is implied that it is precisely Gogo's 'good fortune' of becoming a black female landowner which empowers her to act autonomously and violently against white individuals. Proctor highlights the reorganisation of the farm's hierarchy by contrasting Ilse's youth and naivety – 'the younger woman' is struck and 'caves forward' against the power of Gogo's newfound 'good fortune' – with Gogo's newfound 'elevated' nature, relevance, and power. Here, Proctor uses animal metaphors to clarify power relationships, even as she subverts them: '... when Ilse hit Gogo, they shrieked in chorus, bird and insect together. Deafening...' (314). While Ilse is the bird – larger, more noticeable or significant within the farm space, and a "predator" – and Gogo is the insect<sup>30</sup> – smaller and prey-like, with a presumably quieter "shriek" – the insect "wins" the altercation. This victory vitally subverts "natural" animal hierarchies (birds eat insects) as well as perceptions of land ownership. It implies that the disruption of historical "order" within the space of the farm might offer a positive protective force, and that the subversion of all-white (at the beginning of the novel) farm ownership can be not only empowering to the individual (Gogo), but also to the wider community.<sup>31</sup> Another vital moment is in the discovery that Ouma's death was caused by assisted suicide,<sup>32</sup> rather than murder. This means that the mystery of the book is not concluded with an act of violence, or 'murder, [and] that the motive is not revenge or politics, but

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<sup>30</sup> Cheetah also 'whimpers and buries her head in her lap' in this sequence as 'She can see trouble coming' (314); through noise and gesture, she is compared to a wounded or frightened dog.

<sup>31</sup> Writing about *The Savage Hour* in *The Irish Times*, Proctor details how she and her brothers were raised by Elisabeth Moekesti, the 'daughter of a Sotho farm worker... who suffered, as did most of her generation, the iniquities of apartheid South Africa', whose compassion inspired Proctor to write about that 'universe of unmoored people, those forgotten by the grand sweep of history, who endeavour to bind themselves to the future and its promise through an unpromising piece of land.' In Gogo's inheritance of – albeit 'unpromising' – land, Proctor 'binds' this black community to a more promising, and empowered, future.

<sup>32</sup> "He [Jannie] discovers that the crime is euthanasia and not murder' (Naidu 17).

compassion' (Naidu 17). Therefore, the reader cannot discount the love, positive relationships, and sense of community which is centred on the farm, and which transgresses racial boundaries and apartheid notions of farmland, ownership and the façade of "naturalness" in Proctor's South African farm.

### The Farm Novel and *Plaasroman*

The farm as a fundamentally racialised space was established as a South African literary trope as early as the nineteenth century in white Anglophone South African novels which tackle the farm very differently from my key texts, such as Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), written at the start of the scramble for Africa, and Pauline Smith's *Platkops Children* (1935).<sup>33</sup> Schreiner and Smith's novels are discussed in Coetzee's 1986 essay, "'Farm Novel' and 'Plaasroman' in South Africa", which also offers an overview of the consensus and scholarship on the space of the farm within white South African literature up until that point. This essay was notably written before the fall of apartheid, and is therefore limited in its ability to be reconstructed to comment on the post-apartheid works with which this thesis primarily concerns itself. However, certain statements continue to speak to the literary farm spaces of post-apartheid literature, and offer judgement on whether they may be deemed modern, Anglophone versions of the Afrikaans "Plaasroman" too.

The African farm is thus Schreiner's microcosm of colonial South Africa: a tiny society in the middle of the vastness of nature, living a closed-minded and self-satisfied

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<sup>33</sup> The *Plaasroman* tradition in Afrikaans 'had its golden age between the 1920s and 1940s, a time in which many farmers were losing their farms to debt, drought, and the rinderpest' (Warnes 123).

existence, driving out those of its number who seek the great white bird Truth by venturing out into the veld or by reading outside the One (closed) Book. The farm is *smallness* in the midst of *vastness*.

(Coetzee "Farm Novel" 65)

Here Coetzee implies that the "smallness" can occasionally be successful in its representation of the "vastness" of society, which is a style of writing he goes on to self-consciously employ in *Disgrace*. Coetzee advocates for his aptitude to represent the "vastness" of blackness in South Africa<sup>34</sup> through his literature. In his writing, Coetzee allows Lucy's farm to emulate Schreiner's aforementioned "microcosm" of South Africa, and yet his microcosm is a fundamentally *postcolonial* one, and a space which aids in the criticism of the whiteness of its narrator.<sup>35</sup> Sam Naidu discusses how, in modern South African farm crime novels, 'Elements of the pastoral are retained but these are accompanied by unflinching accounts of historical and current injustices, and of intimate, personal crimes, that is, "the dark side of farm life".' (12). Both *The Savage Hour* and *Disgrace* retain the connection to dogs<sup>36</sup> and reference the natural world intermittently, but these 'elements of the pastoral' are often directly involved in, and function as metaphors for, the acts of violence which entangle the natural surroundings of the farm in "the dark side of farm life". Many of the 'historical and current injustices' of farm life are revealed to the reader in *Disgrace* through Lurie's perception that central to "the dark side of farm life" are

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<sup>34</sup> In 2010, black people made up 79% of South Africa's population, while white people made up just 5% (Desilver).

<sup>35</sup> Smit-Marais and Wenzel agree that 'As a fictional reworking of the traditional farm novel (plaasroman), *Disgrace* draws on the tradition's anxieties about the rights of (white) ownership, but within a post-apartheid context' (25).

<sup>36</sup> Dogs and animalisation are discussed in a separate section towards the end of Chapter 1.

“darkness” and blackness. When he is attacked and Lucy is raped in Coetzee’s presentation of an archetypal farm attack, he reconsiders that he is ‘here in *darkest* Africa’ (95, emphasis mine), and draws upon the alleged “nativity” of blackness to the space of the farm to critique and dehumanise his attackers:

He is helpless, an Aunt Sally, a figure from a cartoon, a missionary in cassock and topi waiting with clasped hands and upcast eyes while the savages jaw away in their own lingo preparatory to plunging him into their boiling cauldron.

(95)

Lurie associates his attackers’ blackness with nativity, and nativity with savagery:<sup>37</sup> in this way, his inferiorization<sup>38</sup> of the “other” due to their space within the farm references both the *Plaasroman* trope and the persistence of colonial attitudes into the postcolonial subject. For Lurie, the men’s “nativity” places them within a kind of African “tribe”, an idea which ‘was an important element in colonial thinking about violence which was *imbued in both the British and settler audience with considerable success* and remains a deep legacy of colonialism’ (Beinart 457, emphasis mine). Lurie does not say that the men “speak their language”; rather, they ‘jaw away in their own lingo’, the verb ‘jaw’ implying an aggression to the physicality of their speech, while ‘lingo’ is a diversion from Lurie’s usually formal language, implying that theirs is a vernacular or even vulgar tongue. The presentation of

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<sup>37</sup> In colonial times, ‘Military and “legitimate” [white] force was sharply distinguished from “informal” or “barbarous” [black] violence’ (Beinart 457), a racialisation which Coetzee mirrors here in Lurie’s attitudes towards his attackers.

<sup>38</sup> Which speaks again to Fanon’s ideas surrounding inferiorization and its essential position within the colonial regime: ‘It is not possible to enslave men without logically making them inferior through and through’ (Fanon *TTAR* 40).

these men as inferior in their nativity contrasts with Lurie's sudden self-awareness of his own whiteness – he is an “Aunt Sally”, the target of a traditionally English pub game, feminised to represent the so-called “savages” prey and dressed up in performance of the occasion and its likeness to the presentation of black farming individuals within the colonial regime in South Africa. The *plaasroman* ‘of the 1920s and 1930s allowed Afrikaans writers to assert and explore a bond between the [white Afrikaans] farmer and the soil, a bond that stands metonymically for the relations between culture, place and nation’ (Warnes 120). Coetzee’s modern Anglophone take on the Afrikaans trope allows him to criticise Lurie’s whiteness – and the way in which modern whiteness is constructed by colonial whiteness even in the *post-apartheid* farm space – while acknowledging the *Plaasroman*-esque bond between farmer and land, and the contention this bond causes when notions of “nativity” are drawn into conversation. Lucy and Lurie both refer to the three men as if they are in collection of a debt which the white farmer owes to the black native: ‘rapists cum taxgatherers roaming the area’ (199); ‘They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying?’ (158).<sup>39</sup> In this way, in the modern ‘farm crime novel, there is a deliberate exhumation of all that was denied and suppressed in the original *plaasroman*’ and that the ‘blood spilled on the land is re-examined as evidence of the past crimes of land appropriation, slavery and mass murder’ (Naidu 14).

Coetzee’s ideas about what the literary farm narrative can offer to modern scholarship on racial violence are rethought and presented anew in *Disgrace*; the novel thus becomes the

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<sup>39</sup> Of course, the postcolonial memory of colonial trauma is not the only reason that racial violence is enacted within the space of Lucy’s farm.

document in which Coetzee presents a post-apartheid rethinking of many of the ideas and theories which surface in "Farm Novel". Just as 'in her novel Schreiner is not taking on the task of comprehensively representing a South African sheep-farm, and it would be unfair to make such a demand of her' ("Farm Novel" 2), Coetzee (and Proctor) presents not *the* South African farm but a short portrait of a South African farm in a moment of turbulence.

Similarly useful is Coetzee's statement that 'Once we see Smith in the context of English country-writing, it becomes clearer why in her Aangenaam valley so prominent a place is accorded to a colonial aristocracy' ("Farm Novel" 13); once we see Lurie in the context of his whiteness, of "Aunt Sally" and his English colonial heritage, it becomes clearer why in Lucy's Eastern Cape farm the hierarchies of colonialist narratives and their considerations of nativity are so vital. Although in "Farm Novel" Coetzee states that Schreiner and Smith 'by themselves... cannot be said to have defined a "farm novel" genre in English to parallel the *plaasroman* in Afrikaans' (63), I argue that *Disgrace* is his own contribution to the very trope of which he had previously denied tangible existence. Essentially, 'the "silences" that so troubled Coetzee<sup>40</sup> have been filled with a cacophony of voices, some strident, some muted, some harmonious, even some non-human voices, but mostly they are voices in conflict' (Naidu 12). Some of these voices are Coetzee's own offerings of 'a form of social analysis' which does not yet attempt to actually "'solve" South Africa's crimes' (Naidu 36). Certainly, one such uneasy "silence" – 'the problem of how to integrate the dispossessed black man into the idyll... of African pastoralism' ("*Farm Novel*" 8) remains "unsolved" by Proctor in *The Savage Hour*, in that Dumisane is murdered, and Klein Samuel is exiled before dying

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<sup>40</sup> 'Our ears today [in 1986] are finely attuned to modes of silence' (Coetzee *Farm Novel* 17): Coetzee's anticipation of 'the day when the truth will be... what is said, not what is not said, when we will hear... music as sound upon silence, not silence between sounds' (Coetzee *Farm Novel* 17) has been fulfilled, according to Naidu (12).

prematurely. The “solution” Coetzee presents in *Disgrace* – that Lucy should begrudgingly marry Petrus, the ‘relative’, ‘family’ and ‘people’ (201) of one of her attackers – hardly solves problems of land conflict (and the ownership of the female body as if it is land) any better.

### Farm Attacks

As outlined and defined in the overall thesis introduction, farm attacks – and the contestation the very term causes – in South African rural spaces are intrinsic to the recent postcolonial history of both the physical and the political landscape. Elaine Proctor presents a moment of violence within the home which creates an interesting conversation between race, nationality, xenophobia and intimate relationships on the farm in *The Savage Hour*:

Klein Samuel... grabs Cheetah’s kitchen knife and points it upwards. Dumisane’s own weight and vigour drives him onto the blade... Klein Samuel’s veins swell with conquest. The blood from the wound in Dumisane’s chest pumps thick red onto the mud floor. The light is fading in his eyes... Klein Samuel, confident of victory now... stands above him and stabs him again, this time into his back. He does not stop stabbing.

(297)

This act of violence is primarily motivated by jealousy, rather than farmland, yet there is a territoriality to the attack which makes Cheetah’s body proxy for the space of the farm – the land which both farm workers wish to “husband”. Coetzee considers this in “Farm Novel”:  
‘At a mythic level, the farmer I am describing is forbidden to rape the land. Instead he must

husband it, giving it a devoted attention which will bring it to bear manyfold, yet remain fertile for succeeding generations' (3). Cheetah's name carries additional significance within this assault on the land, the farm, and the woman: she is a big cat, one of Africa's "Big Five", an animal often hunted for sport. Klein Samuel is an immigrant worker from Zimbabwe who has been prejudiced against in that he is never considered to be "of the land" in the same way that "native" black workers (like Dumisane) are – this is demonstrated in the brutal attack on him by "native" South African Zulus (153-4). It is perhaps due to his recent exposure to this prejudice that the act becomes entrenched with a form of vitally *xenophobic* tension, which is yet racialised as it is triggered by territorialism over Cheetah, acting as proxy for the farm. The act of violence transforms Cheetah's body from a sentient human entity to a racialised site of dispute. The final line of the above quotation, 'He does not stop stabbing', is employed by Proctor to shock the reader; the persistence of Klein Samuel's vicious passion and deep-rooted hatred encourages the reader to question the Zimbabwean man's humanity. This kind of dehumanisation by a white author is problematic, in that Proctor attempts to signpost an unstoppable, instinctive, almost animal force of violence, yet her writing here does more to signal her own internalised prejudice. Furthermore, she both recognises and highlights that 'The blood from the wound... pumps thick red onto the *mud* floor' (emphasis mine), signifying her detachment from Cheetah's lived experience in a farm worker's mud house rather than a "white" farmhouse with which Proctor would have been familiar as a child.<sup>41</sup> Proctor's intense fascination with the black men's blood and veins, rather than their emotions or expressions, depersonalises her characters further: she becomes fascinated by the very flesh of the blackness and animality

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<sup>41</sup> I discuss Heidi Holland's lack of neutrality surrounding black home spaces and how her description of them signifies her whiteness in Chapter 2.



she perceives within their violence and nativity. Proctor also creates a culture of blame around Dumisane, which is perhaps a nod to Klein Samuel's attitude towards him as a "native" following the attack he underwent by "natives". However, this blame culture is constructed not only out of Klein Samuel's recently-deepened prejudice against South African nativity, but also out of Proctor's whiteness. When Klein Samuel 'grabs Cheetah's kitchen knife and points it upwards', it is 'Dumisane's own weight and vigour [which] drives him onto the blade', leaving 'a bloody hole in his chest' (297). From this, I infer that it is Dumisane's 'vigour' which pushes him onto the knife and into death. His dynamism, drive, vitality, and persistence to live even in the face of sudden, unexpected racial-xenophobic violence, are demonised in the way that Proctor has these features highlight his blackness, and his implied beastliness due to his 'weight'.

Proctor also relies upon imagery relating to darkness and night-time, such as Dumisane's blood being described as 'the dark mark on the sand beside Cheetah' as 'the night settles into its darkest hours' (306); furthermore, 'the water in the bucket goes deep red. Then black' (298). 'The light is fading in his [Dumisane's] eyes' (297) as he becomes subjected to specifically *black* violence, too. Violence is also racialised as intrinsically black earlier in the novel: when Jannie's father beat his mother, 'She cleaned, baked and sewed to create order out of the brutality that the fall of darkness unleashed in her house' (37-8). Violence is thus dynamically drawn as the precise 'fall' or weakness within 'darkness' (blackness). Further, Jannie's adult eyes show a 'wave of black despair', and his colleague Mokheti has a 'gaze full of matching darkness' (90) when they are conversing in the aftermath of Ouma's death over its potential causes. Proctor thus offers the reader blackness amongst so many different instances of violence, so that within the space of the farm, blackness directly foregrounds

racial violence as a constant semantic presence. Coetzee, too, colludes in this double-representation of violence, in its constantly being painted with darkness and associated with dark colour: he deems that Lurie's knowledge of 'Italian and French will not save him here in *darkest Africa*' (95, emphasis mine). Violence as having constant union with blackness in these societies is unequivocally incorrect, and this is the end to which Proctor and Coetzee concur, even when they inadvertently show their whiteness. This is especially the case when the darkness-violence alliance is compared with 'the great *white* bird Truth' (Schreiner 161, emphasis mine) and the association of honesty and reality with whiteness; in this way the "colour" associated with violence is fundamentally racialised within the space of the farm in both novels. Violence as a force is darkened by both authors in contrast to their own whiteness, and, in Coetzee's case, in accordance with the prejudice of his narrator.

As aforementioned, the real-life South African farm attack is often characterised by black peril, and yet Beiranvand and Liema posit that Coetzee prefers to cover 'black peril and white peril neutrally' in *Disgrace*, 'something which is not observed in post-apartheid South Africa... [as] white media covers cases of black peril extensively in order to create public black hysteria' (56-7). Despite numerous instances of black peril, Coetzee does attempt to an extent to include narratives from both sides of the racial violence or peril conversation in *Disgrace*. Lurie launches a retaliatory attack on the youngest of the black men who raped his daughter. However, within this attack, Coetzee writes Lurie such that while striking the boy, he thinks 'So this is what it is like ... ! This is what it is like to be a savage!' (206). In this way, he removes the boy's humanity, drawing upon aforementioned notions of blackness equating nativity and therefore animalising him – again, here, colour is highlighted in association with the act of violence: 'as they watch, pearls of blood emerge on the dark skin'

(207). Thus, Pollox – or “the boy”, as he is constantly called by Lurie, drawing upon a long history of the infantilisation of black Africans – is fundamentally othered, even as Lurie feels himself “becoming” a savage, and, by extension and by Lurie’s perceptions, “becoming” black as he enacts violence. The act itself is a retaliatory act of violence, done under the guise of his daughter’s protection but also an act of racial hatred – ‘*Teach him a lesson, Show him his place*’ (206), thinks Lurie, almost methodically. In the aftermath of the act, however, Lurie’s opinion on the event changes:

Hours after the incident his hand still tingles from the blows. When he thinks of the boy and his threats, he seethes with anger. At the same time, he is ashamed of himself. He condemns himself absolutely. He has taught no one a lesson – certainly not the boy. All he has done is to estrange himself further from Lucy.

(208)

Even though Lurie feels shame and regret – one of the few instances in the novel he acknowledges such emotions – it is not the pain in his hand, or the boy, which make him feel this way, but his increased distancing from Lucy, and from the safety that her whiteness and allyship represents to him. Pollox is thus discarded once more by Lurie, whose affinity to whiteness triumphs over a young boy’s pain and fear, and black peril comes to the surface, persisting even in a moment of white-on-black violence and, arguably, white peril.

Both Coetzee and Proctor offer scenes in their novels in which one man attacks another, in an act “provoked” by sexual relations of some kind. Through Lurie’s above reflection, Coetzee offers further personal comment on how revenge violence is detrimental to all

racism and parties, and Proctor appears to agree: in *The Savage Hour* Dumisane dies, Klein Samuel has to flee, no one claims the “prize” of Cheetah’s body, and she is left partnerless and distraught. Coetzee effectively declares a fundamental lack of productivity to violence, in the same way that the exposure of acts of racial violence within literature and news certainly directly affects public opinion of the race of the perpetrator. Perhaps this proliferation of black peril and hysteria by literature and the media<sup>42</sup> is one of the reasons why acts of racial violence done to black characters by white characters in Coetzee’s *Disgrace* do not gather as much attention from police and law enforcement services: in his acts of racially targeted violence towards black individuals within the space of the farm, David Lurie faces no official repercussions. Acts of violence done by white offenders are also confronted quickly and quietly by white authors:

A homemade bomb had been found on a farm in the valley a few years ago. When asked about its intended target, the farmer had muttered, “The Xhosa bastard.” He meant Nelson Mandela. And that farmer went to jail.

(292)

Proctor attempts to show that a white farmer might also be the one delivering such premeditated violence, but she falls short in the infrequency of white peril demonstrated in *The Savage Hour* compared with the regularity of black peril – this signifies her whiteness and the narrative she might have been fed by (white) media. Indeed, in both Proctor and Coetzee’s writings, the police become involved within narratives surrounding black peril –

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<sup>42</sup> I discuss media portrayals of farm attacks in the thesis introduction.

Ouma's alleged murder and the attack on Lurie and his daughter – but not so much white peril – Lurie's retaliatory attack on Pollux. Despite Proctor and Coetzee's apparent concurrence on the fact that cultures of race-based suspicion can be as damaging as outright acts of violence, their own whiteness interferes within their narrative (notably, Proctor's more so than Coetzee's) in the unequal distribution of black peril over white peril within the two novels.

### Rape and Sexual Violence

Throughout *Disgrace*, with each act of racial violence detailed, Coetzee asks – or even dares – the reader to form their own moral judgements on what the act *means*, both within and for the space of the South African farm, how the portrayal of the act compares to the many other acts of violence detailed, and what the reader's immediate perspective on the act gives away about the reader's own prejudice and privilege. Be that as it may, Coetzee's whiteness must not be detached from either his writing or his white narration, as his exploration of humanity is mediated by whiteness. In *Cultured Violence*, Rosemary Jolly deems *Disgrace* to be 'a text that demonstrates Coetzee's commitment to the principle that, in order effectively to understand social violence, our most intimately held notions of what it means to be human need to be thoroughly scrutinized' (38). Indeed, the very notion of humanity – or lack thereof – is directly related to the construction of the alleged South African farm's "culture of violence", as I have already touched upon in my discussions of how inferiorization and violence are perceived to be inherent to both nativity and blackness. Naidu extends that 'for the white farmer... there has been a shift from the farm being a site of freedom and self-sufficiency to its becoming a space of imprisonment and vulnerability' (14).

The rape of Lurie's daughter, Lucy, by three black men, which Coetzee portrays as an act of black resistance against white occupation of "native" black farmland, is a shocking scene which we never clearly see in *Disgrace*. This very fact – that the rape remains unseen, vastly undiscussed, and certainly unresolved or unavenged – makes the act all the more shrouded and critically interesting. The violation occurs *in darkness*, and it is generated *by those of dark skin*. Indeed, the struggle for farmland is directly alluded to in Lucy's comments that 'I think they are rapists first and foremost... I think they *do* rape... They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying?' (158). Lucy's perception of her own rape epitomises her attackers as rapists and violent *before* she allows Lurie or the reader to consider them as anything else. Furthermore, albeit backhandedly, she acknowledges both her privilege and her prejudice in her "white guilt"-like nod to how she feels as though she "owed" them something due to her – until now – comfortable, peaceful, and privileged life. Coetzee's words here are so heavily loaded; Lucy is seen to "pay" for her residence with her own body, as her sexuality, her autonomy, and her freedom of choice are taken forcibly away from her. Such a notion echoes Wendy Davies' musings on farm workers in *We Cry for our Land* – 'the only way women can get or keep jobs may be to grant sexual favours, or to file no complaints in the case of favours taken, or of actual rape' (25) – although Lucy is a white landowner, who holds more privilege and autonomy than a black worker. In this way – and assuming the fact that the rapists in *Disgrace* do, indeed '*do* rape' as Lucy speculates – the three black rapists are enforcing a form of dehumanising taxation upon the land occupied by white farmers, and the *bodies* which may only be tentatively occupied by white female farmers before they are violated again. Left unchecked, this expectation of violence within

literature feeds into the culture of suspicion which in turn percolates the “culture of violence” in real time in South Africa. Importantly, there is, however, a great problem in the construction of black masculinity in this way by a white author (and by Lucy, the white speaker). Although David Attwell, writing in 1993, deems his fiction to be ‘more than conscious of its own precariousness’ (125), Coetzee yet ‘faces the problem of cultural authority’, and ‘his relationship with the European canon entails an accusation of complicity in a history of domination’ (4). This means that his construction of blackness as violent – and also Lucy’s generalisation, after she has been violated, that this violence is a habit, or even a hobby, for the three black men, or black men in general – is not reflective of the lived experience of blackness, but rather the lived experience of white superstition and paranoia of black peril within the farm space. In this way, Coetzee’s white privilege donates a further layer of unreliability to Lucy’s words, of which the reader must be carefully and continuously aware.

Lurie reconsiders his daughter’s rapists following his discovery of his daughter’s pregnancy:

The gang of three. Three fathers in one. Rapists rather than robbers, Lucy called them – rapists cum taxgatherers roaming the area, attacking women, indulging their violent pleasures. Well, Lucy was wrong. They were not raping, they were mating. It was not the pleasure principle that ran the show but the testicles, sacs bulging with seed aching to perfect itself. And no, lo and behold, *the child!* Already he is calling it *the child* when it is no more than a worm in his daughter’s womb. What kind of child can seed like that give life to, seed driven into the woman not in love but in hatred, mixed chaotically, meant to soil her, to mark her, like a dog’s urine?

We come to learn of the act of rape, the rapists themselves, and the effect which the act has on Lucy, through a male figure, who is in so many ways peripheral to the act itself. Lurie is behind a locked door in the bathroom while Lucy is raped, and he 'stands on the toilet seat and peers through the bars on the window' (95) in his attempts to ascertain the situation outside, while safely imprisoned away from his daughter's violation. Even though David is Lucy's father, he is utterly polar to her: a male, heterosexual, city-dweller, visitor to her farm. I contend that they find commonality only in *race* and *disgrace* – that is to say, in their lived experiences of whiteness, and in their understandings of the disgrace which their relative – and again, polar – experiences of (sexual, for Lucy) assault give them. It is important to note that David excuses his own actions when he, a white man, rapes Melanie, a black girl – 'Not rape, not quite that' (25). However, he refuses to excuse the rape of his daughter by three black men. When Lurie raped Melanie, he publicly recollected to reporters how he thought that he had been 'enriched by the experience' (56); on the other hand, he considers his daughter to be "marked" 'like a dog's urine' (199) – to him, she becomes dirty, animalised, and inferior, and he appears to imply that the rape has permeated her skin so that she reeks of the shame which he also feels. Further, Lurie's consideration of rape in the space of the farm in the above quotation concerns more the perpetrators – who are, to Lurie, "dogs" – than the victim, and his judgements are thus infected with the political narrative of farm attacks, of colour and of racial prejudice. He is as unsympathetic of victimhood as he is of blackness, and fails to understand Lucy's personal healing in any terms other than his – limited – own. Coetzee does offer the reader one moment of respite from Lurie's constant selfish monologue, however:



He [David] remembers, as a child, poring over the word *rape* in newspaper reports, trying to puzzle out what exactly it meant, wondering what the letter *p*, usually so gentle, was doing in the middle of a word held in such horror that no one would utter it aloud.

(159-60)

This statement qualifies that Lurie does not understand – and indeed, has never understood – the gravity of violation which rape entails, just as he has never understood, but often thought about, the word itself. Over the course of *Disgrace*, he muses upon every detail of the act; the baby, the rapists, Lucy’s farm and its future, even the bed on which the crime occurred, rather than confronting his own relationship to acts of sexual assault. ‘In Lucy’s room the double bed is stripped bare. *The scene of the crime*, he thinks to himself; and, as if reading the thought, the policemen avert their eyes, pass on’ (109). Contemplating the bed is akin to musing upon the *p* in the word “rape”: peripheral to the consequences of the act within the South African farm, and yet in acknowledgement of the significance of the space in which the act took place. Within the space of Lucy’s farm, the man through whose eyes the reader learns of events in the novel is revealed to be limited in his understanding of, and sympathy with victims of, racialised violence, even when that victim is his own daughter. In this way, Coetzee presents a climate which is not sympathetic to the consequences of violation and suffering, and rather fosters secrecy, suspicion, and prejudice.

The fact that Lucy decides to hide the fact that she has been raped is essential to the understanding of both race and gender relations in South African rural environments. Her explanation to her father is as follows in *Disgrace*:

“The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone.”

“This place being what?”

“This place being South Africa.”

(112)

Rather than allowing her body to become a site on which a dispute about race relations and land ownership within rural environments is conducted, Lucy chooses silence. She therefore prevents both her body from being treated as an extension of the farm, and the rape from being viewed as an impersonal form of trespass, rather than a deeply personal, thought-through, gendered, and racialised form of violation. This idea pays tribute, in a way, to how ‘The hunger strikes, riots and arsons that punctuated prison life during the democratic transition constituted the climax of this *effort to regain control over their own sense of being*’ (Filippi 643): Lucy’s reclamation of her sense of self in not involving the authorities signifies an act of spatial revolt. Coetzee therefore conducts Lucy to silently reclaim and redefine her culture for female farmers, and for women in rural environments: there is a great degree of empowerment in her silence, and in her ability to choose for herself where she wishes to stand in the bigger picture of South African race relations – even if that means removing herself from it entirely. Just as the space of the farm is the home of her own

business, so, too, is the act done to her 'my business, mine alone'. To explain her choice is so much more complicated than the fact that, as Graham St John Stott proposes, 'to come forward as a victim would only invite further abuse, while to demand revenge would bring with it the risk of perpetuating violence against women or between racial groups' (349). Her stance is certainly not even a partial practical solution to the greater complex problem of violent race relations, but it is one potential choice. Certainly, within the microcosm of the farm in *Disgrace*, Coetzee makes a case for the value of silence and cooperation to promote autonomy and, further, to attempt to break the cycle of inter-reactionary racial violence (which Lurie nevertheless perpetuates in his aforementioned retaliatory attack on Pollux). Lucy could, equivocally, be avoiding the judgemental, unpleasant, and drawn-out hassle of launching a rape case – David's observes 'Behind the lavatory door, two spent matchsticks, which they do not even notice' (109), demonstrating that the police are unobservant and inefficient at best. Lucy's actions, however, constitute an autonomous gesture, in which she removes herself from the culture of racially motivated violence through silence, which in fact has the potential to possess as much power in South African rural cultures as speaking out could have had within the multi-layered racial complexity which the space of the farm is home to. Coetzee presents Lucy's deeply spatial choice as both deliberate and appropriate to the climate in 'this place, at this time... This place being South Africa', specifically.

Coetzee himself pondered how farmland and farmer are tied together in a gendered fashion in his introduction to *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*:

At a mythic level, the farmer I am describing is forbidden to rape the land. Instead he must *husband* it, giving it a devoted attention which will bring it to bear manyfold,

yet remain fertile for succeeding generations. In the logic of the myth, the sons who inherit the farm husband the same land; or, to put it another way, the generations of husband-farmers are the same (mythic) man.

(3)

Here, the farmer is portrayed as uniquely male and the land as uniquely female. In *Disgrace*, however, the rape (although “forbidden” by Coetzee’s above statement) is done *to* the farmer (Lucy) *by* the black native – who, as outlined earlier, is for several reasons associated more intrinsically with the natural landscape: ‘our DNA is connected to this land’ (Smith). Thus, Coetzee upends the narrative of his theoretical “mythic farmer” within his own later work, and yet the forced union conceives a child. Lurie is disgusted at how the act of rape produces a legacy, and the sexual features necessary for this – the rapist’s ‘sacs bulging with seed aching to perfect itself... seed... like a dog’s urine’ is ‘no more than a worm in his daughter’s womb’ (199) – repulse him further, as is demonstrated through his thorough, continued imagining of the details of the black man’s body. The notion is dually vulgar and uncomfortably intimate to Lurie. Twice within a few lines he animalises the rapist’s “seed” – a seed which has been “planted” forcefully in the “ground” of the farm space, a space which Lucy’s body represents; Lurie animalises both his daughter and her unborn child, too, by association. That the rapist’s “seed” is ‘*no more than* a worm’ (emphasis mine) rather than a potential carrier of life speaks to how his daughter described the men as ‘rapists *first and foremost*’ (158, emphasis mine); both statements qualify exactly what the men and their animalised bodies should be considered before anything else. The latter statement turns the black man into an insect, whose ‘sacs’ are ‘bulging’ but only with grubs and pests; in this way, Lucy’s bodily farmland is polluted and ravaged by parasites. Rape within a farming

environment draws inevitable parallels with not only land husbandry, but also animal husbandry and artificial insemination. With such judgement upon her, Lucy also becomes an animal roaming the land she used to own, and she will be marked – branded – by the dark skin of her baby when it is born. In this way, Coetzee’s mythic farmer and farmland are utterly destabilized by the act of racially motivated, violating rape, in what is vitally a post-apartheid environment: Coetzee comments closely upon the shift in rural land politics between the publication of *White Writing* in 1988 and *Disgrace* in 1999, speaking uncomfortably from between the legs of a white woman. Indeed, the closest Lurie comes to comprehension of what has happened to his daughter in a wider political sense is within the following statement, in the aftermath of the attack:

“It was history speaking through them,” he offers at last. “A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn’t. It came down from the ancestors.”

(156)

Here Coetzee directly references the influence of apartheid politics – which Lurie admits to be ‘A history of wrong’ despite his persistently racist prejudices in most of the rest of the novel – upon the modern space of the South African farm. Although Coetzee stresses throughout *Disgrace* that Lurie believes rape to be inherently chaotic,<sup>43</sup> the only way in which this is true in the context I reference in this chapter is that it is *at once* personal<sup>44</sup> and political, in that the motivations behind the act are clearly partially to do with distribution of

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<sup>43</sup> He calls rape ‘seed driven into the woman not in love but in hatred, mixed *chaotically*; (199, emphasis mine), and even goes so far as to deem rape the ‘god of chaos’ (105).

<sup>44</sup> Lucy contemplates how her rape ‘was done with such personal hatred’ (156).

land and their associated histories of racialised prejudice. In essence, Coetzee's writings on rape as a real and contemporary form of racial violence illuminate and complicate the social, political, economic, and cultural repercussions of rural land ownership, though they are complicated by his identity as a white man who at once has no experience of being female and violated, or black and subjugated to the kind of generalising prejudice which both Lucy and Lurie impress upon their attackers. *Disgrace* plays upon – and almost requires – the reader's own existing prejudices, so that Coetzee as a writer is empowered with the ability to draw attention to the epistemic nature of racial violence and its persistence through several cultures, climates, histories, and societies which the novel *Disgrace* does in fact infiltrate.

#### Animalisation and Dehumanisation

The young woman, knee-deep in the sow's slop and excrement, stops her labour to listen to Delilah's cry. The sound seems to suck the brown out of her skin, leaving her indigo hued. This is Cheetah. She has a feral thinness about her... Her father named her Cheetah because of the cat-like cheekbones her Khoisan ancestry gave to her face. She thought it was a good name because it meant she could run from trouble. She was wrong about that.

(Proctor 15)

Although Cheetah, a young black woman with HIV/AIDs who is taken in and cared for by Ouma, is initially introduced by Proctor as a 'young woman', she is quickly degraded, dehumanised, and animalised in the space of this short extract. Animalisation and

dehumanization are not the same thing: by my definition, while dehumanization concerns the removal of a person's humanity, animalisation is further degrading, in its connotations of another level of inferiority.<sup>45</sup> Here, Cheetah is covered in pig 'slop'<sup>46</sup> and excrement, yet appears unfazed about this dirtiness being part of 'her labour'. Her thinness is specifically 'feral', a word much more closely associated with cats, strays, and aggressive or dangerous non-domesticated or wild animals than with humans. That she has high 'cat-like' cheekbones is attributed to her Khoisan ancestry, of which nativity and feline animality are highlighted.<sup>47</sup> Even her skin is chameleon-like in the way it changes colour at the sound of Delilah's distress: all of these animalisations are presented to us for the racialised purpose of dehumanisation. Haapoja discusses 'the human need to externalise and reject its own animality, and to project its undesired characteristics onto those rendered "other" to the realm of humanity';<sup>48</sup> this is exactly what Proctor is emulating, in her definition of the "other"'s body on her own terms:

My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly...

(Fanon "The Fact of Blackness" 86)

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<sup>45</sup> The accentuation of the alleged undesirability of nativity often relies upon animalisation.

<sup>46</sup> Pig's slop, or feed, is made from human leftovers; that Cheetah is covered in it demonstrates another level to her dehumanisation.

<sup>47</sup> Although Proctor is of course constructing an image of Cheetah's sculpted face for the reader, that does not mean that the image is devoid of an animalisation which is rooted in prejudice.

<sup>48</sup> 'It follows not only that the human-animal boundary is what makes it possible to throw anyone outside the protections of humanity and treat them like an animal (as is widely noted in posthumanist discourses), but also that it will be impossible to dismantle racism or coloniality without also dismantling the logic of animality and vice versa' (Haapoja).

Cheetah's body is presented, firstly merely as a 'young girl'. It is then *re-presented* to the reader, this time as black, animal, and other – her skin is even 'recoloured', too, 'leaving her indigo hued' from her original 'brown'. Cheetah is further animalised in the way that she is spoken to by the white Ilse:

... in her helplessness and her panic, she speaks as she would to her animals. "Come, come, now, Cheetah, up!"

...

"*Kom nou, Cheetah! Loop!*" she snaps.

The solid earth of caution that has held Gogo up gives way to something much more volatile. "She is not a dog," she says quietly. "She is a somebody."

(314)

Ilse commands Cheetah with simple, short words, which are more like commands for domesticated animals than human requests. Proctor acknowledges that Ilse 'speaks as she would to her animals', qualifying that this is due to 'helplessness' and 'panic', which are not valid reasons for a girl's animalisation, or for the removal of Cheetah's autonomy and dignity. Cheetah responds in fulfilment of the role of a threatened or wounded "cub" or "puppy" in that she 'whimpers and buries her head in her lap' when 'she can see trouble coming' (314); equally, when she cries after Dumisane's death, her cries are 'small *mewing* cries that frighten rather than comfort her' (298) – 'whimpering' and 'mewing' are incredibly animalised noises. Both in victimhood and resistance, white authors dehumanize their black characters, and the fact that this animalisation happens within the farm space,



and to someone with a highly stigmatised disease which is frequently associated with blackness in Africa,<sup>49</sup> only problematises the degradation further.

In *Disgrace*, some of Lurie's racist opinions are detailed through his animalisation of black individuals, too. He talks about dogs in the same breath that he discusses black individuals of whom he has a low opinion: 'The corpses of the dogs lie in the cages where they fell... Of Petrus there is no sign' (108) – in Lurie's discussion, this proximity is significant. Later, he calls Pollux 'A jackal boy' (202): Pollux is a jackal, a wild dog, to Lurie, who has no "human" self-control and only animalistic desires to mate, or rape. While Coetzee portrays dogs in conjunction with whiteness to imply protection, safety, and civilization, the same animals' juxtaposition with blackness indicates quite different distinctive features – aggressiveness, nativity, and deceitfulness. Finally, Lurie deems that the attack on Lucy was 'meant to soil her, to mark her, like a dog's urine' (199). Perhaps in small retaliation from the obvious degradation and trauma Lucy went through by being raped, through these words Lurie animalises her rapists. To him, her attackers are no better than dogs who "mark their territory" by urinating on the same spot that other dogs have already "marked";<sup>50</sup> they 'do rape' (Coetzee 158) continually and compulsively. Lurie regards such behaviour as repetitive, animalistic, and sub-human, sentiments which are revealed as he considers his daughter's rape.

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<sup>49</sup> 'Claims that HIV originated in Africa and the racist link between sexual promiscuity and African-ness have also served to reinforce the othering of Black Africans in relation to the epidemic' (Petros et al. 70).

<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, Lucy's black baby presents a long-term record, and complex repercussions, of the rapists' act of "marking their territory".

## Dogs

So often companions to and observers of human life, the way in which the dogs in *Disgrace* and *The Savage Hour* are written offers an alternative viewpoint within the space of the farm, to track the ambiance of the plot and its relative state of resolution or turmoil – as in the latter novel – or to aid the critical reader in their analysis of both the author and the characters’ attitudes towards the significance of racialised violence – as in the former.

Proctor uses the figure of the jackal to reflect the relative peace or turmoil of the nearby farm at the beginning and end of the novel:

A black-backed jackal on the hill behind the farmhouse searches for grubs under the sharp yellow grass. He hunts without the cover of darkness for reasons of scarcity and the demands of the starving cubs in the den...

(4)

The jackal, watching Cheetah from the mountaintop, turns on his heels, lopes across the short yellow grass and vanishes over the brim of the hill to hunt, as he likes to do, under cover of night.

(362)

Although Naidu acknowledges that Proctor frames the narrative with the jackal, and provides it as a sentient being (29), he does not go so far as to state that with the inclusion of this wild dog, Proctor is offering two moments of serenity which bookend “the savage hour”, a title which indicates that in between these points there is a snapshot or period of snowballing violence on the farm. A growing peacefulness is implied when these two

statements (4 and 362) are contrasted in light of the rest of the storyline, as a kind of resolution has been reached,<sup>51</sup> which is reflected in the natural surroundings of the farm. These “natural” or “native” surroundings – wildlife and farm animals, crops and the bush – are detailed surprisingly sparingly by Proctor, and so the jackal is made to represent the timeless inevitability and continuity of natural space, while also depicting shifts in the life and death of non-human animals who live and work on the farm. In constructing the jackal as this reflective being, Proctor is making a statement about how the wisdom of nature is a part of nativity (and, by extension, of animality), implying that animals are polyvalent, and that therefore so must the process of animalising be. The reader notes how the jackal responds to the events on the farm without human ignorance, selective vision, or prejudice, but rather with a pure curiosity, and sense of self-preservation: it is the only being of its kind in the novel, and its movements and appearances are some of the least biased and most interesting of all.

All the next-door pigs at feeding time couldn't match the depth and terror in that sound. It makes everything else mute. The cicadas. The water. The cows.

The jackal on the hillside spins round to see what new horror has come his way, and then steps back, rattled.

(8)

Just as some of the black characters are animalised, in this instance the jackal is humanised. It is implied that the jackal comprehends the emotion within Delilah's scream at finding

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<sup>51</sup> Especially in the case of the end of Ouma's suffering.

Ouma dead and that it is this, and, by extension, the death of Ouma, which the jackal is 'rattled' by, rather than just a sudden noise.

In *Disgrace*, dogs are employed like the jackal in *The Savage Hour*, as figures which underline the nature of racial violence within the space of the South African farm. The tallest of the three black men who attack David and Lucy shoots all the caged dogs:

With practiced ease he brings a cartridge up into the breech, thrusts the muzzle into the dogs' cage. The biggest of the German Shepherds, slavering with rage, snaps at it. There is a heavy report; blood and brains splatter the cage. For a moment the barking ceases. The man fires twice more. One dog, shot through the chest, dies at once; another, with a gaping throat-wound, sits down heavily, flattens its ears, following with its gaze the movements of this being who does not even bother to administer a *coup de grâce*.

A hush falls. The remaining three dogs, with nowhere to hide, retreat to the back of the pen, milling about, whining softly. Taking his time between shots, the man picks them off.

(95-6)

The level of – brutal and shocking – detail with which Coetzee provides the reader in this passage implies a weight and significance to the act, so that it surpasses a random act of cruel violence. In "A Theory of Racial Conflict", Joseph Himes discusses how 'violence is itself not the problem-solving tactic', that it is 'rather an intermediary attention-gaining, communication-mobilizing device violence', and that 'as Bayard Rustin... has shrewdly

observed,<sup>52</sup> even such expressions of violence retain a notable measure of calculated deliberateness' (60). I believe all three statements to be at play in the case of the tall black man shooting the dogs, as although no great problems appear to be "solved" through this "tactic", the man demonstrates his violent potential to David and Lucy, "gaining their attention" and communicating his intentions; that he loads the gun with 'practised ease' and takes his time between shots demonstrates 'calculated deliberateness', and implies repetition and experience in acts of this kind. It is important, however, to consider the longer-term implications of the attack, too. As several of the dogs are being looked after by Lucy as part of her farming business, the removal of their life also signifies a removal of *protection* for their owners. There is an inherent territorialism within the man's actions, as he responds to the fact that the guard dogs, often owned to protect against racially motivated farm attacks, by shooting all of them, but not the bulldog.<sup>53</sup> This removal of protection implicitly enables further farm attacks by the trio.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the act of violence appears even more calculated and enabling for the men in their apparently continued attempts to 'do rape' (Coetzee 158) and "liberate" farms from white occupation.

The tall black man violates animal, as well as human, features of Lucy's farm life to assert a claim over her land as well as her body. In shooting the dogs, he achieves this by weakening the status and security of the Luries, and Lucy's land, business, and livelihood. Through the act, he also disputes Lucy's choice to use part of the land to keep kennels for guard dogs which are 'bred to snarl' (Coetzee 110) at black people – Coetzee confirms his own assertion

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<sup>52</sup> 'Nor was the violence along the way random and "insensate"' (Rustin).

<sup>53</sup> It is possible that the bulldog was left by the gunman as it is not so much of a guard dog as a German Shepherd or similar; it was not seen as so much of a threat.

<sup>54</sup> As aforementioned, *The Savage Hour* details how absence of canine protection enables such feats: 'There are the dogs. Dogs still mean something. The more dogs, the more deterrence' (60).

in the above quotation, in that 'The biggest of the German Shepherds, slavering with rage, snaps at it [the gun's muzzle]' (95). Inasmuch as these guard dogs are 'bred to snarl' (110) at black people, they can be seen as servants of the white middle- and upper-classes, and, by extension, gatekeepers of – and signifiers for – white land ownership; the dogs are trained to become complicit in the racial prejudice their owners reiterate.<sup>55</sup> Thus, non-human animals are brought into racialised debates about rightful land ownership by a white author, in order to demonstrate one perception of black opinions and motivations for violence within the space of the farm. In the way that they are jeopardised through their role in the protection of a farm, Coetzee demonstrates how dogs can be both used and portrayed to come down on one side – the white one – of the racialised narrative of violence of farm violence, despite their lack of the "human" capacity for autonomy or decision-making in this respect.

Critically, at one point in *Disgrace*, Katy the bulldog takes Lurie's lead, attacking Pollux after Lurie hits him.<sup>56</sup> 'At once the dog is upon him. Her teeth close over his elbow; she braces her forelegs and tugs, growling. With a shout of pain he tries to pull free... the dog ignores him' (206). Although arguably Katy, as a non-human animal, lacks comparable conscience, knowledge, and emotions which motivate Lurie to strike Petrus, the dog's imitation of Lurie's actions signifies two things. Firstly, since coming to the farm, Lurie appears to have become Katy's "master", and an alliance has formed between the two, so that the dog both senses and supports his prejudice. Secondly, the violent unity between dog and master

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<sup>55</sup> Shontel Stewart discusses how dogs have been used in the history of white power to "control" black populations in "Man's Best Friend? How Dogs Have Been Used to Oppress African Americans".

<sup>56</sup> 'The flat of his hand catches the boy in the face. "You swine!" he shouts, and strikes him a second time, so that he staggers. "You filthy swine!"' (Coetzee 206).

consolidates and extends upon the novel's commentary on the figure of farm dogs. While up until this point in the novel they have been images of protection, this scene extends their role within white territoriality and converts the dog to an image of attack, too. They go from being a representation of white fear of black intruders, and of attacks within the farm space, to *active* within this narrative. Furthermore, given Lurie's earlier opinion that Pollux is 'a jackal boy' (202), to him this fight between Katy – a dog that Lurie is much more forthcoming to name than most black figures in the text – and Pollux could represent a fight between a domesticated servant of whiteness and a "wild dog" (of blackness). Because of Katy's domestication, Lurie considers her in a way more "human" than Pollux, whom he considers "wild" and "native" in the same way as a jackal; these are traits which form the basis of his dehumanisation and animalisation of Pollux and the other black men who attack Lucy. This further speaks to Lurie's conceptions of domestication and civilization, and how they are defined by his whiteness. Overall, in *The Savage Hour* and *Disgrace*, dogs are used to protect and attack, as a symbol of whiteness<sup>57</sup> and of white land ownership against the black reclaiming of land. As discussed earlier, dogs are also used as negative comparisons within commentaries of animalisation and dehumanisation, and while the dogs' animality and nativity is at points employed by authors to highlight racism and a lack of morality, they are at once symbols of peace and protection, of peace, wisdom, and turmoil, of whiteness and blackness, and of the farm and the farm attack itself.

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<sup>57</sup> And in defence of whiteness.

## CHAPTER 2 – THE URBAN SPACE

### 1. Victims of Violence

In *Born in Soweto* (1994), Holland presents acts of violence – or the threat of the same – to constitute a normality, and to point to an overarching “culture of violence” within the township. She introduces to the reader victims and bystanders to the perpetrators of the violence: I discuss the first of these in this first section. In one early passage, Holland discusses ‘the invasion of dangerous forces’ and how they allegedly unconditionally permeate the lives of otherwise innocent youths:

The boys lying under the kitchen table have rehearsed a defence strategy in the event of human invasion, she explains. They will rise up together and, with arms outstretched, heave the table in the faces of intruders approaching through the front door.

(Holland 23)

Although the ages of these youths are not specified, their introduction as ‘boys’ invites assumptions that they are children rather than juveniles or youths according to the parameters set out in Ward et al. (3). Holland posits that their proposed and premeditated actions are necessitated due to the overwhelming violence within Soweto’s culture, which has resulted in a ‘rehearsal’ – rising ‘up together’ ‘with arms outstretched’, implying a subconscious, sleepwalker-like image – a drill utterly lacking in childish innocence. Holland even deems Soweto ‘a world in which innocence has been outlawed’ (130), and, to her, this deficiency is shocking; despite being born in nearby Johannesburg, she has never



experienced a comparably “dangerous”<sup>58</sup> environment. In the acknowledgements to *Born in Soweto*, Holland thanks her Sowetan tour operator and photographer, who acted as a black escort to ensure her safety during research trips to the township: Jimmy Ntintili and Victor Matom ‘kindly accompanied me into Soweto on several occasions when I thought it was too risky to go alone’ (ix). Importantly, however, for innocence to be outlawed from a society, it must first be present: childhood innocence is a feat which is sometimes both taken for granted and viewed as sacred within certain privileged white communities. Nguyen details how ‘Problematically, innocence has always been a racialized and gendered concept... For children of colour, childhood innocence is neither presumed nor entitled’. Therefore, Holland’s implication that her white experience<sup>59</sup> represents neutrality is flawed, and yet it is from this allegedly “neutral” stance that Holland understands the relative “violence” of these boys in Soweto. Even though in the above extract, no actual violence occurs – it is simply *projected* to occur (‘They will rise up...’) by Holland – the boys’ comprehension of normality is converted to comply with a “culture of violence” when judged by white standards, in ignorance of the privilege which white experience contains. Furthermore, as Holland *witnesses* no violence here, one must question the kinds of queries she made to make the family divulge this information.

As well as childhood innocence not necessarily representing safety to these boys, domestic space and the idea nature of “home” do not appear to contain the same security as white domestic space. Inasmuch as the fact that the kitchen table is as a place under which to sleep – itself attracting racialised discussions of overcrowding within township

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<sup>58</sup> Her portrayal of the Sowetan house shows it as both cramped and under threat of violence.

<sup>59</sup> “White experience” here indicates a presumably relatively peaceful and innocent childhood.

accommodation – it also has the potential to become a defence mechanism for the home, and the fact that this is one of its several uses brings the culture of violence within that very space, too. In any case, Sowetan childhood experiences of domesticity are not the “neutral” haven which Holland proposes through her discussion of them, and Holland’s perception of childhood innocence and safety as a right implies white blindness within her writing.

Stories of urban violence told from afar – for example, those told within the space of the farm *about* the city or township space – are just as important to the study of the culture of violence in the city as those of first-hand or journalistic accounts. Proctor tells of Cheetah’s ex-boyfriend – Cassiem – and his death,

He died buying a watermelon from Chrissie at the roadside stall on the corner of Prince George Drive and Military Road. He was handing over his twenty rand when a boy with a big hat, half hidden behind a corrugated-iron shed, pulled out a gun and fired a single shot. The boy knew he could advance his own story if he felled the big bull, so he did.

(Proctor 55)

In the same way that I discuss Proctor’s and Coetzee’s use of the farm as a microcosm of the rural space in Chapter 1, in this instance Proctor uses ‘the roadside stall on the corner of Prince George Drive and Military Road’ as a microcosm of the urban space, hence choosing an example which highlights the “culture of violence” which she views to be so central to the city. Cheetah, Cassiem, and the ‘boy with a big hat’, three youths, respectively inhabit the identities of bystander, victim, and perpetrator of violence within this microcosm.

Cassiem demonstrates vulnerability even in his 'big bull' masculinity: there is at once an innocence and a lack thereof to his death, given that 'he was, briefly, the brutal master of his corner of Lavender Hill' (55). The 'big bull' is racialised, and problematically animalised, by Proctor. What is initially a murder ('he died buying a watermelon') and a description of tragic victimhood is transformed within sentences to be a generalised commentary on the workings of hierarchies of black masculinity<sup>60</sup> amongst the violence of "predator-and-prey" gang mentality, in which the boy in the hat 'advance[s] his own [social township or gang] story' (Proctor 55). Such allusions to animals, as I have detailed in Chapter 1, are derogatory and revealing of the white privilege Proctor carries. Proctor's portrayal, however, of toxic masculinity as fundamentally black and self-perpetuating by township gangs implies that toxic masculinity is not only essential to the black urban space, but is also unique to the race: its consequence is the tragic lived experience of the victimhood of violence.

Urban violence is, as Proctor highlights, easier to specifically locate than rural or farm violence. The street names in the extract above, 'Prince George Drive' and 'Military Road' (Proctor 55) – aside from being instantly stigmatised as the sites of a murder and therefore as possessing their own miniature cultures of violence – give further light to how black violence is yet racialised. The streets' names have British colonial undertones, the former being the name of a monarch, and the latter referring to one of the ways South Africa was seized from its native black population. This functions within Proctor's effort to locate the South African urban space as one intrinsically and historically linked to various (colonial) toxic masculinities and their repercussions. Proctor is thus making a point about violence

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<sup>60</sup> Eliot considers how 'a great many men fall into the fashion of violence as a relief for their frustrations and as an apparent demonstration of manliness' (34); 'To be a man according to tsotsi culture was to be streetwise, to be tough, to fight' (Morrell 627).

being constitutive of black masculinity, while eliding the longer history of colonial violence and its associated black victimhood.

Holland introduces another victim in her portrait of Tsakani, a nine-year old girl:

... a retarded child. Linda says she was an entirely normal little girl, laughing and chattering, until the age of four, when she was raped by the 18-year-old son of a neighbour. Since then she has not spoken a word. Tsakani sleeps alone because she bites the other children, even while sleeping. "She is like an animal," says Linda.

(26)

The animalising<sup>61</sup> of perpetrators of violence is here repurposed to apply to a rape victim, in the very way that she mimics her attacker in performance of violence after she has been assaulted. Tsakani's experience is complicated in that she is both a victim and a perpetrator, and for this she is animalised in a similar way to Proctor's animalisation of Cassiem, 'the big bull', as detailed above. Tsakani experiences – and internalises – a form of trauma so early on in life that it changes her life and temperament. Her comprehensions of violence (political, racial, gendered, or otherwise) are not formed at this early stage in her life, but she internalises the racialised violation which is performed upon her. She becomes – albeit an extreme – part of the perpetuation of the violent act within Linda's household, through her biting other children; her dual identity as perpetrator and victim of violence complicates her place within the spectrum of township personalities. Her isolation is multiple, in that she

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<sup>61</sup> This is a topic discussed at greater length in Chapter 1.

cannot speak, and she must sleep alone, so, while she occupies domestic space, she is both separate from the family, and limiting upon their home space. Furthermore, Holland's highlighting of the family's neighbour's son who was the rapist localises the violence further, meaning that the 'Pimville area of Soweto' (Holland 22) is constructed to contain a community saturated with violent individuals. Comparisons may also be drawn to the aforementioned passage concerning the boys under the table who use it as a defence mechanism (Holland 23). These boys in fact live in the same house as Tsakani; while Holland may interpret the table to represent the constant need for defence within the home space, Tsakani becomes symbolic of the very real – and active – constant threat of attack, and thus also Soweto's "culture of violence", within the same. The 18-year old's attack on Tsakani thus prolongs, extends, and iterates the culture of violence – even among the young and "innocent"<sup>62</sup> – as Holland perceives it in Soweto, upholding her statement "Everyone in Soweto fears the invasion of dangerous forces" (23).

### Victims within Urban Education Spaces

The power dynamic between student and teacher can become toxic, abusive, and inappropriate. Although *Born in Soweto* does not directly reference teacher sexual abuse, Holland instead documents one teacher's inverse experience of being threatened – albeit nonverbally and implicitly – by a pupil for better marks.<sup>63</sup> In *Disgrace*, however, much of Lurie's "Disgraced" nature and exile to the countryside stems from his abuse of his pupil,

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<sup>62</sup> Which is, as I have previously outlined, a term loaded with white privilege.

<sup>63</sup> '... he produced a lethal-looking hand gun and fiddled with it casually. I got the message. He was telling me that I either made sure he passed or I would suffer the consequences... After he left, I fiddled his papers to make sure he passed. I had very little option' (Holland 58). This speaks to how Phakana George, 'a South African law student, accepted a ride home from her law lecturer after a meeting... instead of driving her home, he took her to his house where he sexually assaulted her. He said that she owed him sexual favours because he boosted her law marks by two percent' (Draper).

Melanie. The details of Melanie's race are fundamental to my study: I believe that she is black for several reasons. Firstly, Coetzee has Lurie observe seductively and meaningfully 'Meláni: the dark one' (18), asserting that her race is significant and related to his later violation of her. Secondly, 'Melanie comes from the Greek melanos, meaning black... the fact that the person [raped] is female and black makes the situation far more potentially explosive' (Douthwaite 142), as Lurie's whiteness and maleness are weaponised by Coetzee. Thirdly, Lurie's physical description of Melanie – 'She is small and thin, with close-cropped black hair, wide, almost Chinese cheekbones, large, dark eyes' (11) – portrays her again as black and dark. Although a specific ethnicity is not directly assigned to her, the reference to 'almost Chinese' appears to be Coetzee's invitation to the reader to consider Lurie's ignorance about the significance of separate races. In this way, she is "othered" and deemed "coloured", in a similar way that, in colonial times, a diverse range of racial groups 'all became black in the sense of not being accorded the racial status of being white' (Morrell 625). Fourthly, Melanie's boyfriend's assertion towards the end of the novel that Lurie should 'Stay with your own kind' (194) implies a significant difference between Lurie and Melanie.

Melanie is victimised by Lurie, but also by his whiteness, his privilege within the South African urban space, and his position of power within the education space. Melanie's blackness is at play in this dynamic, in that she was clearly fundamentally sub-human to Lurie until they had sex. 'A week ago she was just another pretty face in the class. Now she is a presence in his life, a breathing presence' (23); her presence, and her right to "occupy space" as recognised by Lurie, is *predicated* by sex. Coetzee implies that Melanie belongs to the South African urban space, but this positioning within space, again, is conditional:

He is mildly smitten with her. It is no great matter: barely a term passes when he does not fall for one or other of his charges. Cape Town: a city prodigal of beauty, of beauties.

(11-12)

She, the victim, belongs to Cape Town, and to the young students Coetzee fantasises about, but only due to her beauty, and indeed due to her similarities with the 'city prodigal of beauty'. As Cape Town is specifically "prodigal" of beauty, it is implied, too, that Melanie's beauty is wasted and surplus unless "taken in" by Lurie: he activates her beauty – and, problematically, also her blackness – by sexualising and touching it, signifying a kind of white saviour complex in the way that he "treats" or "initiates" her with his white attention. This notion is fundamentally racist and characteristic of racially motivated violence within institutions; Coetzee encourages the reader to be disgusted by Lurie's demoralising and dehumanising of black femaleness, and by his lack of self-awareness about the toxicity of both his white privilege and prejudiced opinions.

When Lurie attempts to persuade Melanie to stay the night with him, furthermore, he deems that 'a woman's body does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it' (16). We can infer that Lurie thus sees sex between a white man and a black woman as transactional, with the black woman's body a part of a "bounty". This invokes antiquated notions of male ownership of female bodies and, by extension, slavery. Melanie is powerless to escape this enslavement of black women to white men's sexualisation of their bodies, and the fact that her body is – Coetzee

comments – seen as part of public space and public right, rather than private and human, further robs her of autonomy. Significantly, the interactions leading up to Melanie’s rape intrude increasingly on her privacy and the appropriateness of the relationship between tutor and student. The first interaction we see between them is a conversation in the old college gardens (11-13), before they have dinner together at Lurie’s house (14-17), and sleep together at Lurie’s house the following day (19): he then arrives at her house unannounced and rapes her (24-25). The quick progression of these interactions from the urban education space to the private spaces of Lurie’s and Melanie’s homes – their encounters become even further removed from the education space, and even more private as Lurie is unwanted and unwelcome<sup>64</sup> – represents how the spatiality of privacy, and its isolation, is taken advantage of by Lurie. ‘But nothing will stop him’ (25) in his determination to conquer Melanie’s body: her private home space, as well as her body, is infiltrated and violated.<sup>65</sup> Just as she is initially removed from the old college gardens by Lurie driving her to his flat to attempt to court her, so, too, is she removed from the education space: ‘in his mailbox he finds an official withdrawal card... Ms M Isaacs has withdrawn from COM 312 with immediate effect’ (36). Although Coetzee considers the effects of Lurie’s actions – he flees both urban and education spaces following the repercussions of raping a student – he dedicates few words to the consideration of Melanie’s forward path, imitating Lurie’s unerring prejudice towards her race and sex, while highlighting how the lived experience of black victimhood (an identity which Melanie is reconstructed in by both Coetzee and Lurie) does not interest his narrator.

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<sup>64</sup> ‘At four o’clock the next afternoon he is at her flat... He has given her no warning; she is too surprised to resist the intruder who thrusts himself upon her. When he takes her in his arms, her limbs crumple like a marionette’s’ (24).

<sup>65</sup> This is comparable to an idea I discuss in Chapter 3, about how the violation of Lurie’s car functions as proxy for the violation of his body.



## 2. Perpetrators of Violence

### Spatialising and Socialising Violence

A racist connection is frequently made between blackness and violence. The movement of mass black labour to, and confinement within, the “undesirable”<sup>66</sup> black township suburbs of gold- and diamond-mining areas such as Johannesburg,<sup>67</sup> and the subsequent “culture of violence” which has allegedly emerged from and within the black township, puts the blame for such violence upon the white-orchestrated rural-urban move itself, although this is not always acknowledged. I concur that the urban space of the township – a place of relocation and of the inevitable rethinking and restructuring of cultural practices – has cultivated violence in a way that the relocated rural communities did not. However, presentation of this cultivation as universal and all-encompassing in some white literature holds the potential both to mislead the reader and to contribute to the fear and proliferation of alleged “cultures of violence” within black spaces. The significance of spatiality to township violence is outlined in Louise Vincent’s case study, “‘Boys Will Be Boys’: Traditional Xhosa Male Circumcision, HIV and Sexual Socialisation in Contemporary South Africa”, in which she implies that the methods and practices employed by historic, rural, tribal sexualisation, as well as rural communities’ management of their youths’ puberty, were effectively superior

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<sup>66</sup> Holland’s depiction of the township space as “undesirable” as well as “violent” will be extended later in this section.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Johannesburg came into being as a mining camp in 1886 and ten years later “it was the largest urban place in Africa south of the Sahara” (Kynoch 630). Furthermore, the legislation of black labour migration is evident as early as the 1920s, in the “1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act”, which ‘represented the first major intervention by the central state in the business of managing the urban African labour force and ensuring its reproduction. The Act empowered municipalities to establish segregated locations for Africans, to implement a rudimentary system of influx control, and to set up advisory boards, bodies which would contain African elected representatives... but without any power to change policy... *The significance of the 1923 Act lies in its broader, long-term implications...*’ (Maylam 66, emphasis mine). Such implications are felt in post-apartheid communities who continue to inhabit the townships to which their ancestors were allocated.

to post-apartheid *urban* sexualisation and teenage sexual development.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the orchestrators and enforcers of apartheid are implicated in the suffering of those who become victims of this violence, meaning that even when a black man rapes a black woman within the township, it constitutes an act of racial violence due to the very space in which it occurs: a space which both fosters and represents violence in South Africa. This racialisation is further complicated in *Born in Soweto* by Holland's whiteness and its influence upon the subjectivity of the text, while Coetzee's consideration of Lurie as perpetrator of violence in *Disgrace* considers a very different urban spatiality of violence, which will be discussed in the later part of this section.

Although 'socialisation into violence'<sup>69</sup> may appear oxymoronic – as a white woman, I have been brought up to perceive violence as fundamentally antisocial – these youths *learn* violence through the culture of the township, from their elders, and from the very education space.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, Holland's presentation of the black township education space in *Born in Soweto* pushes the (popularly white) narrative that the school itself, though "supposed" to represent a space of peace and education, in fact fosters and encourages

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<sup>68</sup> Vincent states that there are 'those who attribute social decline to the "loss" of "African cultural practices"' (438). While in rural and "traditional" black African communities 'the initiation of a young man was a communal responsibility, it is now [since the relocation of black African communities to urban spaces] much more of an individual project... where circumcision schools once played a role in the sexual socialisation of young men, what was once an overarching message of responsibility and control has transformed into a focus on *the right of access to sex as a primary marker of manhood*. This has occurred in the context of a society in which *multiple sexual partners, with or without consent, is thought to be an incontrovertible male right*' (Vincent 438).

<sup>69</sup> A term taken from van der Merwe et al.'s "Youth Violence: Sources and Solutions in South Africa" (58).

<sup>70</sup> My case study of a white character who is a perpetrator of racial violence – David Lurie in *Disgrace* – is contained in a separate section towards the end of this section.

violence.<sup>71</sup> She details how ‘after six Soweto pupils gang-raped a schoolmate, the principal told the girl’s mother there was nothing he could do to punish them’ (57-8). Holland offers this comment without elaboration: it is a passing remark by a white visitor, which presents black individuals within the education space as both perpetrator *and* victim, hence reinforcing white stereotypes and presenting Holland herself as unenthusiastic white saviour-observer. As well as this, her selection of enthused exclamations by youths as they discuss various crimes they have committed with her, such as ‘Man she cries!’ (37) and ‘Yeah man. Hai!’ (36), certainly imply that they relish violence, and that they export the violence they “learn” and become accustomed to into other urban spaces to perpetuate the continued proliferation of violence which Holland proposes as fact. Her focus on these negative descriptions, rather than elaborating on how children are so keen to learn that ‘they sleep at their desks rather than return home at night’ (Holland 57) or listing what they learn about implies that Holland’s whiteness is so overwhelmed by violence within the education space that it becomes all she *can* see. However, in Holland’s later interview of activist and social worker Bongzi Mkhabela, Mkhabela refutes such violent ‘delinquent behaviour’ as detailed above (Holland 36-7) to be ‘the legacy of apartheid’, positing that people ‘search for excuses’ in this way, and that it this behaviour is in fact ‘the legacy of something else’ (63). The disjunction between Mkhabela’s analysis and Holland’s depiction only reinforces my above argument that Holland’s focus, which seeks to collate blackness

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<sup>71</sup> Although ‘education is acknowledged to be a key for societal development’ (Augestad 145), ‘the liberal feminist perspective... seeks to provide a solution to gender inequality by promoting socio-economic change on the understanding that access to *education alone is insufficient* to address gender inequality’ (Nomlomo 122, emphasis mine). Furthermore, Van der Merwe et al. posit that ‘peer groups play similar socialisation roles as... families and schools’, modelling and rewarding ‘violent behaviour’ and setting ‘standards that approve violence’ (van der Merwe et al. 73).

with violence, fails to recognise or even acknowledge the lived experience of blackness in Soweto.

Holland invokes ideas of 'socialisation into violence' again in her discussion of a boy who is problematically referred to simply as "another youth" in *Born in Soweto*.

I never had a white woman. It is something I am thinking about... I can have power over you and nothing can stop me, even your money, even your white skin. That is why you rape them; when they snob you.

(34)

This youth refers to white women ('it', he calls them) as something he has never 'had', objectifying them; when speaking to Holland he appears to be aware of her whiteness and yet does not distance himself from it, sounding vengeful in his discussion of 'your [presumably Holland's] money... your white skin'. He implicitly threatens her dually because of her race and gender, reasserting that he '*can* have power over you' (emphasis mine) if he wanted or tried to. We are thus again made aware of the author's whiteness, but this time through its resentment by a black youth, as well as through her careful and selective curation of black experiences – even desires – of violence. There is an unspoken, but evident, prejudice between the interviewer and the interviewee, which is mediated by the encounter being an interview, as Holland is protected by her identity as "white visitor" to the township space, accompanied by black locals. Had the encounter been "off the record", the black youth's apparent dislike of Holland's whiteness and his evident wish to rape a white woman could have ended in yet more violence and violation. Holland wishes to make

her reader aware of this fact, too: ‘The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor’ (Fanon “Concerning Violence” 53). This desire for domination and control within the township space – which Holland mirrors in her selective control of the black narrative in *Born in Soweto* – is thus shown through Holland’s writing to not only be a black male sentiment, but also a white female one. Fittingly, the chapter is called “Getting Even”, implying a desire for revenge, which speaks not only to gendered power struggles, but also to Holland’s own perception of her whiteness, and of the associated colonial guilt.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, Holland’s framing of the space comes from knowing spaces of privilege: the spaces she shows the ‘sullen and suspicious’ (33) youth occupying are vitally those of darkness and claustrophobia. ‘It is dark now and the figures of the lone youths outside are shadowy in the dim light cast by a lone street lamp’ (33); the room is ‘a small room, tightly packed with young men... jostling as if in a shower room after a football match’ (32); ‘two engage in a wrestling contest, their bodies lurching against others who protest irritably’ (32). Holland racialises and stigmatises small township spaces in her view that they lack the privacy and privilege with which she is familiar and which whiteness offers, and at the same time implies that such spaces promote and spread violence, as if violence is a township disease passed from person to person through that very proximity.

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<sup>72</sup> Fanon discusses the white settler’s narrative of colonial guilt: ‘The colonized man is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive, “They want to take our place”’ (Fanon “Concerning Violence” 39).

## Jackrolling

Foster posits that ‘an extremely toxic form of masculinity operates in nearly a third of young South African men’ (43): Holland presents “jackrolling”<sup>73</sup> to be demonstrative of such toxicity. ‘The abduction of women became fashionable during their [the gang “The Jackrollers] violent reign’, and even ‘long after the demise of the original gang, those who abduct and rape are proud to call themselves jackrollers’ (Holland 48). Jackrolling is connected to Soweto by its spatiality, as although the word’s use has spread across South Africa, its immediate association is with the original Sowetan jackrollers. Any identification of post-apartheid youth characters with the late-apartheid-era gangsters “The Jackrollers” necessitates a further association with the violences of the time; even though black township youths largely reject that they have been influenced by structural or apartheid-era violence (Swartz et al. 31),<sup>74</sup> the link between apartheid violence and post-apartheid violence is too close for one to be comprehensively examined without the other. The imitation of the Jackrollers’ abduction and rape of young girls implies a “fashion of violence”<sup>75</sup> which is admired by the black male post-apartheid township youth. “A [nameless] youth” is asked why the TV programme *The Bold and the Beautiful* is so important to the community of ‘men and a few boys’:

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<sup>73</sup> On jackrolling, Holland details in *Born in Soweto* that ‘the word was coined in reference to the forceful abduction of women in Soweto by a gang called Jackrollers, which began with ten members led by a youth named Jeff Brown. He revelled in his reputation as the most feared man in the township.’ (45). Steve Mokwena further details apartheid jackrolling in the late 1980s and early 1990s in his 1991 paper “The Era of the Jackrollers: Contextualising the rise of the youth gangs in Soweto”.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Slavery? It was no longer even mentioned, that unpleasant memory. My supposed inferiority? A hoax that it was better to laugh at’ (Fanon 86-7).

<sup>75</sup> Elliott’s aforementioned article “A Fashion of Violence” deals with American fashions of male violence, but certain aspects map directly onto Soweto, in that – in both spaces – violence and violation constitute social success.

They will drive in the white man's streets, looking for a house or a car. They are thinking about *The Bold and the Beautiful*... the beautiful houses where the whites have too much money, everything, and we black dogs have nothing. That is why we watch *The Bold and the Beautiful*... It gives us strength and courage to spin and maybe rape, ya man... I'd rather die a hero, stealing a car, supporting my family... If we have to start (shoot) them, we will do it. We are not scared.

(34)

The nameless "youth" compulsively self-deprecates, creating a community in animality by referring to himself and his friends as 'we black dogs' whereas 'the whites' have – he believes – 'too much money' in their 'beautiful houses'. The "youth" exhibits a fascination – which borders on an obsession – with white beauty and the fragility of white existence in fear of black jackrollers, robbers, and rapists; the latter excites him and gives him 'courage to... maybe rape' and violate this racial, sociocultural disparity in penetrating the white space. The roads and pavements of the "white" urban space which Holland refers to in her commentary about the jackrollers are "public", although she implies that the black individual does not feel welcome there, with her own affinity to the white space – and her othering of the black jackroller – evident here. Fanon's statement is applicable: 'All round me the white man... and there is a white song, a white song. All this whiteness that burns me...' (86). In the same way, the black youths whom Holland depicts 'discovered their blackness' (Fanon 84) in, and compensate for their blackness by being violent within, the white neighbourhoods which continue to demonstrate – "burningly" – to them the material possessions and privilege that they do not possess, as well as the continuous legacy of apartheid on the township. That 'they will drive in the white man's streets' implies a defiant

silent implied addition of “even if the white man does not want us to”. Additionally, the fact that the “youth” is nameless is a significant editorial decision by Holland: that she repeatedly leaves black men nameless has a clear effect on the racialisation of violence, as it encourages the reader to flatten the experience of blackness as inherently violent.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, in the above extract (34), Holland shows the reader how black Sowetan youth utilise violence within the white space to facilitate their own emulation of white ideals and materiality<sup>77</sup> as promoted by the whitewashed cast of *The Bold and the Beautiful*:<sup>78</sup> this is inherently problematic. Holland interprets that white media is weaponized by black urban communities against the very white females it depicts, creating an uneasy tension between *all* black and white neighbourhoods she introduces, as well as between Holland and her interviewees, of whom she appears suspicious. ‘We are not scared’ (34), Holland depicts the youth saying, implying that he means “we are not scared *of doing violence*”. She draws upon narratives of violence in Soweto constituting belonging, including that of “*Ikasi Style*”, which ‘refers to the ways in which youth rationalise their participation in behaviours which are not socially acceptable in order to attain markers of belonging’ (Swartz et al. 28), ‘in the absence of real opportunity’ (Swartz et al. 37). The transgression of black and white “boundaries” in this way is portrayed as heroism,<sup>79</sup> while Holland’s commentary on jackrolling contributes to inter-racial fear and suspicion. While the youth themselves ‘perpetuate a sub-culture of

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<sup>76</sup> Holland comments that the elderly George’s violent criminal grandson is ‘also named George’ (30): even when she names Sowetans, she implies their experience to be violent due purely to the similarity of their names.

<sup>77</sup> George is quoted in *Born in Soweto*: ‘all my children and grandchildren are sick in their hearts because they want what other people, white people, have got’ (Holland 30).

<sup>78</sup> *The Bold and the Beautiful* has since been criticised for promoting a lack of diversity through their continually whitewashed casts (Varnham).

<sup>79</sup> More details on this, as well as the sources already given, are available in Lindy Heinecken’s article “What’s behind violence in South Africa: a sociologist’s perspective”.



violence on the Cape Flats'<sup>80</sup> (Foster 43), they are aided and abetted by the jealousy and aspiration they feel towards the privilege held by those living in the nearby white suburbs: Holland thus involves the white community within black violence by association. After the episode of *The Bold and the Beautiful* finishes, 'though the screen is blank, they still stare at it, reluctant to stir from the spell' (33). This is a spell cast upon them by an unattainable whiteness, and a desperation to be a part of such a dialogue. It is a spell cast by Holland, who depicts the youth as held within the aforementioned cramped – and racialised – black space by the very dream of whiteness which they believe will aid in their social advancement. In this way, Holland is happy to confine the black individual to the space she does not have affiliation with or belong to. To her white readership, she presents the black youths as "safe" there, when they are watching *The Bold and the Beautiful* and simply dreaming about whiteness, rather than trying to emulate it through violence.

In *Born in Soweto*, one black youth remarks that, while jackrolling,

If there is a dog at the house, it's OK... if it attacks, you knife it. Sometimes we can put a small, dead dog in the fridge – or in the oven, and then turn it on. When that woman comes home, she smells her dog in the oven. Man, she cries! It's revenge because she likes her dog more than us.

(Holland 37)

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<sup>80</sup> Or, in this case, in Soweto.

This is comparable to the shooting of the dogs in *Disgrace*, as those animals which guard against black attacks and raids are destroyed so that they may no longer bark and alert neighbours. The youth's final remark, that 'It's revenge because she likes her dog more than us', speaks to the above passage about *The Bold and the Beautiful*, in the feeling of inferiority felt by these Sowetan youth, and their attempts to compensate for the same which, desperate, become violent when they enter the white domestic space. The act of putting the dog in the oven represents a fightback by the black youth who recognises that racism values the dog more than the (black) human. As there is a presumption of femaleness to this white space ('when that woman comes home'), the black man not only trespasses in the white space but also the domestic space, to which traditionally "the woman belongs". The youth relishes the violation of both this woman and her personal or home space – 'Man, she cries!'. The violation of the home collates the white domestic space within the home with the woman's very body, as robbery and rape are fused. If we take the house to signify the white woman's body, the cooking or burning of its insides brings into consideration horrible complexes of rape, intrusion, and defilement: she and the house are victimised and demeaned as one by the black youth. The racist valuation of dog over human life (which results in its humanisation), its cooking within the white domestic space, and the representation of the white woman's body through the space of the home, together evoke images of pregnancy, so that the act of trespass quickly becomes one of penetration, insemination, and racialised violation. The youth's own claiming 'revenge' evokes apartheid-avenging ideals which have been such a trouble to South African urban societies since the fall of the same;<sup>81</sup> I would attest that the act is *as gendered as* it is racialised, in the way that

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<sup>81</sup> 'While the apartheid system has been abolished, its traces remain firmly entrenched in these neighbourhoods, which are still largely segregated along lines of class and race' (Ward et al. 4-5); furthermore,

Holland constructs both the (her) white female body, and the white domestic space, as desirable, revered, and even fetishized by black youths.

In *Born in Soweto*, Holland alludes to how the township is constructed as a space ideally suited both to the acting out, and flaunting, of violence. She posits that

A characteristic of jackrolling is the rapists' failure to conceal their criminal deeds: part of the exercise is to be seen jackrolling, so as to earn respect among peers. Most of these rapes are committed in daylight and in public places... Jackrolling is widely viewed by the youths of Soweto as the sport of tough and respected gangsters. "It is not a crime," said one teenager. "It is just a game."

(49)

Youth pursuit of respect from both 'peers' and 'tough and respected gangsters'<sup>82</sup> is a running consensus of township patriarchy in *Born in Soweto*, and at points in *The Savage Hour*, too.<sup>83</sup> The alleged black male sense of entitlement – 'the right of access to sex as a primary marker of manhood' (Vincent 433) – and the intensity of the definition of masculinity and manhood by private parts and sex<sup>84</sup> mean that the urban space in question

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Bank and Carton discuss the 1952 riots in terms of 'cultural enactments of purposeful violence' (475), a Fanonian logic which has the potential to translate onto certain acts of violence in the present day, too.

<sup>82</sup> In *Born in Soweto*, one youth tells Holland about how he sold a stolen Toyota to a "clever", which is slang for 'a hardened, admired criminal' (34).

<sup>83</sup> Proctor's aforementioned brief comments on urban township violence culture about how 'the boy knew he could advance his own story if he felled the big bull, so he did' (55) are significant here, too.

<sup>84</sup> 'No matter how many years may pass, the individual will never be regarded as a man until circumcised in the traditional way' (Vincent 440).

appears to foster sexual violence even more readily than it does other types of violence.<sup>85</sup>

Holland attempts to highlight how sexual violence within public urban spaces – street corners, alleyways – is a rite of passage, even though her words are anecdotal and do not point to a single evidenced instance of jackrolling. Jackrolling is thus a sport which is played by fundamentally masculine perpetrators on the “street circuit” of Soweto, which has spatiality at its heart. While the man is deemed to “belong” to the streets, the woman only “belongs” there when she is being violated. In the game, she is effectively the ball, passed or [jack]“rolled” around. Furthermore, if the woman lingers within the masculinised space, she can *expect* to be violated: Holland evokes the narrative of victim-blaming by implication, and in her continued lack of consideration of the female experience within the act of violence. The trouble is, according to Holland, that the violence remains as juvenile as its perpetrators, even as they progress into adulthood; the alleged opinion of “all” male Sowetan youth that ‘It is not a crime’ perpetuates this culture to seem almost as desirable as the lifestyle – and indeed the whiteness – in *The Bold and the Beautiful*.

#### Perpetrators within White Education Spaces

As I have discussed the brief mentions of black perpetrators of violence in education spaces within my considerations of the “socialisation into violence” in Holland’s *Born in Soweto*, I now consider Lurie’s rape of Melanie in Coetzee’s *Disgrace* as a portrait of white sexual violence within the urban education space. Lurie’s actions are so much more easily discounted and “authenticated” by both characters in the novel (such as members of the University Court), and Coetzee, than Holland’s constant references to the gravity of violence

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<sup>85</sup> In *Born in Soweto*, Holland interviews Gavin, a young paramedic, who comments that ‘Over the last four years since the beginning of political violence, domestic violence has gone down. People have found something to do with their frustration... They aren’t fighting so much with each other’ (100).

in Soweto and how it constitutes a “culture”. Lurie’s rape and violation of Melanie begins within the urban education space, though the eventual act of rape is relocated to Melanie’s flat. The spatiality and urbanity of the crime is vital to Coetzee’s continued dual narration and criticism of the immoral character he has created; as detailed in the first section of this chapter, the “privacy” of their interactions escalates away from the University space, though discussions of the act return to the University when Lurie is called to a hearing there,<sup>86</sup> offering a ‘full circle’ which returns the act of violence to its institutional roots. Sexual violence on University campuses has been an issue in South Africa for some time,<sup>87</sup> and its depictions in South African literature can illustrate how power structures such as age, profession, and race, can feed into its enactment. ‘#Endrapeculture’ protests took place across South African university campuses in 2016 (Orth et al. 206); they deem that it is the very ‘*institutional culture* of the university, which is described as *reinforcing a rape culture*’ (Orth et al. 192, emphasis mine). I posit that it is the very organisation and regulation of the University’s institutional space which partially enables such acts to continue, and that in *Disgrace* Coetzee offers discussion on this toxicity. The leniency – and even kindness – which the University court show towards Lurie<sup>88</sup> demonstrates the power which affiliation with the University can have.<sup>89</sup> Graham discusses how ‘Lurie’s relationship with Melanie in *Disgrace* is depicted as a betrayal of ethical responsibility’ (438); it is much more than this. Lurie’s actions constitute rape *as well as* betrayal of responsibility, and the underreaction –

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<sup>86</sup> Lurie’s consideration of his relationship with, and rape of, Melanie continues later in the novel from within the farm space, as I will discuss later in this section of the chapter.

<sup>87</sup> Gouws and Kritzingler highlight how, ‘in response to serious incidents of sexual harassment on its campus’ the University of Cape Town ‘initiated steps to assess the extent of the phenomenon... in November 1989’, finding that ‘sexual harassment (ranging from verbal remarks to rape) constituted a serious problem on the campus’ (2-3).

<sup>88</sup> ‘We around this table are not your enemies. We have our weak moments, all of us, we are only human. Your case is not unique. We would like to find a way for you to continue with your career’ (Coetzee 52).

<sup>89</sup> White male privilege and academic intellect are also at play in Lurie’s case.

or selective vision – shown by the University court only functions to silence Melanie while offering to support Lurie through his career; were he to show sincerity in his remorse,<sup>90</sup> the University court would have him continuing to occupy the education space, despite his crimes. Notably, during the hearing, Desmond Swarts confesses that ““Ideally we would all have preferred to resolve this case out of the glare of the media”” (53), demonstrating a further institutional desire to silence the victim. One member of the University court trying Lurie does recognise that ““... as teachers we occupy positions of power”” and suggests ““Perhaps a ban on mixing power relations with sexual relations””, ““Which, I sense, is what was going on in this case”” (53), acknowledging Lurie’s use of his own institutional power in his efforts to “court” Melanie. The link between the act of rape and the space of the institution is thus very close.

As well as the institutional silencing of Melanie, Coetzee also gives more power to Lurie, the perpetrator of violence, than to the victim: we only ever hear Lurie’s side of the story, and accordingly the (non-white) woman is silenced once again, this time by the narrator, as well as by the institution. John Douthwaite comments how

It is significant that Lurie does most of the talking and narrating... This is one indication that the novel is focalised through Lurie, and the ‘vision’ that emerges is his. The inordinate quantity assigned to Lurie’s thoughts... represents the suppression of other voices in the novel.

(132)

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<sup>90</sup> ““We will see what attitude you express. We will see whether you express contrition”” (Coetzee 54).

We are presented with a dual narration: of one white man we don't morally trust – Lurie – and one we grow to trust due to his criticism of the first – Coetzee. Lurie's narration both silences and speaks for other women, too, in the education space: during the hearing, he wonders if Farodia Rassool has 'another vision: of a great thick-boned male bearing down on a girl-child, a huge hand stifling her cries?' (53). Lurie proposes this image unprompted, so that our interpretation of femaleness is understood through his eyes, just as our interpretation of blackness and racialisation is his. He is doubly prejudiced against Dr Rassool, who, as well as defining a fellow (we assume) non-white woman like Melanie, 'is the punitive feminist who carries the burden of Coetzee's censure' (Head 103), although I argue that the 'burden' of her punishment never really touches Lurie or encourages him to rethink his prejudice. In this way, Coetzee presents the reader with a fundamentally limited narrator, who enacts his prejudice on multiple women as he moves through the urban education space, using institutional privilege granted to him by that very space, and ignoring reason even as other characters present it to him.

We see and hear about Lurie's rape of Melanie several times: in the first instance in Melanie's flat (25); a second time, when Lurie confesses to some of his actions in the University hearing (52); and a third, when he reflects upon the experience later in the novel from the removed space of the farm (89). The way in which the accounts differ is notable in Lurie's denial of the action being rape:

Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit

when the jaws of a fox close on its neck. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away.

(25)

There are several things to unpick here, the primary of which is that Lurie's narrative definition of rape when he rapes Melanie is ignorant of what rape means to the victim. Objectively, sex which is "undesired" directly constitutes rape,<sup>91</sup> but Lurie's lack of understanding – or ignorance – of this concept sticks with him as he moves through both urban education, and rural, spaces in the novel.<sup>92</sup> Despite the fact that Melanie is represented by the rabbit, and therefore is Lurie's prey, Lurie acknowledges without any emotion how it is both 'within herself' and within the space of her *home* that he violates her: within both "spaces", as it were, Lurie's presence is not just unwanted, but 'undesired to the core' of Melanie's being, and in breach of her boundaries. Douthwaite discusses how Lurie is 'downgrading both the sexual act and the women he engages in the act with: "It is no great matter"' (146); in this way, Lurie is a toxic perpetrator, in his painting of Melanie as but a paralysed rabbit to him, animalised even as she occupies the "civilization" of her home space. Although she is paralysed – as well as being violated, it is implied she 'dies within herself', suffering a small death<sup>93</sup> – Lurie justifies his actions to himself by implying that the act is 'done to her' 'far away' from both the young woman and her no-longer safe space of

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<sup>91</sup> The most appropriate OED definition of rape has it as 'the act of forced, non-consenting, or illegal sexual intercourse with another person; sexual violation or assault' (OED n. 3).

<sup>92</sup> Coetzee accentuates how Lurie 'remembers, as a child, poring over the word *rape* in newspaper reports, trying to puzzle out what exactly it meant, wondering what the letter *p*, usually so gentle, was doing in the middle of a word held in such horror that no one would utter it aloud' (159-60). It is strongly implied that such a misunderstanding persists into Lurie's adult life, too.

<sup>93</sup> Perversely, this phrase in French – "petite mort" – means "orgasm". Lurie's narratorship leads the reader to think that Melanie's "dying within herself" is due to pleasure, rather than a lack of consent.



“home”. Lurie’s use of the words ‘within herself’ are significant here: the phrase implies racialised victim-blaming, in that Melanie’s choices and autonomy brought ‘within’ her physically. He justifies her becoming the animalised *subject* of the sentence, and the one at fault for what has happened to her, in a small, perverse acknowledgement that he may have committed some kind of crime.

In the university hearing, Lurie “confesses” to his crimes:

“Very well,” he says, “let me confess. The story begins one evening, I forget the date, but not long past. I was walking through the old college gardens, and so, as it happened, was the young woman in question, Ms Isaacs. Our paths crossed. Words passed between us, and at that moment something happened which, not being a poet, I will not try to describe. Suffice it to say that Eros entered. After that I was not the same.”

(52)

He both exaggerates the conditions of the initial meeting with Melanie and romanticises the act of rape. Firstly, his statement that ‘Our paths crossed’ is incorrect, as his initial account of the scene in the college gardens has him speeding up to meet her: ‘She is dawdling; he soon catches up with her’ (11)). That she is “dawdling” within the college gardens – a space associated with the “rape culture” of the University – again promotes his victim-blaming narrative, signifying the entitlement a white professor feels within the University space. Secondly, his romanticisation of his meeting and, by extension, his rape of Melanie, is encapsulated within his phallic statement that “Eros entered”. Eros being the Greek god of

love and sex, “he”, in this case, applies only to Lurie: Melanie’s recollections of the events and associated lack of consent are different from Lurie’s – in fact, rape is not even mentioned or hinted at in the hearing. ‘After that’ he ‘was not the same’ – he was a rapist, or a servant of Eros, as Lurie would have it, rather than a predator who animalises his prey, as he did during the act (25). Indeed, ‘By dubbing himself a “servant” of Eros, Lurie asserts the authority of sexual impulse over the body’ (Neimneh 174). He willingly “serves” Eros: the ‘impulse’ was ‘far from ungovernable’ (52), and of his denial of ‘similar impulses in the past’ (52) he is ‘ashamed’, rather than proud. Collating these two quotes provides us with the following reading: that in his trial Lurie is not so much defending himself as making a case for the validity of Eros’ presence within the University space, and that in his violation of Melanie he believes he was welcoming Eros, rather than giving in to illicit desires of predatorship. Thus, for Lurie, the authority of godly sexual desire within a white male prevails over the humanity of his black victim.

The third viewpoint of the act of rape is from the temporal and physical distance of the rural South African farm later in the novel. Lurie ‘sees himself in the girl’s flat... peeling off her clothes, while her arms flop like the arms of a dead person’ (89). Crucially, he ‘sees himself’ in Melanie’s home from a distance not only symbolic of the distance he has travelled to Lucy’s farm, but also of the aspects of the rape he does not “see” – such as Melanie’s lack of consent. The further Lurie travels away from the University space, the more he (problematically) reflects upon the act romantically, even as he dehumanizes Melanie, comparing her to a ‘dead person’, perhaps in reference to how he sees their twisted, failed,

and extinct relationship. While Melanie is 'dead' in her passivity,<sup>94</sup> Lurie is 'a god', implying that his perpetration of violence was one of divinity rather than sin.

Coetzee presents the reader with a bizarre narrator, and attempts to demonstrate that, in his movement from the city to the farm, Lurie is attempting to flee the rape culture and the 'long history of exploitation of which this [Lurie's rape of Melanie] is a part' (Coetzee 53). However, the narrative which prevails is that Lurie cannot – or will not – get rid of his continuing fantasies about raping Melanie: it is interesting that none of this is connected to Lurie's whiteness in the way that Holland connects violence to her subjects' blackness, even when the link is tenuous or non-existent. 'Eros dominates Lurie's life to a bothering extent' (Neimneg 174), whatever space he is in, and his persistent discussions of his relationship with her throughout the novel are evidence of this: her rape both transgresses the University space and is emblematic of it. Neimneh extends that 'Eros is not easy to subdue or get rid of' (174), although in this way Lurie's subjective narration is unhelpful, unreliable, and morally misleading for the reader. Sickly, his "comeuppance" or punishment for his crimes – and also, potentially, for the way in which Lurie drags these crimes through the various spaces he inhabits – is bestowed upon his daughter by proxy,<sup>95</sup> as she is raped soon after Lurie arrives. Here, Coetzee presents a problematic complex of morality and punishment for the reader, in which male whiteness prevails. Although Coetzee implies that Lurie's act not only belongs to white men but is also "of the institution" just as the rape of Lucy is "of the farm", the consequences of, and attitudes towards, white violence are not as severe as those of black violence in *Born in Soweto*. In this way, the rooting of a "culture of

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<sup>94</sup> 'She [Melanie] is passive throughout' (Coetzee 19) the act of sex.

<sup>95</sup> In a similar way to my argument in Chapter 3, that the car becomes proxy for Lurie's body.

violence” in blackness is confirmed by the consideration of perpetrators, and the spatiality of their perpetration, in white-authored South African literature.

### 3. Bystanders to Violence

The lived experience of being a bystander to violence is implied to be common in *Born in Soweto*, due to the alleged constant proximity to violence (“culture of violence”), and yet references to named bystanders are remarkably infrequent. Holland tends to focus her attention within the text on victims and perpetrators of violence, meaning that she presents a perceived community in which nearly all named individuals experience violence first-hand. One of the few father figures of a young criminal offender we are presented with is described by his neighbour, the war veteran “George”: ‘It was the father who called the police... He said, no, I will not hide my son who has committed murder’ (30). Although this father is actively eschewing violence from his household, Holland wishes to foreground once more that he and his children fundamentally ‘live in an environment that does not have strong anti-violence norms’ (van der Merwe et al. 76), and this shapes the family and local community, rather than highlighting this one man’s peaceful choices and lifestyle. George confirms a universality: ‘every house in Soweto has the same problems’ (30); he further details how he is afraid of his own grandson,<sup>96</sup> demonstrating with sadness the violent potential the youth continue to enact even within their own households. Holland’s implied wish for “family”, and by extension the space of the family home, to be synonymous with safety and security, is refuted before she even enters the homes in Soweto, by the violent

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<sup>96</sup> ‘I am afraid of him, my own grandson... He is a tsotsi but I cannot say he is no good because he is still my grandson.’ (Holland 30); ‘I was thinking that these young ones must not believe the old ones are afraid of them. But I was afraid’ (Holland 29-30).

means through which they were constructed,<sup>97</sup> by their frequently physically unstable, unhygienic, and generally unsafe nature,<sup>98</sup> and by how she ignores – or refuses to offer her own comment on – moments of peace and positivity as they are presented to her.<sup>99</sup> Holland also considers George’s testimony about his work, as a ‘cashier in a beer-hall in Soweto’ (27), where, in 1976, ‘All night, the schoolchildren had been running around, burning and looting... I waited and saw a crowd coming... Then they started to throw stones and bottles...’ (Holland 29). Violence is therefore shown to penetrate his workspace as well as his home space, rendering it an inescapable force by Holland’s reportage, and such penetration is alleged to have increased with time: ‘When it is hot inside the house, you can’t sleep in the yard under the sky in Soweto *any more* because the tsotsis are running all over the night’ (Holland 29, emphasis mine). As well as the jackrollers who flaunt their crime by daylight, tsotsis are portrayed to have the run of the night as well as the outdoor space, meaning that no time – or indeed urban space – might be regarded as “safe” from violent crime and victimhood or being a bystander. Furthermore, Holland chooses to end George’s testimony, and indeed the chapter, with a sense of hopelessness – ‘I can’t help them when I am dead but all the time I’m asking myself what will happen. There is no answer.’ (31) – rather than with his comments about living life as God intended, and his rather optimistic

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<sup>97</sup> In “South Africa: From Township to Town”, Findley and Ogbu detail how ‘South Africa’s townships continue to be sites of struggle and resilience, as they have been throughout their history’.

<sup>98</sup> While ‘What constitutes poor quality housing is culturally defined and varies greatly between cities and countries across the globe’ (Crankshaw et al. 841), the apparent disparity between white and black South African housing experience, here suggested and signposted by Holland’s privilege, implies she is relatively unfamiliar with housing standards in townships, as she was born, and died, in nearby Johannesburg. Several studies have considered housing insufficiencies in Soweto since the fall of apartheid. In 2020, Harrisberg considered how ‘crumbling walls, sewage leaking into homes, dangerous loose wires – and sometimes, snakes’ represented problems to residents. Furthermore, 20 years before this, in 2000, Crankshaw et al. studied so-called “backyard housing”, of which ‘almost half are crudely built wood and corrugated iron shacks’, and ‘virtually all... has only one room’ (851).

<sup>99</sup> The elderly George discusses how ‘God put us on earth to see what we can do... I must try to be happy, every day, and not worry too much’ (Holland 31).

attitudes towards death and fate (31). This is an editorial choice to represent the violence and sadness of a bystander at the forefront of, and conclusion to, a chapter of Holland's portrait of Soweto, a choice which the reader must remain conscious of in their reading of the rest of the text.

Holland and Proctor lead their readers to collude in a general expectation of violence in the township, even – and sometimes especially – amongst the young. In *The Savage Hour*, Cheetah, who functions at times as an urban reference point within the space of the farm, is relied upon to contextualise the violence on the farm within the wider climate of South African racial violence. Cheetah 'didn't grow up afraid of creatures that come out at night apart, of course, from the men and boys in the gangs that sprang up on the sandy flats like bitter weed' (Proctor 147). Through, and because of, her black experience, Cheetah becomes Proctor's archetypal bystander, while the violent black youths of whom she was so afraid are not animalised, but rather compared to plants who rise out of the empty, un-nurturing space on 'the sandy flats' to fulfil the culture of violence there. Even though she represents the bystander in the city or township, Cheetah references the urban experience of apartheid only implicitly through her lack of trust of authority: "'No policeman I know ever did any good,'" she replies, straight as a bullet' (Proctor 131).<sup>100</sup> Swartz et al. note that in one of their own studies, there was a 'refusal' by youths 'to recognise the structural violence they face', and that 'their own acceptance of this violence indicates the crippling impact of symbolic violence on their lives... [and yet] their persistence in thinking positively

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<sup>100</sup> The self-policing nature of the township breeds an automatic mistrust of state-sanctioned authority figures, especially when they represent archaic and racist regimes. Gary Kynoch notes how 'in the absence of effective protection, adult residents in many neighbourhoods organised street patrols and other community initiatives' (634).

was worth noting' (31); such positive thinking is rarely referenced by Proctor or Holland. The introduction and government of townships by white colonial rule<sup>101</sup> was primary to the spread of violence, victimhood, and the experience of being a bystander amongst the young. Young victims of violence continue to feel relics of the trauma implicated by the postcolonial legacy, simply because of the space they inhabit and the way in which it is interpreted and rewritten by the white author.

### Bystanders within Urban Education Spaces

Schools and universities are sometimes seen as spaces with the potential to adjust violent attitudes and quell violence amongst young people while they are at their most impressionable.<sup>102</sup> However, the educational space is demonstrated within the white-authored literature I examine to have become its own war zone in the period since apartheid, meaning that students are constantly – precariously – positioned somewhere between bystander and victim when they occupy this space. *Disgrace* and *Born in Soweto* address this positioning with differing approaches and focuses: while in the latter, Holland presents portraits of school buildings in ruins<sup>103</sup> and analyses the impact of apartheid education on student bystanders and teachers, as well as delinquency, in the former Coetzee implicitly criticises both the perpetrators of, and the systems of dealing with, sexual violence within educational institutions.

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<sup>101</sup> In South Africa, 'the 1922 Stallard Commission decreed that "the Native" should only be allowed entry to towns when he was willing to minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefore when he so ceases to minister". Similar views were held by both officials and settlers throughout the region. Controlling the African urban presence was essential for the peace of mind of non-native communities...' (Burton 22).

<sup>102</sup> More detail on this topic is available in Heidi Lindberg Augestad's "In The Midst of Gender Norms: A Study of Gender and Education in a South African Township."

<sup>103</sup> 'The walls were smashed over the years... derelict buildings... classrooms without roofs...' (50).

In *Born in Soweto*, Holland openly criticises the ‘chaos’ which ‘prevails in African schools’ (57), and describes how the educational urban spaces themselves have been both politicised and racialised:

Black children have been used consistently as cannon fodder and their schools as battlegrounds in the struggle for political power. The revolt against apartheid education, which first erupted in Soweto in 1976, has lost direction to the point where many students can no longer distinguish between the campaign for reform and the call of crime. Teaching has become one of the most dangerous vocations in black townships. Attending classes against the decrees of political activists is sometimes so hazardous for students that they sleep at their desks rather than return home at night.

(Holland 57)

Here Holland considers Sowetan schools to be the epicentre of political battlegrounds on apartheid education<sup>104</sup> in South Africa, and how they have become hotspots for increasingly mindless violence in the name of politics.<sup>105</sup> The idea that teaching is ‘one of the most dangerous vocations in black townships’ undermines the protection which the walls of educational institutions purport to provide.<sup>106</sup> Considering this, and the fact that Holland reports how students are frequently violent towards each other, sometimes threatening teachers with guns to fix their marks (58), it is bizarre that the school becomes a safe haven

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<sup>104</sup> ‘While segregation in education existed before the establishment of the National Party’s 1948 apartheid policies, the division along racial and ethnic lines became formalized, institutionalized, and legalized under apartheid’ (Eynon 42).

<sup>105</sup> More information on political violence and its validation in Soweto is available in Monique Marks’ ‘“We are Fighting for the Liberation of our People’: Justifications of Violence by Activist Youth in Diepkloof, Soweto’.

<sup>106</sup> ‘In [South African] high-poverty schools... principals spend a lot of time on daily management and administrative tasks and in ensuring the safety and security of learners’ (Zuze and Juan 462).



for some children at night-time,<sup>107</sup> and that ‘they sleep at their desks rather than return home’. The image of them sleeping at their desks is emblematic of the normalisation of how they have become ‘cannon fodder’, and recalls my earlier consideration of Holland’s portrait of children sleeping under the table to remain safe from any potential harm (23). Whether at home or at school, Sowetan children constantly find a specific space, concealed by a kitchen table – symbolising domesticity – or walls – signifying the apartheid education space – to hide from the threat of violence. For the sake of an education, the children trap themselves within the education space, and in doing so only guarantee themselves from escaping one specific type of violence – one triggered in the first instance by continuing apartheid education disparities. In essence, violence within the educational space can be broken down into two categories: exterior violence to the space of the school (politicised “adult” violence which indirectly influences the students and their safety) and more direct, youth-centred interior violence (violence enacted on the students by teachers or fellow students, taking into account the copycat nature of socialisation into violence culture within educational attention spaces and thus also any acts of violence performed by students within, or due to, the educational space).

Van der Merwe et al. attest that the first of these two modes is prevalent: ‘an additional concern about South African schools is that they often directly model violence for learners... it is illegal, [but] many schools still use corporal punishment’ (72). This encourages an early normalisation of, and therefore socialisation into, cultures of violence. This fact is racialised

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<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, one Amnesty International article discusses how ‘the post-1994 government has failed to meet its own domestic and international legal obligations’ regarding the safety of school spaces: among other factors, it details how deaths have occurred due to lack of hygiene and sanitation (“South Africa: Broken and unequal education perpetuating poverty and inequality”).

due to the catchment areas served by schools: most township schools serve only black youths, as they are local. Thus, even in the post-apartheid space, and despite recent initiatives encouraging “access” to education,<sup>108</sup> there remains segregation in the *quality* of education, due to both race and the inherent culture of violence now intrinsic to the surrounding area.<sup>109</sup> Holland depicts this violence – and details how both copycat youths take heed of the normalisation of violence, and the frustration surrounding the recently-abolished but persistently-divisive apartheid education system, manifesting in the destruction of aforementioned ‘battleground’ school sites. ‘The walls were smashed over the years by successive brigades of angry students. The bricks, window frames, doors, roofing, ceiling, blackboard, desks and chairs have all been carried away by squatters gathering building materials for their shacks’ (Holland 50). That the school is the *target* of violence as well as the location for it is important here. Holland highlights how the violence done to the school building – by ‘angry students’ and home-building opportunist adults – is indicative of public black attitudes towards the education system, as well as of their desperation in poverty for resources. These kinds of buildings remain racialised in post-apartheid black environments due to the *white*-orchestrated structures they historically upheld and the cultures of violence they both inhabit and play a role in. The miscellany of ‘bricks, window frames, doors, roofing, ceiling, blackboard, desks and chairs’ constructing the Sowetan residents’ ‘shacks’ creates a jumbled image of black housing which is far removed from the white houses and their luxuries in *The Bold and the Beautiful*, as

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<sup>108</sup> ‘The country of over 50 million has nearly universal primary education’ (McKeever 117).

<sup>109</sup> Foster extends that this racialisation is also fundamentally gendered, and implicates gangs, the detailed consideration of which is vastly outside the scope of this thesis: ‘The construct of masculinity is, however, also implicated in the persistence of male-dominated violence... Secondary school males who lived in a Cape Town area characterised by crime, violence and gang activity endorsed these masculine factors [“toughness”, “success” and “control”] to a far greater extent than males in a non-gang-dominated area’ (Foster 42-3).

described at length by Holland,<sup>110</sup> and this accentuates the polarity between (Holland's) more comfortable white experience and the Sowetans' less privileged, black experience. Furthermore, the movement of these objects and materials from the education space to the home space can also be seen to represent the spread of violence as it migrates through the youth to their homes and families, *from* the very education space which could hold the promise to stop such racialised violence. It is thus both the structure of the building, and the structures upheld by what it symbolises, which affirm the culture of violence within the institutional space, and the apparent inescapability of the same, even by the innocent bystander.

Although urban education spaces do function at points in my key texts as places of rape culture, violence and trauma, and signify the systems of violence and subordination they continue to uphold even in a post-1994 environment, the institutions themselves are also revealed to function – or, at least, to have the potential to function – as active components in the fight against the prevalence of the same in South Africa. One *Born in Soweto* interviewee's thoughts are presented:

One teenage glue-sniffer told an interviewer: "You can create a thousand institutions but you'll never hold him because he loves freedom and adventure more than blankets and good manners. But all the world can be transformed and a new man born in him when you say, 'Brother, give me your hand.'"

(Holland 130)

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<sup>110</sup> 'The camera pans briefly around their stylish celluloid love nest, picking up symbols of wealth and luxury – a magnum of champagne in a giant silver ice bucket, an art treasure displayed on a marble plinth, jewels casually strewn over the dressing table. Then the action moves to a polished mahogany boardroom...' (33).

It therefore follows that while education has the potential to be seen as the foil of, or antidote to, racialised violence,<sup>111</sup> the domain of the educational institution is inherently problematic, gendered, flawed, and, judging by the literature I have referenced, in need of modern overhaul before it can function fully in this positive way.<sup>112</sup> This ‘teenage glue-sniffer’ appears to favour education as partnership, rather than indoctrination or a one-way stream of information from teacher to pupil,<sup>113</sup> which he believes to be not only unhelpful, but also divisive. It is problematic that Holland profiles him to be a nameless ‘teenage glue-sniffer’,<sup>114</sup> as the stigma around such substance abuse – and indeed her implied lack of trust in his words and opinion – has the potential to devalue his account. Perhaps subconsciously and unintentionally, he associates the violence and crime which are frequently partnered with a lack of education with positivity, ‘freedom and adventure’, and even maturity, while education itself represents ‘blankets and good manners’, domesticity, and family life. Although here he represents a bystander to violence, Holland’s prejudices encourage the reader believe that he is also a perpetrator: the fact that he both empathises with those who “do” violent crime, and proposes a ground-up solution for its partial resolution, makes him one of Holland’s most valuable interviewees, even in her mistrust of him.

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<sup>111</sup> Dan Usher discusses this at more length in “Education as a Deterrent to Crime”.

<sup>112</sup> “For South Africa to comply with both its own constitutional and international human rights obligations with respect to education, major change is needed urgently,” said Shenilla Mohamed, Executive Director of Amnesty International South Africa’ (amnesty.org).

<sup>113</sup> I raise this in part due to my father’s personal experience of indoctrination: notably, the school subject “Religious Studies” was called “Religious *Instruction*”, a title revelatory of the commanding nature of the lessons themselves, which only considered Christianity. Although written before the scope of this thesis, more information on the origins of such teaching principles may be found in John Watt’s 1984 piece, ‘Indoctrination in South African Schools’.

<sup>114</sup> “One” teenage glue-sniffer, implying that he is one of many, and that glue-sniffing and indeed drug use is a wider problem in Soweto.

### *CHAPTER 3: VIOLENCE IN THE LIMINAL SPACE OF TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT*

#### Introduction

When I was less than a year old, my Zimbabwean father and English mother went on a long road trip in their blue Volkswagen camper van (“Kombi”), between friends’ and relatives’ houses in South and southern Africa. One night, after dark, somewhere just south of the Zimbabwean border, my father was about to drive across a long bridge, when he saw a gang of men emerge from a hiding place, preparing to throw bricks and large stones at his van, and to hijack it.<sup>115</sup> Stopping or turning round was not an option: he floored the accelerator and tried to speed across the bridge. Due to his acceleration, the well-thrown brick that was meant for the driver’s side window just missed, and smashed through the window behind his head instead. I had been fast asleep in the futon-bed in the back: the brick landed on the seat next to me, less than a foot from my head. My mother tried to get my father to stop to see if I was okay, but he sped on to escape the gang. The only casualty that night was the Kombi’s window.

While the previous two chapters have examined how racial violence functions in specifically defined locations, it is now important to look more laterally, and to question the nature of space itself, in order that liminal aspects of the post-apartheid South African lived experience are not overlooked. The third and final “space” I discuss is sometimes discounted as a reactive by-product of society and policy, even though these fringe spaces are constructed by the same functions which define rural and urban spaces, too.

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<sup>115</sup> Examples of “stoning” (where carjackers throw stones at the driver, in the hope of knocking them out, and then steal the car and any valuables within) can be found at South African online news websites, and include an incident where ‘Buses from two different companies, Intercape and APM, came under attack, with drivers’ windscreens smashed, and passenger windows were not spared either’ (Dywaba).

The attendant risk attached to the entering of a liminal phase or liminal space is of losing a stable sense of self and identity, or of not being reincorporated into the social world in ways that had been anticipated or desired... Death itself is also strongly associated with liminality... Rational spatial knowledge and linear patterns of movement and orientation do not apply in this landscape.

(Roberts 39)

Roberts here encapsulates the sheer *danger* – social and personal – which is associated with liminality.<sup>116</sup> In this chapter I consider how different types of literary travel and transport spaces – public, road, and car spaces, in turn – interact with the liminality of which they are composed, and how white authors utilise the liminality of the space they discuss to extend upon the culture of violence which pervades so much of South Africa historically, and to this day. Culver acknowledges that the inherent spatiality of vehicular violence, ‘is not only socially unjust in and of itself, but from the perspective of spatial violence... it also has a constitutive role in shaping unequal urban geographies’ (162).

Certain modes of transport represent a contentious subject matter in South African culture due to the historic white organisation of land (and the dehumanisation associated with this regulation);<sup>117</sup> those transport systems and routes which were used during the apartheid era remain the paths along which South Africans travel even today. Although in more recent years the ‘loosening and removal’ of such restrictions ‘on [black] African movement

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<sup>116</sup> ‘Liminality’s “betwixt and betweenness” and its “indefinability” are conducive to an examination of violence and violation’ (Gunne ix).

<sup>117</sup> The white man ‘organizes this dehumanization rationally’ (Fanon *TFOB* 231).

between rural and urban areas' has 'facilitated this development' of black households becoming more "stretched" (Lee 199), the fact that a community grows along the very black commuter routes and infrastructure set up by apartheid remains problematic. Furthermore, apartheid-era restrictions and legislation such as Group Areas and influx controls<sup>118</sup> 'on one hand restricted free movement and on the other criminalised staying put' (Makhulu 561). This means that the action of movement by black people in South Africa into and out of urban areas continues to hold memories of, and similarities to, those state-mandated journeys which restricted freedoms and perpetuated black occupation of liminal, rather than permanent, arguably more comfortable, and safer, spaces.

### 1. Train and Railway Spaces

The train, approximating the ship in middle passage, is the link that facilitates labour migration from rural to urban areas.

(Gunne 143)

'For a South African worker, the train is not an innocent form of mobility', argues Mmadi (896); I would amend this statement to read that *public transport* itself is not an innocent form of mobility, and not simply due to the lack of safety and security it represents to its users in South Africa. In fact, the train itself 'reflects a distinct class politics', and, rather than simply being a "container" of commuters... it is imbued with class, racial, and political

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<sup>118</sup> Michael Savage discusses in *The Imposition of Pass Laws on the African Population in South Africa 1916-1984* how such laws as these (and the pass laws) were enforced to 'balance two apparently contradictory white needs: an "exclusionary" need to obtain political security by controlling and policing the number of Africans in "white" areas, and an "inclusionary" need to ensure a supply of cheap labour within these areas' (181).

meanings' (Mmadi 900), a statement which is applicable not only in South Africa but also across the world. Any violence taking place within such a non-innocent "container" is automatically instilled with class and racial politics, and these political machinations have an effect on both the train's occupants and on the wider social environment. Writing in 1999, Gregory Houston considers how

South Africa's African townships are generally located large distances from the places of employment. The continued operation of the cheap labour system depended on the maintenance of a cheap transport system[which is] a major drain on the state's resources.

(49)

Such reliance on state-operated transportation infrastructure – paired with the creation of black townships in the first place<sup>119</sup> – meant that black workers had to directly pay into the very apartheid system which was so destructive to them, and which deliberately facilitated the perpetuation of apartheid ideals and communities.<sup>120</sup> Writing in 2019, Mmadi confirms this:

Both the daily township-to-city commuting workforce and the "international" commuters were the product of the apartheid government's policy of spatial

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<sup>119</sup> 'The township [Soweto] was not designed as a residential area for people with different temperaments and preferences. It was merely a reservoir of labour in which expressions of individuality were discouraged' (Holland 16).

<sup>120</sup> 'Under the apartheid regime, the highly subsidized rail urban transport system was heavily utilized. Indeed, the implementation of the apartheid system (via the Group Areas Act) would have been almost impossible without it' (Todeschini & Dewar 234).



separation and racial segregation... As on the trains, the manner in which South African workers relate to these... modes of transport is mediated through the struggles against the apartheid state.

(898)

What interests me in this first section of my final chapter, however, is the longevity of these systems after the apartheid state's formal dissolution in 1994, and how the literature referencing and detailing them – and the violence which is portrayed to occur on their services – reveals not only the systems' significance to black working communities, but also the whiteness of the authors writing about such atrocities, often in ignorance of the white-orchestrated structures which violently persecute black communities. The train becomes a container of, and signifier for, racialised liminality, and this is only accentuated in my key texts by the whiteness of the authors I consider, as their viewpoint is distanced yet further from the lived experience of blackness in this liminal space.

The train also acts as a site on which to protest these antiquated ideas.<sup>121</sup> Although not a central focus of her interpretation of the township community, the train flits in and out of Holland's commentary of the township in *Born in Soweto*, and her references to the train are revelatory of the nature of violence which occurs there, but also of the skew her whiteness has upon her writing. The first mention of the train in *Born in Soweto* is as follows:

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<sup>121</sup> 'Trains become a space in which people invest multiple, contradictory meanings' (Raychaudhuri NSAP 105).

Passengers queue at the station near Jabulani. The first of many train massacres, an extraordinary horror peculiar to South Africa, occurred here a few years ago. Dark figures appear around a street corner, perhaps residents of the nearby hostel from where the train killers came.

(Holland 19).

Importantly, train massacres – and train violence – are in no way ‘an extraordinary horror peculiar to South Africa’ as Holland here claims. Anindya Raychaudhuri writes about the use of death trains in South Asian partition, and the ‘pervasive’ ‘association between trains and trauma’ (113); the March 2004 train bombings in Madrid, and those in London in July 2005<sup>122</sup> shook Europe; use of trains during the holocaust was iconic.<sup>123</sup> For Holland, a white author, to propose that violence such as this is *only* characteristic of post-apartheid South Africa erases experiences of violence elsewhere, elevating the alleged “culture of violence” in South Africa so that, even in post-apartheid times, South Africa is painted as exceptional in its intense experience of violence.

Furthermore, fewer than ten pages into the first chapter – “Dawn”, a title which invokes ideas of Sowetan origin as well as morning rituals – a sense of constant tension is encouraged by Holland to set the dramatic waking scene. The above train station passage occurs in the wake of the violent history of the same site, and with the association of commuter trains in South Africa, even though the meaning of the name of the area in

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<sup>122</sup> ‘The terrorist attacks on central London's transport network on 7 July 2005 caused 52 fatalities and some 700 injuries. The psychological effects of the attacks remain unknown’ (Rubin et al. 606).

<sup>123</sup> ‘trains are some of the most significant and recurring symbols of the Holocaust, for they represent a turning point in the destruction of European Jewry. Deportation via railway marked a systemic shift from mobile murderers and stationary victims to stationary murderers and mobile victims’ (Stier 83).

question – “Jabulani” – is ‘rejoice’. However, in her attempt to present the “dangerous” atmosphere in Soweto to the reader, or indeed to encapsulate the “culture of violence” present at the station, Holland is inadvertently obtuse through ambiguity. The reader is led to assume, by association after the mention of the ‘train killers’, that the ‘dark figures’ which appear ‘around a street corner’ are train killers too. This impression is consolidated by Holland’s structuring of sentences: although the train massacres ‘occurred’ in the past tense, and the ‘dark figures appear’ in the present tense, syntactically, Holland implies that the image of ‘dark figures’ walking around a corner is directly reminiscent of the violent individuals in the times of the train massacres. Furthermore, once again, the use of darkness to tease the potential for violence is employed in Holland’s depiction of the black residents of Soweto. The expectation of violence precedes everything else, simply due to the hue projected by the dawn light on the individual residents. ‘Perhaps’ the figures are not killers, Holland posits – only ‘perhaps’ – instead, they reside in the hostel in which the train killers presumably plotted their attacks, another liminal space which is, in this context, associated with violence. The ‘dark figures’ are constructed negatively in their blackness – Holland discusses commuters and perpetrators, pre- and post-apartheid subjects, in the same breath – as though they will inevitably fall in step with those who went before. In the same way that she states train massacres are unique and origin-giving to South Africa and its culture of violence, Holland suggests that the act of train massacre originates within the space of the hostel itself – its ‘restraining fence’ attempts to contain the killers Holland believes to be within but the ‘broken windows’ give them away. Her writings point towards the anticipation of further violence, which moves from the hostel to the liminal space. Although the violence occurred in a place of liminality and of movement, the hostel and the station are places which become associated with violence because of racist prejudice, and

this demonstrates how fundamental space, race, and place are to white conceptions and constructions of violence.

The train itself is similarly constructed as a space of not only racial violence but also racialised deprivations, which can also cause death and harm.

A train jam-packed with humanity chugs by, half-seen through the haze. Those who cannot afford the fare stand on narrow running boards, their bodies pressed against steel carriages. Stories of numerous freeloaders who have slipped on to the tracks and suffered terrifying deaths or injuries abound in Soweto. In recent times, commuters have been terrorised by sinister train killings committed by hooded murderers wielding pangas,<sup>124</sup> axes and guns for undeclared political motives.

(Holland 20)

Every sentence of this extract has its racialised elements magnified through Holland's whiteness, which is projected onto the text and made to contrast even more starkly with the subjects she writes about. The train is 'jam-packed with [black] humanity', rather than 'humans', 'commuters' or 'people', implying that they are one entity. This flattens the black experience, devaluing and simplifying blackness in the same breath as it elevates the perceived uniqueness of Holland's whiteness. The commuters are only 'half-seen through the haze', implying a sense of second-class citizens or those unnoticed due to their liminality. Holland raises how people are perceived at first sight, and in the dim dawn light,

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<sup>124</sup> Large machete-like knives.

those with dark skin are as ‘half-seen’ physically as they are politically in the township. On the other hand, one could argue that ‘half-seen’ refers to how black people are the “half” of society which “sees” their own trauma, and that so many whites – the other hypothetical “half” – do not see, but rather ignore, or have selective vision in their understanding of black cultures and the dangers within.

That ‘those who cannot afford the fare stand on narrow running boards’ is revelatory of more than the inferior quality of Sowetan commuter transport systems: Holland exposes how these commuters are perceived to be not only within a liminal transport space, but also fringe to society. The commuters’ occupation of the ‘narrow running boards’ represents ‘an extension of the apartheid-state machinery into their lives’ (Mmadi 898). Therefore, the fact that they have been made to bear the burden of a double exploitation – and made invisible while dangerously ‘pressed against steel carriages’ – is important, as is how their liminality is accentuated by how they do not even ride *inside* the train.<sup>125</sup> Holland calls the black commuters ‘freeloaders’, and while this word is factually accurate – they do not pay to travel on the outside of the train – it is highly unsympathetic, and derogatory in the negative connotations it possesses. These commuters are ‘freeloading’ off the very system which both currently and historically dictates, takes advantage of, and oppresses their lives, labour, and liberty; the system justifies all of this with the commuters’ blackness.

The language of relative racial devaluation is so instilled in Holland’s words that she need not even mention those who ‘have slipped onto the tracks and suffered terrifying deaths or

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<sup>125</sup> Holland’s whiteness is flagged again here – her experience of the train has never been so liminal or dangerous as this.

injuries’ – the reader is already able to infer this. More terrifying still is that this is not even the “main event” of racial violence on this page: the points I have highlighted are accessories, setting the scene for the terrifying final image, that ‘In recent times commuters have been terrorised by sinister train killings’. It is likely that here Holland is referring to the train attack which occurred on 13<sup>th</sup> September 1990,<sup>126</sup> even though she was not a witness. Her (blind) attention to ‘hooded’ – again, half-hidden and therefore frightening – ‘murderers wielding pangas’ only functions to validate an extra level on which the racialised cultures of violence function in the liminal space of the train. Her magnification, and examination through a white lens, of these instances of violence, only perpetuates her own suspicious attitude which aligns blackness with violence unquestioningly: her whiteness thus creates a frustratingly cyclical message.

Holland interviews Gavin, a black paramedic working in Soweto, who remarks that he believes the train attacks are

... organised by specialist killer squads... Still they haven’t been caught, up to this day, after many, many train massacres when people are just sitting innocently in a train and masked gunmen suddenly come in and shoot them or beat them to death... After so many killings in the township, which have been happening nearly every day for years now, why are the culprits not caught?

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<sup>126</sup> ‘Youths with spears and machetes went on a rampage today in a black commuter train, hacking to death at least 13 people and injuring about 100 as terrified people leapt from the speeding cars’ (Renfrew). ‘On September 13, 1990, in a well-coordinated terrorist-style attack, two armed African gangs massacred 26 commuters on a train going from Johannesburg to Soweto. The silence of the killers and their style of attack, which was similar to that of rebels of the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo), led to widespread speculation that the “hidden hand” of white security officials was behind it’ (“Violence in the Transvaal”).

Holland's use of direct quotation from a black Sowetan resident and worker's account of the situation surrounding violence in liminal spaces of transport possesses a different kind of value and authority from her own words. As an individual affected by this violence, his beliefs of the motivations and individuals behind the attacks are more likely to be rooted in experience than Holland's whitewashed comments, which are founded on selective "outsider" observation, in order that she might construct her own story of Soweto. However, the reader must bear in mind that Holland's selection and editorship of his comments means that her whiteness yet presides over his black experience, even within his own statement. Gavin appears to be quietly angry – 'why are the culprits not caught?' – and he highlights the innocence of the victims, contrasting it with the brutality of the attackers who 'shoot them *or* beat them to death' (emphasis mine). Interestingly, anger is not an emotion which Holland often references in *Born in Soweto*; she prefers to focus on sadness, hopelessness, and pity, and the victims, rather than perpetrators, of violence, because black fury is too unsettling for her as a white author.<sup>127</sup> As well as anger, Gavin is subtly incredulous at the lack of support or action from legal and state systems in catching the perpetrators. Indeed, the central government, 'which is responsible for the maintenance and management of the rail system, has increasingly distanced itself from its responsibilities' (Todeschini & Dewar 234). The state's deliberate distance – from the state-formed rail system itself, but also from the violent occurrences within railway spaces – means that the state is at least a bystander to racialised violence. Holland's inclusion of

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<sup>127</sup> '... the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up' (Fanon *TFOB* 114).

Gavin's statements on the train attacks are important, as 'by ignoring South African workers' experience of the train as a mode of transport, the scholarship has excluded a key site of worker militancy and political-identity formation from analysis' (Mmadi 896). In *Born in Soweto*, the formation of identity within the liminal train space is viewed through Holland's whiteness. She melodramatically patronises and victimises many residents, implying that if they are not a perpetrator, they are instantly a victim, and yet – as was explored earlier in this section – she does not hesitate to arouse suspicion around Sowetan residents, simply for their lived experience of blackness within the liminal space.

The train is certainly run by, and filled with, the politics of class and race,<sup>128</sup> and the longstanding impact of apartheid upon public transport systems in South Africa. I have examined Heidi Holland's white viewpoint on a train station which serves, for the vast majority, black people, and which was famed during the apartheid era for its part in the control and restriction of the black South African (or migrant) worker's movement. *Born in Soweto* reveals that these township workers are always the target of prejudice – even in Holland's efforts to expose and liberate them, white saviour-like – and continue to occupy a liminal position. However, in the same space, they are being constantly compared to train attackers and domestic terrorists by those who only glance the township briefly – and from a "safe distance".

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<sup>128</sup> 'The train, moreover, symbolizes crossing the threshold from one world to another. In South Africa this has a particular resonance as these spaces were clearly defined by a racist apartheid regime and supported by legislation' (Gunne 171).



## 2. The Space of the Road

Our spatial awareness of the distribution of violence, particularly the threat of violent victimisation, strongly conditions which parts of the city we can move through and inhabit.

(Vigneswaran 567)

That the road is 'also the infrastructural base of apartheid' is vital: 'the very conjoining of peasant and proletariat under apartheid... depends on this road' (Morris 591-2). However, it also true that 'a changing association to mobility itself' is emerging among 'ordinary Africans' (Lee 197) who relate to the space of the road differently from 20 years ago. One must be careful when discussing "the road" in general: greater specificity is useful to unpicking specific "cultures of violence" and reputations of specific roads within the liminal space. Whole networks of road are generalised, for example, by Holland in *Born in Soweto*; she posits that 'Tempers are short in Soweto, and bad memories haunt *every street*' (18, emphasis mine), even though her glimpses of these streets are fleeting, rather than sustained. Gavin, the paramedic who gives her a tour around the township in the ambulance, details how 'We're *passing through Zola* now...' (101, emphasis mine), and 'We're *passing through Emdeni* now, known as Beirut because of political violence' (100, emphasis mine). Some of the notable moments of her tour are those which stick in her memory for negative reasons, implying that her association of violence with space is in a way practical and self-preserving as well as prejudiced. A 2007 medical study details how 'negative emotions like fear and sadness trigger increased activity in a part of the brain linked to memories', a technique which 'may have evolved as an evolutionary tactic to

protect against future life-threatening or negative events' (Warner). Holland's negative violent memory of a space is thus more dominant than any positive or neutral memories of the same place, rendering it a "space of violence", which in her eyes should be avoided.<sup>129</sup>

Holland's own words, following Gavin's tour in which he details different areas of political, domestic, and other violence, generate more liminal images:

We drive slowly past the wreckage of the ghost town in Meadowlands... As we turn into Vincent "Death" Road, a bizarre drama unfolds. A young white policeman springs into the street from behind a hedge, pistol pointing from his outstretched arm, charging towards a group of youths. His face is tensely drawn, sweating, terrifying and terrified.

Our car drives on; Gavin's conversation doesn't pause. He seems scarcely to have noticed this lone white policeman running, with his gun aimed. The scene from the rear window is one of sheer courage: the policeman is frisking the youths. His gun is still held in a taut arm, but he is piteously vulnerable.

(Holland 103)

The fact the car slows by so-called "'Death" Road' indicates the driver's acknowledgement of his white passenger's fascination with violence: his deceleration means that both Holland's desire to witness violence on "'Death" Road', and the reputation of the space, are fulfilled. To foreground this violence, Holland educes both the supernatural and the post-

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<sup>129</sup> It is, however, important to remember that prejudice, including racist prejudice, has a key part to play in this situation, as well as evolutionary feats of self-preservation.

apocalyptic, and we are presented with the specific ‘*wreckage of a ghost town*’ (emphasis mine); the place thus appears doubly undesirable, marginalised, and liminal. Here, again, Holland accentuates the everyday nature of violence for Gavin the black paramedic – ‘he seems scarcely to have noticed’ – and the occasional spectacle it is to her privileged white eyes. The fact that she notices, and chooses to base her commentary upon *the white man’s vulnerability* – despite him being the one pointing a gun<sup>130</sup> at the (black) youth residents – is revealing, and demonstrative of Holland’s selective vision. To her, it is the white policeman’s vulnerable presence in the township (despite his state-sanctioned profession) which is shocking, rather than his powers to frisk the youths, or their subjugation to the white-written law. Holland’s ability to comment upon the ‘piteously vulnerable’ is severely compromised, as is her definition of ‘sheer courage’ – a courage armed, legislated, and with promulgated authority to create even more violence.

In Proctor’s *The Savage Hour*, the key character used to enact examples of violence in liminal road and transport spaces is the Zimbabwean immigrant worker Klein Samuel, who experiences spatial racial violence severally. Aside from his murder of Dumisane, he is often the victim of racial violence, or the implied victim of potential or projected racial violence. Arguably the most evidently gruesome sequence of violence in the novel is when Klein Samuel is attacked by a nameless (South African) Zulu man, in a tussle started over the space of the road itself – ‘*Who is the mutha fucka who thinks he owns this road?*’ (153) – and how Klein Samuel’s car occupies the Zulu man’s “own space”. The verbal fight continues on the grounds that ‘this is not your [Klein Samuel’s] country to be in’, that Zulu is ‘not yours

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<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, the pistol ‘points *from* his outstretched arm’, as though an essential and unremovable part of his very state-authorised, violent body.

to speak, you fucking rubbish' (153), and that he parked in the Zulu man's space. Such motivations are fundamentally racial as well as liminal.<sup>131</sup> The act of violence consists of Klein Samuel being dragged behind a car, leaving him to ponder how Ouma – who was notably a white matriarch – would have been able to stop the violence, which is a desperate thought. The reader mostly comes to understand the act of violence in Klein Samuel's hindsight when he is in hospital.

[Ouma would have] Stopped the man from pulling his belt off his waist and wrapping it around Klein Samuel's wrists, then, nonchalantly, as if he had done this many times before, fastening the belt round the chassis of the car... He heard the doors to the cab slam closed and he wondered why they had forgotten him outside.

(195)

Klein Samuel heard the engine roar and then his legs were flying through the air as if weightless. His whole body lifted off to follow but the belt around his wrists brought him back to earth. Then up again, then sideways, then all the way round so he was facing the road and his arms had ripped out of their sockets. Then back round and he saw his shoes fly off one by one and he wanted to cry because they were his best shoes.

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<sup>131</sup> The September 2019 article "South Africans Are Used to Being the Targets of Racist Hatred. Now They've Become the Haters" posits that 'South Africans who are involved in the attacks on foreigners often openly exhibit xenophobic attitudes when they speak about foreign nationals living among them, especially in poor townships. In a recent march in downtown Johannesburg, for example, South Africans were chanting, "Foreigners must go, they must go back"' (McKaiser). This demonstrates that the kind of attitudes depicted in Proctor's 2014 novel persist five years later, and indeed beyond.

The next time Klein Samuel hit the road, he wondered if he was already dead and flying onward to the arms of his blood mother who loved him first and waited in the shadows for their reunion.

(196)

Klein Samuel is literally dragged through the same liminal, contested space (of the road) which was the prime trigger for the confrontation in the first place; he is subjected to pain as the space of conflict is repurposed by 'the man in the red T-shirt' (195) to become a space of fear-inducing xenophobic abuse and punishment ("Let's go for a ride, *Zimbabwe*." (154)). He is "taken for a ride" and moved from the parking spaces forcibly and against his will; he fluctuates, rotates, and moves continuously through liminal space, and yet Proctor omits descriptions of intense pain, perhaps drawing upon Klein Samuel's drunken state and deadened senses, leaving the reader to interpret just how painful the experience would be. Two mothers are recalled in the above two passages: his 'blood mother who loved him first' and Ouma, who was a protector and mother figure for so much of the rest of his life post-emigration. In essence, the act of violence in the liminal transport space leads Klein Samuel to question his own maternal roots, national identity, and sense of belonging, which is torn between South Africa, a landscape rife with racism and xenophobia which is frequently unwelcoming, and Zimbabwe. The fact that he is tied to the taxi<sup>132</sup> – or bound to the liminal space between bumper and constantly-changing stretch of road – by 'the man in the red T-shirt' (195) highlights the continued significance of colour again. The only things we know about the man are that he is Zulu (and therefore that he is black), and that the colour of his

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<sup>132</sup> Notably this car is a taxi – 'He heard the doors to the cab slam and closed and he wondered why they had forgotten him outside' (195).

T-shirt is red (implying blood and violence by association). Relevant here is the separate, earlier, statement concerning Delilah's observation of 'the black road', and how 'the black cloud open[s] its mouth and suck[s] her in' (71) – both of these are racialised statements which imply blackness to be inherent within the violence of the liminal space and landscape. In this way, when he is assaulted by the man in the red T-shirt, Klein Samuel is consumed or 'suck[ed] in' by 'the black cloud' of black violence, before being spat out onto 'the black road', as racialised violence operates both within, and because of the conflict over, a liminal space and its surrounding racialised landscapes.

The second close analysis into Klein Samuel I will undertake in this chapter concerns no such outrightly shocking violence, but rather alludes continually to the potential for, and the threat of, violence in a space of notable and widely-recognised liminality – the Zimbabwean border. In the detailing of Klein Samuel's journey to return to his family following his murder of Dumisane, Proctor draws the reader through some of the most liminal spaces in the novel. 'Since Klein Samuel was last here, fences have been erected on the South African side of the river to stem the rising tide of immigrants like him' (309). As well as Proctor's wordplay on the fence being there to stop the "rising tide" of both immigrants and the river, with its erection she also encapsulates Klein Samuel's effective self-imprisonment in Zimbabwe through his committing murder, as well as the xenophobic hostility with which some, including the nameless Zulu man in the red T-shirt, hold him as an immigrant. Significantly, however, Proctor offers neither solace nor peace for Klein Samuel as he moves towards Zimbabwe. Instead, the greeting by a farmer to Groot Samuel is as follows:

The man takes off his hat and warns Groot Samuel that gangs of traffickers operate on this border, violent bands of thugs looking for people to sell and others to ravage.

(Proctor 309)

The border, a liminal space, is therefore not a secure space for either Groot or Klein Samuel. Proctor implies the farmer's words to imply two groups inherently defined by race, "people to sell" and "others to ravage"; this highlights that movement along or across the border (a liminal space) brings likely danger and violence from these 'violent bands of thugs' which the reader now *anticipates interaction with*. In addition, Klein Samuel's very existence as a migrant labourer is further demonstrated to be dangerous, in how his way of life and work – which he adopted to help his family – functioned to put himself at constant risk of racial violence because of the liminal spaces he occupied. Klein Samuel considers this while still in the car – 'How is it that his life, so firmly attached to that slim piece of land and to Groot Samuel, Cheetah and Ouma, has slipped away? How is it that he has lost it all and in such a short space of time?' (309-10). His identity is deeply spatial, and is now torn between two disparate spaces. Groot Samuel's immediate removal of him from the South African farm on which he committed murder relocates Klein Samuel's national identity, but not his heart and his wishes to remain there. Just as in the attack on him by the Zulu man, again here Klein Samuel becomes powerless to the movement of a car, as he is dislocated from a space he feels comfortable in: he is twice-defeated before he even crosses the border.

So Klein Samuel simply turns and pushes his bike down a thin track that leads to the Limpopo river. He will avoid the crocodiles that await him here. He will avoid the

thugs that roam the banks, but he knows, as he takes his leave, that he will not live long here.

(Proctor 310)

Klein Samuel's humanity was contained within his sense of belonging to the South African farm and its people, so he encounters even greater danger than he has already experienced when he is "shunned" by this space and must relocate to the liminal space of the road. Proctor indicates how a sense of belonging functions as protection, while movement and liminality signify danger. Klein Samuel's current – and constant, over the course of the novel – occupation of liminal road spaces, and new *lack* of any sense of belonging or home, is dangerous and is implied to preclude and invite racialised violence.

#### Personalities Associated with the Space of the Road

Different places linked to the road are mentioned frequently as spaces in which violence occurs in my key texts; the road becomes an ingrained space of violence itself:

He died buying a watermelon from Chrissie at the roadside stall on the corner of Prince George Drive and Military Road...

(Proctor 55)

The boys around Gracie Street never asked before taking what they wanted.

(Proctor 191)



[At a car wash] This is the place in Dobsonville where three men were brutally murdered a few nights ago. Neighbours said “people from nowhere” came to kill them.

(Holland 21)

The road’s liminality and inherency as a transient, briefly visited place for most, gives it an anonymity and a lack of familiarity or identity. In this way, ‘carjackers... linger near parking garages and traffic intersections to maximize their opportunities’ (Morris 608). The space of the road itself thus lends itself to acts of racial violence and crime, which the perpetrators more frequently “get away with”.<sup>133</sup> That said, the road remains a space which some people occupy – some not simply to use as part of a commute or move along, but to live and inhabit on a more permanent basis. As an extension of the fear felt by many about the road’s liminality and potential for violence, some people and “street personalities” associated with the road are also feared and held in suspicion, even though their very existence is the result of longstanding socio-political inequality and, by extension, racial violence within the liminal space. Le Roux argues that ‘Street children are simply described as the victims of the former policy of apartheid’. He also points out how some of the children he interviewed in his study ‘cited the following reasons for leaving home: family violence, parental alcoholism, abuse, poverty, and personal reasons’. Holland’s musings on street children are less considerate:

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<sup>133</sup> ‘The bodies that populate literary and cinematic texts are similarly to be found in the margins, on the outside... His [Masseur’s] body is found half on the pavement, and half on the road—a location... [which] is marked by its distance from the comfort of the familiar’ (Raychaudhuri 90).

The difference between right and wrong is unfamiliar to these kids; an abandoned distinction in the battle for a tolerable existence. Life has used them so roughly that they keep people at arm's length with insolent comments and stares.

(Holland 128)

Holland's suspicion of these children places a level of blame on them for their situation: although she concedes that 'Life has used them... roughly', it is the children themselves who, she implies, *actively* 'keep people at arm's length with insolent comments and stares'. Holland senses the physicality of the distance between herself, a white woman, and the black children, and justifies their "abandonment" as self-inflicted. The superstition with which street children are treated is a by-product of the "culture of violence" surrounding the space of the road and those who linger there, rather than pass through, and this is reflected in Holland's writings in her glorification of white experience. Lingering or living in the liminal space of the street implies a danger and harbours a culture of fear and violence: 'Klein Samuel has the illegal immigrant's hardwired fear of all things official but there is a chasm between that and the terror he feels when confronted by the criminals who run these streets' (Proctor 153).

To adapt Vigneswaran's statement that 'Violence is a basic precondition for public space yet a constant threat to its preservation' (580) to better fit this section's argument, I posit that violence both constructs and restricts liminal space in my key texts. Moreover, violence constructs liminal space through white perceptions of "othered" blackness as it occupies spaces which "should be" those of movement, and restricts the black experience of freedom within liminal space through the construction of these very boundaries. In *Born in Soweto*

and *The Savage Hour*, personalities associated with the road space are deemed liminal, and are prejudiced against because of the very space they inhabit. The fear of experiencing violence is elevated within the white experience when in such a liminal road space, due to the blackness and (presumed) associated violence which is suspected to linger, half-hidden, there.

### 3. The Space of the Car

#### Locating the Car within South African Literature and Culture

In this final section of the chapter, I focus on how the space of the car functions within the “culture of violence” in South Africa, as laid out in my key texts. I have discussed how it is important not to see the car moving *in isolation* through travel and transport spaces, and yet detaching the car from the space it occupies is equally important to a comprehensive view of how the liminal space is both created and passed through. Megan Jones considers how ‘Car interiors are not hermetically sealed, but are transgressed by the exterior spaces they navigate’ (391). However, the car does seem to persistently represent one thing in the South African literature I examine: an object which both attracts, and is used for the purpose of, racial violence. To locate the car within South African literature and culture is complex: the stereotype of rich white neighbourhoods with flashy, expensive cars, and poorer black townships with no cars – or only old, decrepit ones – is defunct.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> An exception to this is demonstrated in Holland’s aforementioned discussion of the white neighbourhoods and suburbs as depicted and idolised by *The Bold and the Beautiful*.

Few cars are parked outside but it is not unusual to see a dilapidated vehicle near a smart one because, in Soweto, a successful businessman often lives next door to a humble trader, or a beggar.

(Holland 16)

Holland's above assertion about the variety of cars on Sowetan roads demonstrates that, although vehicle ownership is sparser there than in certain richer white neighbourhoods with 'beautiful looking' cars (97), her immediate thought process regarding the association of vehicles with their owners is rooted in class, wealth, and social status. Holland implies that 'a humble trader' would drive a 'dilapidated vehicle', while a 'successful businessman' would drive a 'smart one', *even though* they live next door to each other in the same township; it appears to follow that cars are a more reliable indicator of wealth than houses are in Soweto. Gordon & Shakeshaft agree that 'on the street, the most visible symbol of class is a driver's vehicle' (261). Indeed, the 'fetish of the automobile' (Morris 602) permeates South Africa and its literatures, for reasons including the enabling nature of movement, the sense of "fitting in", and the spatial autonomy the car can offer and represent. Each of these reasons for car ownership is significant to moments of racial violence in, near, or motivated by the car,<sup>135</sup> and will be extended upon in the examples I examine in this section. The space of the car in South African literature appears to have a *constancy* in its tendency towards both attracting and enabling violence. In the following analysis I argue the car even develops into a symbol of the "culture of violence" itself.

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<sup>135</sup> Enda Duffy writes at length on the implications of traffic 'accidents' and how often the terminology we use around vehicle incidents is both misleading and inaccurate; in *The Speed Handbook: Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism*, she discusses how vehicular violence is a man-made phenomenon, and not as passive or innocent as we are led to believe. However, the discussion of traffic *accidents* is outside the scope of this section of my thesis. My focus is on intentional violence, and the repercussions of that violence.

## The Car, Image, and Status

The car, not only an object or container moving through a city but a particular kind of composite, has been at least as much about defining social relations as it has been about transporting people and goods.

(Jain 188)

That the car operates as a signifier for race and class, and then simultaneously attracts danger and encourages violence (both towards the car, and its owner/driver<sup>136</sup> and occupants), is central to many of the motivations for carjacking, jackrolling, and vandalism in my key texts. As my parents experienced when our campervan was stoned, a car in South Africa is seen to be “worth stealing”, and, by extension, also “worth” any violence or injury which may occur as a consequence of the carjacking – not just due to the monetary value of the car, but also because of the signifier of whiteness which the car is perceived to be.

Coetzee highlights how Lurie notices that ‘Petrus has *borrowed* a tractor, from where he [Lurie] has no idea, to which he has coupled the old rotary plough...’ (151, emphasis mine).

Lurie’s perception of Petrus is derogatory: the racist Lurie does not consider Petrus to be worthy or capable of being an owner/driver, even of a farm worker’s vehicle, due to his black skin. Thus, he narrates the sentence in such a way that Petrus *does the borrowing*,

rather than more passively and willingly *being lent* a tractor. Furthermore, the use of the

phrase ‘from where he has no idea’ (151) works dually: firstly, to demonstrate Lurie’s

implied opinion that because he does not know where the plough came from, it must have

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<sup>136</sup> I have used the phrase “owner/driver” here, as I believe it is important to clarify when someone both owns *and* drives a car, owing to the discussion of car theft and the significance of ownership versus borrowing cars in this chapter.

been stolen; and, secondly, to promote Coetzee's insight into Lurie's prejudice against the black ownership of vehicles.<sup>137</sup> Lurie's bitter and jealous<sup>138</sup> comments spark unnecessary hatred towards, and prejudice against, a black man using a vehicle to work the land: Lurie's near-constant suspicion of black violence weaponizes the vehicles black people drive.

The alleged recovery (153), but later misidentification (154) of Lurie's car highlights the lack of aptitude and capacity of the police to help,<sup>139</sup> and indeed also the lack of power, identity, autonomy, and even sense of self-worth Lurie feels due to his lack of car ownership.

Interestingly, 'he drives with Lucy' (153) in her kombi to the police station; when he gets back to her car having failed to regain his truck, 'Lucy is sitting behind the wheel of the kombi' (154); and yet on the way back to the farm 'It is he who takes over the driving' (156).

Even in his failure to retrieve his truck, he reasserts his masculinity through the dominant act of driving, ousting his daughter from the driver's seat of her own car. Sarah Jain agrees that 'the driver's seat reasserted the male as the family head in control of its destiny' and that 'the car became a symbol of paternity...' (Jain 195). Therefore, while Lurie reclaims his whiteness and masculinity by driving, Petrus is denied both due to racialised dialogues surrounding car ownership in the novel.

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<sup>137</sup> 'Clearly, private automobile ownership is not a primary instrument of subjectification for poor migrant laborers in South Africa, most of whom continue to travel back and forth from work or between rural and urban spaces, via bus, bakkie or minibus taxis, though the desire for such ownership is indeed a force of subjectification' (Morris 595).

<sup>138</sup> Lurie's truck is stolen so he, although white, has less freedom of movement than Petrus in this moment.

<sup>139</sup> In many of the articles I have read surrounding carjacking and crime involving vehicles, it is repeatedly highlighted that "No arrests were made": the lack of ability of the police to aid and catch criminals appears to come down to more than simply ineptitude. Patrick Egwu discusses how 'the South African Police Service (SAPS) is one of the most brutal policing systems in the democratic world. A history of police brutality and human rights abuses in the country can be traced to its legacy of apartheid, when the police were used to dominate and discriminate against Black communities and to hunt down enemies of the regime. But the legacy of brutality has survived the country's transition to a multiracial democracy.'

### The Car, Safety, and Security

Any sanctuary offered by the car is often restricted by overshadowing danger. For example, in *Born in Soweto*, 'A police armoured vehicle rumbles along the distant highway' (Holland 20), and 'armoured vehicles cruise by' (22) scenes of looting and violence. Police are present, but at a notable distance – the highway is removed from the residential areas Holland visits in Soweto – showing that the town is superficially "prepared" by the state for urban violence, but that the state is not necessarily willing to enter the township's fray. The police vehicle is thus liminal, in the sense that it occupies the periphery of the violent area of Soweto, and skirts around its actual supposed "job" as a cornerstone of peace. The vehicle itself is armoured, so while the car is protected, its alleged purpose – the protection of civilians and upholding the law – remains unfulfilled,<sup>140</sup> and its true purpose is of the façade of control, rather than the sustainment of order. Later, in her account of Soweto, Holland comments upon the fact that 'Sometimes people are killed as Gavin and Al watch helplessly from the relative safety of their ambulance' (86). Again, Holland occupies a 'relative' safety, a 'relative' vehicular protection compared with non-state-operated vehicles, and yet the ambulance holds no power in the prevention of crime, violence, or injury: despite localised spots of 'relative' safety, and despite police and other official service presence, violence persists.<sup>141</sup> Holland does present one moment of stationary passion within vehicular sanctuary:

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<sup>140</sup> Judging by the number of crimes Holland witnesses from the safety of another public vehicle, an ambulance, and by the lack of police presence she comments upon on the streets.

<sup>141</sup> Vigneswaran discusses how in some neighbourhoods, a street patrol has been set up by the community, and that many of the community 'joined the patrol with a tale of criminal victimisation and the feelings of injustice that this evokes' (572).

The windows of the Ford jalopy were steamed up from the heat of their passion.

Neither Nomsa nor her lover saw the policeman as he approached, noting the car's registration number.

(67)

Despite the windows being partly shrouded from the rest of the public on the street by steam, even this moment is interrupted by law enforcement. The sanctuary of the car is thus punctured by outside interference, despite the lack of violence or (objectively) harmful crime occurring. Indeed, 'That was the night Josiah Madumo decided to marry Nomsa Matlala' (68) – running from the police. In this way, a moment of sanctuary within the space of the car is translated into a car chase, with the very real potential for 'vehicular violence', not by thugs or criminals, but by the law enforcement services meant to protect these very citizens' security.

#### The Car as a Body which Attracts Danger

Carjacking is an often-violent crime – '... in 2005, there were 12,434 carjackings in South Africa, approximately 20 percent of which entailed violence against the owners or passengers' (Morris 606) – whose levels are allegedly 'now at epidemic levels' (de Greef).<sup>142</sup> Coetzee presents the carjacking of Lurie's truck in *Disgrace*. In his soliloquy following the sequence in which Lucy is raped, Lurie identifies how vehicles attract danger, violence, and trouble, by prioritising them and listing them first in those items it is dangerous to own: 'A risk to own anything: a car...' (98). The theft of Lurie's truck in *Disgrace* occurs in tandem

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<sup>142</sup> de Greef continues that 'For every 100,000 cars in South Africa, some 140 are hijacked annually; in the United Kingdom the figure is less than five. South Africa's national statistics service estimates that up to 90 incidents take place each day, approximately double what the police have on record.'



with the rape and impregnation of his daughter, and yet his personal injuries are relatively minor (a burnt scalp). It appears that Coetzee uses the car as a proxy for any personal or physical violation of Lurie's body, which is deeply problematic. Coetzee's writing merges Lurie and his car as signifiers for whiteness and masculinity – much like my above discussion of the masculinisation of the Kombi's driving seat – both of which are stolen from Lurie. In the theft scene, proclaimed most interestingly by Lurie to be 'the day of testing' (94),<sup>143</sup> one of the men confronts Lurie for the truck's keys:

"The keys," says the man.

"No."

...

The man raises the bottle. His face is placid, without trace of anger. It is merely a job he is doing: getting someone to hand over an article.

...

"Take them," he says. "Take everything. Just leave my daughter alone."

Without a word the man takes the keys...

(94-5)

Lurie's reluctance to hand over his car keys is changed instantly by the threat of pain and violence, and yet the man does not hit him with the bottle. Here, Coetzee constructs a narrative situation in which Lurie is made to feel no physical pain himself, but rather suffers through what is taken from him: his vehicle, and his daughter's perceived purity. In this way,

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<sup>143</sup> Of his whiteness and masculinity.

Coetzee highlights how carjacking as criminality is 'the mode of class conflict in the absence of political alternatives' (Morris 606) within the remote space of the farm. In making the truck a vehicle for Lurie's violation by proxy, Coetzee comments on Lurie's materialistic priorities and values while revealing the sexual double standard within the novel, and the way in which payment is different for the perceived social "crimes" committed by men and women. While Melanie "pays" for the crime of existing while non-white by being subjected to rape, and Lucy "pays" for being both a lesbian<sup>144</sup> and a white female South African landowner with her rape,<sup>145</sup> the violation Lurie experiences is a privileged one, considering his numerous real crimes and various prejudices. His white male privilege means that any punishment he experiences is directed not towards his body, but something inanimate and exterior to the self, and yet he feels violated anyway, as the car is the extension of his manhood and whiteness. Furthermore, Coetzee strongly implies that the truck symbolises Lurie's body, and what happens to the car is implied to be what Lurie would deserve in a more just world. The three "acts" committed against the car in *Disgrace* are vandalism, theft, and misidentification or loss by the police. Each of these offends or bothers Lurie, not least the last, which, although less physically intrusive, appears to purposefully ignore and dismiss the social status associated with car ownership, as well as Lurie's implied viewpoint that a car is a travel- or escape-enabling extension of the self: 'without a car he feels trapped on the farm' (Coetzee 139).

Lurie's car being vandalised is another clear cause-and-effect "punishment" inflicted upon him by Melanie's boyfriend after he rapes her.

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<sup>144</sup> According to Lurie, who resents Lucy's relationship with Helen (60).

<sup>145</sup> This is explained in more detail in Chapter 1.

Though he stays up late into the night, waiting for her, Melanie does not come.

Instead, his car, parked in the street, is vandalized. The tyres are deflated, glue is injected into the doorlocks, newspaper is pasted over the windscreen, the paintwork is scratched. The locks have to be replaced; the bill comes to six hundred rand.

“Any idea who did it?” asks the locksmith.

“None at all,” he replies curtly.

(31)

In this instance, Lurie’s actions – his raping of and having a twisted relationship with Melanie – are punished, but so, too, is his twisted *desire for more*. He ‘stays up late into the night, waiting for her’, despite her shunning him: his proxy body – the car – is violated in the same moment and space as he openly wishes to violate her body again. Not only is his car violated, furthermore, but it is violated messily, openly, and publicly. He is visibly humiliated – ‘*Disgrace*’-d – for a crime which has not yet been made public, but is about to be.<sup>146</sup>

Furthermore, Coetzee crudely and graphically mirrors Melanie’s rape in the actions done to the car. That ‘glue is injected into the doorlocks’ encourages the reader to think of forced penetrative intercourse, as well as the glue itself sealing the locks shut so that they vitally *cannot be penetrated again by Lurie*. A barrier is formed by the boyfriend, between his lover and her violator: her boyfriend protects her by vandalising Lurie’s car just as he protects her by becoming the ‘intruder’ (31) in Lurie’s class. ‘The locks have to be replaced’, and Lurie’s sexual relationship with this individual is forcibly terminated; he must search for a new or

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<sup>146</sup> ‘The report is on page three: “Professor on sex charge”, it is headed’ (Coetzee 46).

different sexual partner, even one he pays for like the new locks fitted to his car. In this respect, it is not only Lurie himself that the car becomes a symbol for, but also his priorities in life. Furthermore, Lurie lies to the locksmith about having no idea who 'did it', despite it being directly implied that Melanie's boyfriend was the vandal:<sup>147</sup> here he is both in denial of the crime he has committed and refuting his deserving of any repercussions. Lurie goes on to anticipate more violence to himself and his car, implying that black violence will target the whiteness and masculinity which he and his vehicles represent: 'What happened to his car is evidently not enough. Evidently there are more instalments to come' (Coetzee 31).

#### The Car Used as an Enforcer of Danger upon Others

Although the car attracts danger, it also has the potential to act as an enforcer of danger – and indeed violence, frequently racialised – upon others. Duffy posits that with the car came the 'arrival of a new form of violence... into people's increasingly protected lives' (204). *Born in Soweto* discusses how the car is used to conduct violence upon others, most frequently in the enabling sense of travel to rape, murder, or commit racially-motivated crimes.

They drive in the white man's streets, looking for a house or a car... to spin and maybe rape, ya man... If we have to start (shoot) them, we will do it. We are not scared.

(34)

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<sup>147</sup> Or, at least, Lurie believes this: what Lurie believes is in a way just as important as what actually happens in this novel, for Coetzee's spearheading Lurie's thoughts and prejudices are vital to the course and tone of the story.

Possession of a car is in this case a real and viable mode of entry into the white, upper-middle class city space. By driving into this space – and, by extension, into a richer and more prosperous society than townships like Soweto – the potential for successfully committing crime is raised, in that already owning or driving a car opens a space which holds better and more expensive cars to be stolen (“spun”) and women to ‘maybe rape’. In this way, ‘private automobile ownership is not a primary instrument of subjectification for poor migrant labourers in South Africa... *though the desire for such ownership is indeed a force of subjectification*’ (Morris 595, emphasis mine). Holland reveals how the car holds the potential to both transport the criminal to, and partake in, black-on-white crime opportunities in white suburbs near Soweto, due in part to the social pressures which surround gang leaders, their vehicles, and their associated image. Exemplary of one of these ‘poor migrant labourers’ Morris discusses is Klein Samuel. Although he does drive some of the farm vehicles, his most significant interaction with motor vehicles and the enabling power they possess for crime and violence is in the sequence examined earlier, where he is dragged behind the car of the man in the red T-shirt. The act is not that of a normal traffic collision, or even of road rage – vitally, Klein Samuel is violated as he is dragged *in pursuit of* the car – and the racially-motivated violence exerted upon him is so niche and brutal that it demonstrates the viciousness and power of the man in the red T-shirt as much as it strips Klein Samuel of any autonomy. Image, as I have discussed, is a key feature of automobile ownership:

... people want recognition and these days it doesn’t matter what form of recognition... If I am a thug, I steal a beautiful looking car so that when I pass people notice me... Or a knife...

Gavin, the paramedic, presents a sentiment mirrored in Morris' writings: that 'the desire generated by the car is not necessarily for the car, but for the freedom and sovereignty that it ostensibly expresses' (603).<sup>148</sup> Given that the township itself is 'a prime centre for the traffic in stolen automobiles' (Morris 605), and the car's frequent surrounding aura of violent crime, the car has the potential to be perceived as an active threat in Soweto. Furthermore, there is the problematic notion in the polarity presented in the above quotation that prosperity, wealth, class, and 'beautiful looking' cars are associated with whiteness; Holland implies the criminals are chasing whiteness, too, in their pursuit of white possessions. Here, Holland's subconscious whiteness and privilege are speaking aloud; that she believes whiteness more desirable than blackness is misleading to readers of *Born in Soweto* if they do not stop to consider the skew of the author's whiteness. The car is directly associated with danger, as is demonstrated by the aforementioned jackrollers<sup>149</sup> who are 'utterly feared by women in Soweto' (48). As 'carjacking permits the love of speed to express itself as a commitment to individual freedom... as an escape from collectivized forms of historical accounting' (Morris 605), the jackrolling presented in *Born in Soweto* represents protest against historic white ownership and government of cars and transport systems, but also a protest for liberation and personal autonomy.

While the car certainly has direct links with violence in South Africa, in my key texts the *threat* of the car and its association with violent people, forces, or acts, seems to be the

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<sup>148</sup> Again, Lurie's sentiments are relevant: 'Without a car he [David] feels trapped on the farm' (Coetzee 139).

<sup>149</sup> I believe that jackrolling, although concerned with liminal road spaces and the space of the car, is a fundamentally urban crime, which is why the bulk of my analysis on it is located in Chapter 2.

more significant factor than the car as a constantly active enforcer of danger upon others. Furthermore, although overall the car can both *attract* and *enforce* violence, within the literature I have examined over the past two sub-sections, the more significant role of the car within literary racial violence is certainly the former – *attraction*. The way that the car attracts danger is fundamentally linked to the way cars are perceived to signify class, and this complex is racialised, too, by motivations for jackrolling, vandalism, and theft, in my key texts. Literature on, and theories surrounding, cars enforcing danger and violence upon others are significant, too, in the exceptional case of the attack on Klein Samuel. It is the space of the car – and the associated enabling nature and liminality of cars – which empowers violence and violent people, rather than the car itself being used to actively enforce racial violence, and racially-motivated violent crime in South Africa, in the context of my key texts.

Overall, it appears that, in the context of the travel and transport space, the *liminal* space is not only the location of violence but also the partial root. As Roberts asserts, ‘It is the *humanising* of space that we, as spatial humanists, need turn our attention more vigorously towards’ (47); South African travel spaces and vehicles have not been humanised in the universal, fair, right, or just sense. Rather, they have been politicised – *white*-ised, even – and as these spaces remain unattainable, impractical, or dangerous, the act of travel – something that so many take for granted, and regard with little, or only “accidental”, risk – remains an action instilled with nearly as much racial violence as pre-1994. The fact that ‘all mobile bodies produce a potential for mobility violence through their movement, making violence a fundamental aspect of mobility’ (Culver 160) formulates less than half of the equation in terms of South African as violence presented in and by my key texts. This is

because the conscious employment of a vehicle (in the case of the attack on Klein Samuel by the man in the red T-shirt), or use of that vehicle's space (in the case of the train attacks, or rape while jackrolling) is also due to the convenience of that vehicle, as well as the *culture of violence* which surrounds all aspects of travel in South Africa. It follows that the ambiance in all three of my texts is one of tension, and of the sentiment that one is not normal to be alive and well, but rather constantly counting oneself 'lucky not to be a prisoner in the car at this moment, speeding away, or at the bottom of a donga with a bullet in your head' (Coetzee 98). The notion is disturbing, but remains true to this day.



## OVERALL CONCLUSION

### Overall Summary

Over the course of this thesis, I have examined how white authorship is a valuable lens through which to examine spatiality and its relationship to racialised violence.

The spatiality of any violence directly affects its racialised nature: to an extent, violence forms space in South Africa. I do believe that *all* violence in South Africa is racialised, simply because the contextualisation of that violence enforces upon the act the histories of the space in which it is performed – and, thanks to apartheid and colonialism, prejudiced narratives which call into play state-sanctioned violence cover most, if not all, types of space and place in South Africa. However, the way in which white authors pursue and repurpose that spatiality – so that it is interpreted to collude in the continued stigmatisation and oppression of black communities – is a harmful effect of such contextualisation. The persistence of these derogatory spatialised and racialised narratives, which are used to oppress black people in the key texts I have considered and outside of literature, advertises the so-called South African “culture of violence” (a term which is inherently linked to blackness) to those who read such texts – and who then go on to perpetuate the perceived existence of that “culture”.

The ‘detached complicity’ which exists ‘between capitalism’ – and also, I believe, colonialism and apartheid – ‘and the violent forces which blaze up in colonial territory’ (Fanon “Concerning Violence” 65) signifies part of the same complicity which I sense and have begun to uncover within white authorship and its associated privilege. Also functioning within this is the flattening of black experience by white authors – especially Heidi Holland, whose 28-year-old text is the most antiquated in some of its attitudes – who deem black

individuals and communities to be nameless and universal in their violence. This is linked to obsolete (colonial) ideas surrounding nativity and animality, and humanity and civilization, as laid out in the thesis introduction.

## Chapter 1

In the texts I consult, white experience of the farm space is synonymous with victimhood, in the certainty for violence my authors perceive there, while black experience constitutes either the suspicion of being, or actually being, a perpetrator. Farm attacks form the basis of this suspicion, and the white perception of the farm attack is constructed from a place of fear of blackness, black peril, nativity, and the “other”, even though earlier rural conflicts were instigated by the white colonisation of farmland. The portrayal of the farm as the ‘smallness’ which can be representative of the ‘vastness’ is a trope which persists through my authors’ interpretation of all three “spaces” I discuss: their extrapolation of violence, even in its ‘smallness’, subsumes the ‘vastness’, too. Coetzee considers how the white female body can be seen as a close metaphor for farmland in Lucy’s rape, and how land husbandry and nativity can be used to explain or understand the deeper-rooted spatiality of this racialised violence. Dogs, furthermore, are signifiers for whiteness within the space of the farm, as well as for the white rejection of, and protection from, black ownership of land, and violence towards them constitutes resistance against white occupation of land. Violence can signify social change and empowerment of blackness, such as in the instance of Gogo hitting Ilse to protect Cheetah and assert her newfound authority as landowner in *The Savage Hour*. However, for the most part, violence within the farm space is stigmatised – and, disappointingly, confirmed by Coetzee and Proctor – to be black-orchestrated and white-victimizing, in partial ignorance of historic white-orchestrated farm crimes, and in

encouragement of the “culture of violence” and of the continuation of white suspicion in the space of the farm.

## Chapter 2

The urbanity of violence is significant to its racialised enactment, due partially to the apartheid segregation of the city space, but also because urbanity is presented to foster violence in a way which rurality does not. Furthermore, the presentation of violence within black urban spaces such as townships as normality – importantly, this is a normality which is at odds with the safe, white “normality” of the authors’ experience – allows white writers to construct communities which are fundamentally full of victims and perpetrators of, and bystanders to, violence. The black urban community is thus defined through the violence which is essential to the white understanding, and subjugation, of it. Holland, especially, is entranced by this theory of all-encompassing violence in this particular space, although Proctor also falls foul of collating her characters’ excursions from the farm space into the urban space with experiences of violent victimhood, too. It is detailed at length in *Born in Soweto* how black education spaces are deemed to offer a “socialisation into violence” for the youth they serve: a lack of editorial transparency leads to accounts by Sowetans which focus on jackrolling, rape, and youth violence, and which skirt over or omit stories of positivity and peace. Contrastingly, although Lurie’s white-perpetrated act of violence in his rape of Melanie is aided, abetted, and covered up by the institution and the act’s fundamentally institutional nature, any “culture of violence” within the white urban education space is only alluded to in *Disgrace*, before being refuted by Lurie’s very white male experience as he emerges relatively unharmed from the situation. His self-centred narration vastly neglects commentary on the black urban space; instead, he focuses on his

own justification of violence against blackness (and femaleness) because of its nature as “other” to his own white maleness.

### Chapter 3

A stigma of danger surrounds the railway, road, and car space, and not simply because violence is ‘a fundamental aspect of mobility’ (Culver 160). Any discussion of violence within the liminal travel or transport space invokes the discussion of apartheid movement, as, like the car, the liminal space is not ‘hermetically sealed, but’ is ‘transgressed’ (Jones 391) by the different temporalities of violence across South African history and culture. That the very act of movement was politicised in the apartheid era means that discussions of violence within liminal spaces of movement are instantly racialised, too. The railway space is collated by Holland to be synonymous with the political violence which has historically occurred there, as her ‘spatial awareness of the distribution of violence’ (Vigneswaran 567) in Soweto is formed through the suspicion of blackness, and the association of violence with the liminal space that the black commuters continue to inhabit. In *The Savage Hour*, the liminal road space becomes contested, and a site of xenophobic violence, while in *Born in Soweto* it is a space of suspicion of, and then of a spectacle which fulfils Holland’s desire to see and report, violence. Meanwhile, the car – signifier of whiteness and prosperity – is suspected by my white authors to attract danger (carjackings and vandalism, in Lurie’s case) just as much as it is proven to have the power to exert violence (the attack on Klein Samuel). That the car becomes proxy for Lurie’s body and “punishment” after his crimes is not accidental by Coetzee; he offers a criticism on Lurie’s whiteness and privilege, both of which are disrespected and removed (briefly, without much recognition from Lurie) as the car – and with it Lurie’s autonomy – is taken away. All three authors cohere in the discomfort of the

liminal experience, due to its reputed association with – and fulfilment of, in my key texts – danger and violence.

### Concluding Remarks

In essence, the proliferation of literature which flattens black experience to be violent *simply because it is black* is a harmful trope which can only be countered by a stringent criticism of that same material which uses the unpicking of the white author's perspective as a starting point. White interpretations of spaces and their significance to the violent acts they are home to function only to minimise the magnitude of, or fallout from, white acts of violence, while black acts of violence are extrapolated to be indicative of a whole race and "culture of violence". The attitude within white-authored South African literature is to see (black) violence, to convey that violence, to combine it with more violence (often drawing upon spatial narratives of historic violence), and to proliferate the story of that violence, as if it is 'violence in its natural state... [which] will only yield when confronted with greater violence' (Fanon "Concerning Violence" 61). Much more valuable would be an honest account of whiteness and its spatialised functionality within black and white violence systems, which is a tale *Born in Soweto* remains very far from indeed, while *Disgrace* and *The Savage Hour* just about, at points, begin to acknowledge the value of. If such a text existed, I would very much like to read it.

### Considerations for other projects

The wider significance of this thesis speaks to interdisciplinary study, including sociological, anthropological, and purely historical focuses: all these interpretations on the spatiality of

violence in South Africa would be valuable, although historical context on colonialism and apartheid has informed my argument most of the three.

A focused study, furthermore, on the lived experience of blackness as told by white authors, and deeper research into, and analysis of, the real-time social problems this causes for black individuals in modern-day South Africa, could throw light on my assumption that the proliferation of white literature on blackness is harmful to families and communities.

A larger project, which would offer more in-depth, longer discussion, could be especially valuable to a potential study of Coetzee, as there is so much more to say about his complex discussions of race and violence than I could possibly have included here. A consideration, perhaps, of spatiality and violence in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *The Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) could speak to contemplation of the same in his post-apartheid texts such as *Boyhood* (1997), and *Disgrace* (1999), in order to better understand the politics of space and violence in both apartheid and post-apartheid contexts of his literature.

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