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Giving back the land:

Whiteness and belonging in contemporary South Africa

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Scott Burnett

March 2018

Plagiarism declaration

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and to pretend that it is one's own
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26 September 2018

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Acknowledgements

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The analytical orientation of this dissertation has been inspired by the powerful student activists of #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, and related decolonial social movements, to whom I owe a great debt. While activists put their own studies on hold and their bodies on the line to fight for fee-free education for future generations of students, I worked in a fully-funded and comfortable environment. I can only hope that this dissertation provides some support to the broader movement for decolonised knowledge production and fundamental equality at home and abroad.

Finally, I am grateful beyond expression to my husband Tommaso Milani, who not only encouraged me to embark on this exciting process in the first place, and kept me in food and drink throughout, but who also read and re-read drafts of every chapter, provided comprehensive comments, debated ideas with me tirelessly, and opened up his personal and professional networks to help me access conferences, publications, and other presentation opportunities around the world. It is no exaggeration to say that without him there would be no monograph, and I therefore joyfully dedicate it to him.

For Tommaso

"jag vore ingenstans…"

Abstract

While previous research has unpicked the forced coincidence of racial and spatial relations, including through critical examinations of the role of environmentalist discourse in the reproduction of racial hierarchies, a careful analysis of the current South African conjuncture, with its combination of persistent racial inequality and growing political momentum behind radical land redistribution, has yet to be conducted. This dissertation approaches this task as a question of deconstructing the *hegemonic* relations between whiteness as a power structure, and "the land" as a material and symbolic resource. Arguing for a broader discursive interpretation, or 'thick' sense, of what is meant by "the land", hegemonic land relations are analysed through a framework built both upon the repairs to Western Marxism elaborated by poststructuralist critics of Althusser and Gramsci, and on the radical critiques of colonialism and whiteness found in the work of Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, and Sara Ahmed.

Analysis is presented of four sets of articulations: the radical Black critique of the white relationship with the land, the conservative defence of whiteness as under siege by vengeful 'Blacks', the 'whitely' campaign against rhino poaching, and group conversations between white environmentalists intent on halting natural gas extraction through hydraulic fracturing in the Karoo. All four discursive formations rely on a "common-sense" notion of the inevitability and inviolability of white property and power, and the continued relevance of liberal notions of efficient land use and property ownership in the Lockean tradition, which contribute to the perpetuation of racial division in South Africa. A "structural topology" (Marttila, 2016, p. 134) of the discourse reveals the relevance of affect, racial actor fictions and narratives, notions of fairness and responsibility, and how specific institutions and subject roles materialise the discourses that entrench hegemonic whiteness.

A note on orthography

I have adopted the orthographic convention practiced by certain Black feminists in the United States but not much in fashion nowadays of capitalising “Black” (and “Indigenous,” etc.) but not “white”. This is not because I believe anybody needs my help to look big or small in type, but rather to offer a constant visual reminder of the asymmetry of Black and white as terms in racialized systems of power, an asymmetry that is easily overlooked in the dyad black/white. This asymmetry is discussed in §2.1.2. I have left the orthography in direct quotes as originally written.

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Chapter 1: The Soul of the Land: An Introduction

1.1. Kipling's Threat – Chigumadzi's Reply

The last four lines of Rudyard Kipling's elegy for Cecil John Rhodes, *Burial* (1902), are engraved on the plinth of the statue of the infamous imperialist that gazes northeast to his grave in southern Zimbabwe from Cape Town's Rhodes Memorial:

> This immense and brooding spirit still
> Shall quicken and control
> Living he was the land, and dead,
> His soul shall be her soul! (Kipling, 1902)

The idea that Rhodes's soul could be the soul of the land long after his death is a fitting provocation for this dissertation, written as it is from a vantage point well over 100 years into the future. Kipling's words sound like a threat to democratic South Africa: Rhodes may be dead, but his spirit will both "quicken" – i.e. animate, live on – and continue to exert "control" over the land.

What could this mean? And why bother paying Kipling any attention today?

In August 2016, the enforcement of rules about the tidiness of hair at Pretoria Girls' High School saw Black learners complain that they were being subjected to a racialized hierarchy of body norms. One student said she was instructed to "fix" herself, "as if I was broken" (Pather, 2016). In her comments on the unfolding saga, author and activist Panashe Chigumadzi suggests that the fracas over hair could be distilled to what might at first seem like an unrelated issue – the land question. She writes:

> The land question […] is a proxy for the historical socio-economic dispossession of black people… South Africa remains a country in which our ability to access resources and opportunities is determined by our proximity to whiteness… This is the reason black parents will do their best to ensure their children have access to historically white schools and universities… If black people do not control the socio-economic order, it is unsurprising school codes of conduct in historically white schools are created with the assumption of the white child… So it goes without saying… The hair issue is the land issue. (Chigumadzi, 2016, n.p.)

Between these two perspectives lie differences of time, space, and ideology. That the imperial or colonial spirit of Rhodes lives on in the land suggests a landscape that is haunted. And in the petty daily management of hairstyle and uniforms at a 'good' post-apartheid school we see the land play a role again, this time as a fundamental distortion on social and economic life. It is precisely along the seam opened up between Chigumadzi and Kipling that I would like to position my approach in this dissertation.

1.2. Aims & Questions

That most of the privately held land in South Africa is owned or occupied by white people or white-owned companies, and that this land forms a part of what can be thought of as the "material base" for white wealth, is not really disputed. What is however less clear is how exactly the continued disproportionate social dominance of white South Africans is linked to these many millions of hectares which, after all, are actually owned by a very small number of people. About 35,000 commercial farmers out of 4,5-million white people, or about 0,78% of the white population, own 72% of all agricultural land (AgriSA, 2017; Department of

Rural Development and Land Reform, 2017; Du Preez, 2016; Stats SA, 2017). If we take from Kipling the idea that a particular colonial, imperialist, and racist project can become the "soul" of the land, and from Chigumadzi the idea that our relationship to the land affects the minutiae of everyday social life, then it becomes clear that we ought to expand the notion of the land from the 35,000 specific individuals who own specific plots of land, to the full symbolic and social implications of historical land dispossession and current patterns of land ownership and control. I shall call the former relationship to land – i.e. owning it as property – its 'thin' sense, and the latter – engaging with land in all its symbolic dimensions – as the 'thick' sense. While it is easy for white people to simply shrug off the call to "give back the land" in the thin sense – "you are welcome to the mortgage on my flat!" – it is a different matter altogether when it comes to the abrogation of the right to define space, to see oneself in the landscape, to feel at home and not a "pariah" in the land of one's birth (Plaatje, 1916/1982, p. 21).

The aim of this research is thus to investigate the connection between whiteness – understood as the logic of a racialized power structure that confers privilege and value onto people who "think they are white" (J. Baldwin, 1984) – and the land in its 'thick' sense.

The specific dynamics of South African socioeconomic life, which will be explored in the next section, demand an immediate clarification of what is meant by 'whiteness'. The critique of whiteness in South Africa is not merely that it attempts to pull material and symbolic value towards itself, as is the case globally, but that it has succeeded to so great an extent so late into the post-apartheid order. The problem is therefore not just whiteness, but that whiteness has retained the bulk of the hegemonic position it enjoyed under white minority rule. The question that must therefore specifically be addressed is the role that the land has played and continues to play in the sedimentation and reproduction of *hegemonic* whiteness in South

Africa. Before I start providing some answers to this question, it will be useful to understand the specific dynamics of the society that give credence to this grand claim of hegemony.

1.3. Fraudulent relationships

On UCT campus in early 2015, Chumani Maxwele[1], a student activist associated with the Rhodes Must Fall movement, had covered a statue of Rhodes on the Jameson Steps with human shit. At the time, Maxwele asked:

> How can this statue still stand on a road called Madiba Circle? By doing that we are making history beautiful when it is not […] These are all fraudulent relationships (Bester, 2015).

Maxwele's characterisation of the symbolic juxtaposition of the names of Rhodes and Madiba (i.e. Nelson Mandela) as a "fraudulent relationship" can be read in at least two dimensions. The first is that the alignment of the Rhodes and Mandela names itself is forced and fraudulent. Vicious and uncompromising racism[2] clearly cannot be aligned with a social vision built on fundamental human equality and dignity. In the second dimension, which flows from the first, historic compromises between white supremacy and Black liberation were sold in 1994 to the electorate as enabling "A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL!" (African

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[1] Maxwele's association with the Rhodes Must Fall student movement requires some qualification. There is no singular movement, and it has taken on different forms at universities in South Africa and the world. Students have repeatedly asserted that their movement is "leaderless" (see Andrews, 2016). Furthermore, feminist and queer drivers of campus decolonisation have distanced themselves from Maxwele, whom they describe as a would-be "bigoted" and "patriarchal" leader (Mthonti, 2016).

[2] Rhodes justified limiting the franchise in the Cape Colony on the grounds that "the natives are like children. They are just emerging from barbarism" (C.J. Rhodes, 1894, quoted in Ngcukaitobi, 2018, p. 243).

National Congress, 1994). While decades of ANC rule indeed delivered some improvements for all, inequality between people along racial lines increased, and the absolute deprivation of millions persisted. On this reading, Nelson Mandela's attempt to forge a 'Rainbow' Nation from the social ruins of apartheid traded a truly revolutionary socioeconomic transformation of the country for a shallow feel-good metanarrative of reconciliation and a shared future. As Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh has pointed out, "We were sold a lie: that the vote would resolve our country's fundamental problems, if we only had the patience to wait" (2017, p. 4). Madiba's Rainbow Nation has thus been critiqued as a "myth" that sees Black South Africans face "interpersonal and institutional racism on a daily basis" (Msimang, 2015, n.p.). Along nearly every dimension of difference that it is possible to measure, white people are still doing dramatically better than Black people (Mpofu-Walsh, 2017, p. 18). It is as if the image of the Rainbow was too powerful: as white light absorbs the other colours of the rainbow, "the fates of all the people of this diverse country were subsumed within the interests of the white population" (Steyn, 2001a, p. 85).

That the statues of Rhodes around UCT campus should have become lightning rods for protest is thus unsurprising. In 2015, Kipling's lines and Rhodes's bust in the Memorial were stained black with soot and red with spray-paint. Untarnished bronze shines brightly where Rhodes's nose has been taken off with an angle grinder (Figure 1-1). What the managers of the monument referred to as "vulgar slogans" were scrawled in the sanctuary: "'The master's nose betrays him' […] 'Your dreams of empire will die' and 'Racist, thief, murderer, philanthropist'" (Peterson, 2015).

Figure 1-1: Interrupting Rhodes's gaze, 1 (image © Kim Gurney, 2015)



The statue of Rhodes on the Jameson Steps below had come to signify every aspect of the racist institutional culture of UCT; attempts to re-signify the statue, which was finally removed in 2015, date back many decades, and have been associated with student attempts to "decolonise" the campus (Figure 1-2). The meaning of interrupting Rhodes's gaze, of cutting off his nose, of covering him with shit, was not a rejection of the liberation tradition itself, but of the compromise that his presence had come to represent.

Figure 1-2: Interrupting Rhodes's gaze, 2 (image © Joseph Raimondo, 2008)



While the peacefulness of the transition to a multiracial democracy in South Africa was rightly celebrated, it was in many ways a neoliberal triumph (see Hart, 2002) signalling, at that time, the "end of radical politics" of the left or right (Norval, 1996, p. 267). What this détente yielded was a statistical picture of racial division in contemporary South Africa that is alarming. The median wage of white men is *six* times that of Black women (Department of Performance Monitoring & Evaluation, 2014, p. 41). White people make up only 8% of the population, and Black people 81% (Stats SA, 2017, p. 2) and yet white people account for about 72% of top management jobs in the private sector, not even 11% of which are occupied by Black African[3] people (Commission for Employment Equity, 2017, p. 14). When Nelson

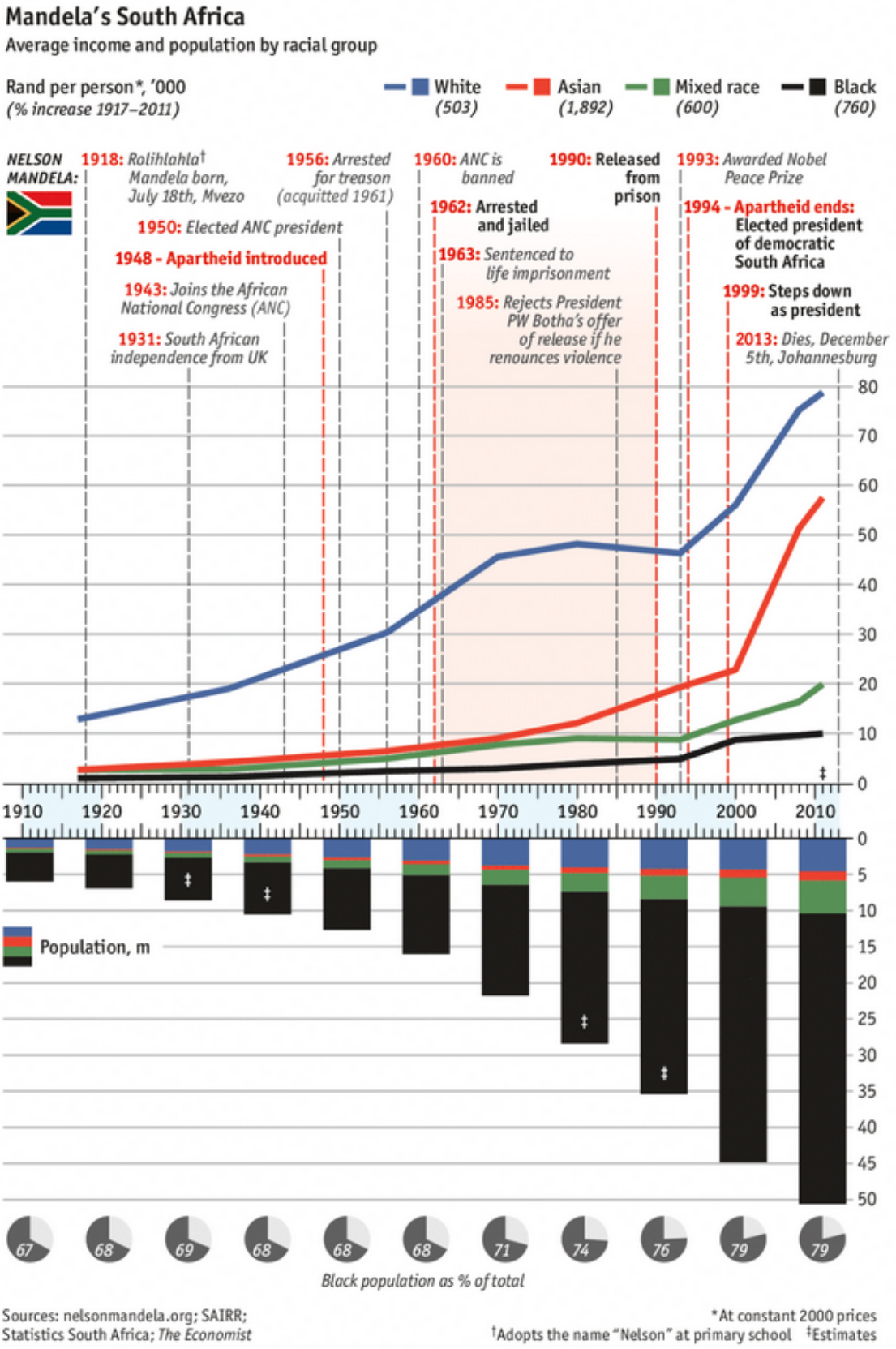
[3] The Commission divides all South African citizens into the four major apartheid era population groups – 'African,' 'Coloured,' 'Indian,' and 'White'; other people are counted as 'Foreign Nationals'.

Mandela died in 2013, The Economist published an infographic (Figure 1-3) showing average income per apartheid-era population group over his lifetime (The Economist, 2013). In these terms, whites as a group were both the biggest losers from his imprisonment, and (with 'Indian' people) the biggest winners from his presidency. As can be seen in Table 1-1, between 63 and 73% of Black people, and between 37 and 48% of Coloured people, live in poverty, while only 0,9 to 1,8 percent of white people do (Wilkinson, 2016). What's more, according to the official rate as calculated by Statistics South Africa and reported by the Institute of Race Relations, poverty levels among white people actually declined from 2% in 1994 to 1% in 2012 (Cronje, 2013).

Table 1-1: Poverty levels by population group (adapted from Wilkinson's (2016) comparison between Statistics South Africa (SSA) and Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) data)

	Total number of people in population group living in poverty		Percentage of population group living in poverty	
	SSA	SERI	SSA	SERI
Black African	25,311,744	29,236,632	63.20%	73.00%
Coloured	1,676,144	2,175,417	37.00%	48.10%
Indian/Asian	87,969	150,409	6.90%	11.80%
White	42,115	82,573	0.90%	1.80%
South Africa	27,117,973	31,645,031	53.80%	62.80%

Figure 1-3: Average income by population group in Mandela's lifetime (image © The Economist, 2013)



Poverty impacts directly on how people experience citizenship. South Africa's second president in the democratic era, Thabo Mbeki, described the country as consisting of "Two Nations" (1998), one white and one Black. The white nation is "relatively prosperous [and] has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure" (1998, n.p.). The "second and larger" nation is "black and poor […living] under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure […with] virtually no possibility to exercise what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity" (ibid.). His speech sparked an outcry in the liberal press; academics weighed in to accuse the President of "inadequate" analysis as, in the considered opinion of (white) economists, the problems of South Africa cleave to class, and not race (Nattrass & Seekings, 2001). And yet, 20 years after his speech, the structure of the problem that Mbeki outlined still animates South African reality. Indeed, how would the outcomes of colonialism and apartheid, systems built for centuries on uncompromising racist domination, become deracialised so soon? The memorialisation of figures such as Rhodes in South Africa would suggest that rather than facing the past, we are merely pretending that it does not matter (Ndletyana & Webb, 2017). As Xolela Mangcu argues (2017), denying the salience of race – enabled by the "post-racial consensus" of liberal and Marxist academics such as those at UCT – is only possible through the erasure of Black experience, further underscoring the urgency of critical race analysis (2017, p. 246).

1.4. Taking back the land

While this dissertation is about land, it will not deal with the post-apartheid history of land reform, nor address questions of policy. It will however touch on parts of the discursive regime that structure these debates. One of the areas of discursive struggle over land reform is the narrative of a fundamental colonial trauma shared by a colonised people who were

alienated from their ancestral lands over generations. Former land claims commissioner for KwaZulu-Natal, Cherryl Walker, argues (2008) that the emotional and political power of the "grand narrative" of dispossession, while correct in its broad outlines, is a "political fable" that "simplifies, excludes, and reduces too much" (2008, p. 41). Walker is concerned primarily in her argument here with land *restitution*[4] and its requirements as a legal process, and she thus decries the "opportunism" of land claims without legal basis produced by the grand narrative (2008, pp. 48–50). She rejects the 'thick' portrayal of both Black anger at land dispossession and white recalcitrance in the reform process as inter-generationally heritable, implying that this is an essentialist position, which she refutes by pointing out that *not all* Black people lost out from the white supremacist land dispensation, and that indeed some benefited, as state functionaries (2008, p. 39). This argumentative move – to individualize the harm of (for example) the Land Act in specific people at particular times – is at odds with Chigumadzi's argument, which posits that *all* Black people are confronted with systems and institutions built on assumptions about who they are linked to historic land dispossession. And Walker is indeed explicit about her discomfort with race as a "historically sanctioned collective identity" which erases the "ambiguous" historical relationships between Black and white, making it "unimaginable" that there might have been "white investment in or identification with the land"[5] (2008, pp. 40–41).

A general and diffuse sense of dispossession is necessarily made simplistic if land is defined *only* in its thin sense: as a specific claim to a specific tract of land lost by a specific person or

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[4] As opposed to one of the two other legs of the "three-legged cooking pot" of land reform: land redistribution and tenure reform (2008, p. 199))

[5] Though this last point is not central to Walker's argument, it is interesting that a white connection to land in the thick sense is contrasted with the flimsiness of a Black claim to land in the thin sense.

group at a specific time. In the absence of the nationalisation of land, or other policies that would see rights to land use transferred to Black people, land ownership in South Africa has remained significantly skewed towards white people. The national government's 2017 land audit was only able to identify the race of individual[6] owners: it found[7] that 72% of the surface area of farms and agricultural holdings, and just under 50% of erven, were held by white people (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2017, p. 2)). The policy conundrums of rectifying this picture are as intractable as ever. The historic 2018 State of the Nation address by newly sworn-in president Cyril Ramaphosa signalled a shift in political will, and a discursive shift around expropriation, but made few gestures to specific new policies:

> We will accelerate our land redistribution programme […] to redress a grave historical injustice… We are determined that expropriation without compensation should be implemented [to] ensure that the land is returned to those from whom it was taken under colonialism and apartheid (Ramaphosa, 2018).

While appealing to the grand narrative, this portion of the speech links in to a thinly agricultural sense of property: the purpose of land reform is to "to bring more producers into

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[6] This accounts for only 30% of land in South Africa. White ownership of companies and other holding structures might in fact be higher than this, though the Audit was unable to get ownership data at this level.

[7] The report is unfortunately riddled with inconsistencies. For example, Table 2 (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2017, p. 6) states that 37,031,283 hectares is owned by individuals across all land types (farms, agricultural holdings, and erven). However, individual ownership of agricultural holdings and farms is given as 37,078,279 in Table 4 (2017, p. 8) and as 722,668 for erven in Table 10 (2017, p. 12), which adds up to almost 770,000 more than the figure in Table 2; the total is only 29ha off the total given in the Executive Summary (37,800,986), a number that however does not appear in the body of the report.

the agricultural sector and to make more land available for cultivation […] in a way that increases agricultural production [and] improves food security" (Ramaphosa, 2018). The new policy seems continuous with what Walker calls the "misplaced agrarianisation" (2008, p. 225) of South Africa, in a context where Black people, especially if they are poor, generally prefer urban land close to them, and often remain disconnected from the highly capitalised world of commercial farming. And indeed the various policy options on the table are all problematic for one reason or another. Other liberal white commentators, while asserting their sympathies with redistributive initiatives and with the grand narrative, warn of Zimbabwe-like economic collapse, the highly risky and unpredictable nature of farming, the urban and increasingly liquid nature of white wealth, and the notorious difficulty of settling people on land they can ably manage (Du Preez, 2016; Meintjies, 2018).

These are clearly matters for serious policy debate, and it is not my intention to adjudicate them in this dissertation. Instead, I would like to start by drawing attention to the extent to which the land issue is framed (by white people especially) as *a Black problem*. The Black ANC government is presented as having failed to implement land reform. Black people in general stand accused of an inchoate and legally baseless sense of entitlement to land, of claiming to want to farm when once on the land they don't, of failing to apprehend the real seat of white wealth, of a childish and inaccurate construction of whites as heartless fat cat farmers. White people (the progressive ones, at least) are represented as open to orderly and rational changes to property ownership patterns, and as part of the solution. Black people are often represented as spanners in the proverbial works, loose cannon would-be Mugabes whose lust for restitution is narrowly self-serving and collectively destructive.

The very structure of the debate should be cause for analytical pause. As Clements Kadalie said at the ANC conference in 1926, "there [is] no such thing as a "native problem" – instead,

there [is] “a European problem of weakness, greed, and robbery” (Kadalie, 1926 quoted in Ngcukaitobi, 2018, p. 280). Kadalie’s observations echoed those of W.E.B. Du Bois, who pointed out that the United States does not have a “Negro problem” but a white-enforced “problem of the color-line” (Du Bois, 1903/2008, p. 7). And of course there is Steve Biko’s concise statement:

> [White liberals have] the false belief that they are faced with a black problem. There is nothing the matter with blacks. The problem is WHITE RACISM and it rests squarely on the laps of the white society. (Biko, 1978/2006, p. 23)

This dissertation therefore aims to respond to Kadalie’s, Du Bois’s, and Biko’s challenge and shift the attention to the discursive dimensions of white land ownership and control. In the thin sense, of course – which relates to the reality of the 72% mentioned earlier – this has already been sufficiently problematized as a *statistical fact*. But what does it *mean* for whiteness? Clearly, the problem of whiteness is not just in the ‘thin’ sense of land ownership, but in the ‘thick’ sense of how this constructs the meaning of being a white South African. If white racism – in whatever novel institutional, structural, or cultural form it may take – is the problem, then how can this problem be unpicked in contemporary discourses about the land? Does the land play the same kind of role in resilient white power that so many people have argued it plays in continued Black oppression? How does white land control reinforce the structure of a “world of white hegemony” (Macheke, 2015) that the student movement takes as its target? And what, if anything, can unpicking the connections between domination of the land and the structure of the racial order do to ultimately be a part of the *solution* to the problem? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in the chapters that follow.

1.5. Structure of the Dissertation

If, as Kipling predicted, Rhodes's spirit would control the land long after his death, it may be possible to observe in contemporary ways of looking at the land the dreaming gaze of the long-dead imperialist. The thoroughgoing theorisation of the imbrications of spatial domination and white supremacy in South Africa thus delimits the scope of the research I shall present in this dissertation. In the next chapter, which focuses on the relation of race and space, I therefore focus on aligning the questions asked above with the relevant critical literature. I have already mentioned some of the work that may be done from a white "liberal" perspective to shift attention from richer senses of what land means, and from the socio-cultural damage done by colonialism, to an asset-oriented, quantitative, and economically reductive mode of addressing the land question, and one that is uncomfortable with the notion of race as a "group identity". I therefore start in my review of the literature with the liberal tradition itself, and specifically with the relationship that this way of looking at the world has historically had with property rights. Here, I explain how the influential Lockean notion of coming to own land through 'improving' it has shaped both the erasure of Indigenous rights in land, and contemporary ideas about who is to be trusted to use land in an 'efficient' manner. In this section, I also explore the idea that whiteness may itself be a type of property relation.

There are two broad themes in the literature to which I pay careful attention. The first could loosely be thought of as the politico-geographic: the way that racial orders have been established territorially through centuries of ever-evolving colonialism, the way that spatial relations govern differential chances of a "premature death" in certain societies, and the way that notions of indigeneity, autochthony, and citizenship are mobilised to quantify and manage belonging, to distinguish "pariahs" from those who may feel "at home".

The second focuses on environmental politics, or what may broadly be thought of as 'green' issues. Discourses "of the earth" (Dryzek, 1997) are a special case for the investigation of whiteness: they do not necessarily deal with ownership, but with a plethora of issues supposedly related to human and planetary wellbeing, issues that, as I shall show, are often asserted as taking precedence over human social relations. Because concern for the future of the planet is often thought of as a progressive domain, so far removed from Trumpism and other problematic political formations, it has become a safe space for the expression of murderous rage at other human beings: "Bring back the death penalty!" for rhino poachers, for example (McKaiser, 2012, p. 177). While C.J. Rhodes may be reviled in certain quarters for his racism and imperial violence, it is still normal in South Africa for a publically owned entity to refer to him warmly as a "father of conservation"[8]. Indeed, environmental protection introduces a different spectrum of values that have to do with the value of animal life, ecosystems, and planetary sustainability, and these do not necessarily always clearly intersect with the damaging hierarchical arrangements of human social life. Where value systems governing race and the environment are made to overlap, they may be tendentiously forced into alignment around the prospect of brown-skinned "climate refugees" from the "Third World" who are either constructed as passive victims who need protection from Western resource exploitation, or as a security threat requiring a militarised response.

[8] According to the SANParks website, "Cecil John Rhodes was a powerful and controversial character who could be called the father of conservation on the Cape Peninsula having acquired land spanning the eastern slopes of Table Mountain from Devils Peak to Constantia Nek. On his death this land was bequeathed to the people of Cape Town and protected from development" (SANParks, no date). A great deal of ideological work is done every time it asserted that a white person 'acquired' a tract of land in South Africa.

In Chapter 3, I outline the two hemispheres of my theoretical approach. Firstly, it is clear that in starting with an attempt to problematize the white relationship with land, much of what I am doing can be thought of in the tradition of "whiteness studies," an approach that targets the attention of critical race scholarship onto the deconstruction of "whiteness" as a power structure. This approach is however riddled with pitfalls and contradictions, especially for scholars like myself who are themselves white. One of the central problems, as I shall explain, is that it is incredibly difficult to prevent oneself as a white scholar from repairing a personal subject role outside of the fray of the racial structure that it is possible to occupy without guilt or shame. As I discuss later (§4.4), much of the motivation for this particular research topic comes from my own history and my own implication in the racial structure of South Africa, and there can be no wriggling out of this. Furthermore, as I will explain in laying out the second dimension of my approach (§3.4), it is clear that "whiteness" is not really a theoretical framework, but a research field that has been built on a number of different theoretical traditions. I therefore argue for the relevance of the postfoundational tradition associated with the "Essex School" of discourse theory to a study of 'hegemonic' whiteness. The Essex School is one of the most robust elaborations of the Gramscian tradition, and I argue in §3.5 for an approach that combines the best of some of the sometimes quite arcane debates in Western Marxism, with postcolonial and other radical theorisations of race that may be brought into a productive conversation with it. Specifically, the work of Frantz Fanon is an indispensable toolkit; other scholars such as Sara Ahmed, Steve Biko, Michael Billig, and Edward Said are also discussed.

Chapter 4 explains in detail how the postfoundational approach supports the construction of discursive maps, which represent the lie of the land, ideologically speaking, when it comes to unpacking whiteness in the data I will present. Specifically, I explain in this chapter how and

why the four specific corpora were built. Social media are increasingly the go-to place for understanding, almost in real time, the ever-changing patterns of human social articulations. My data is mainly drawn from Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, by far the three most popular social media networks in South Africa (Snyman, 2016). Every day, a significant proportion of the population of the country makes statements, shares videos, comments, forms, joins, or leaves groups, and generally conduct their social life in a manner that is both "scrape"-able for research purposes, time-and-date stamped for context, and publicly accessible in a manner that is ethically defensible[9].

Four sets of data are analysed in the central chapters of this dissertation (5-8). Chapters 5 and 6 approach "hegemonic whiteness" as a power structure through a very specific discursive formation: the performance of white vulnerability. In a much-publicised 2016 encounter in a hip eatery in a Cape Town suburb, two prominent Black activists aligned with the global Rhodes Must Fall movement performed a seemingly trivial act of political commentary, the audience for which was their white waitress, who broke into (what turned out to be figurative) "white tears". The waitress was richly rewarded though: a fundraising campaign for her 'tip' netted over R140,000. Chapter 5 examines how this encounter was structured by the activists as a joke, and how, over the course of the following months, on Facebook and on so-called 'Black' Twitter, a joke cycle developed at least partly inspired by this action, which probed the limits of what is thought of as 'funny' within the currently hegemonic discursive regime. In this chapter, I will argue that finding jokes about white tears funny, and indeed being able to laugh at the whole constellation of jokes about Black land use that developed, involves being able to think *outside* of the current hegemonic ways of thinking about race and

[9] See §4.3.

land. I will furthermore show how the counter-hegemonic practice of the joke cycle clearly traces the outlines of the discursive structure that is being undermined.

In the companion chapter, Chapter 6, I examine in more detail how white vulnerability is produced and distributed globally with the assistance of television media in South Africa, Australia, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. News and documentary video clips about white poverty have attracted millions of 'shares' on YouTube and other platforms; they are a staple (along with reportage of farm murders and other supposedly white-targeted crimes) of white nationalist discourses on Twitter that construct Black rule in South Africa as having profoundly disadvantaged white South Africans; of vicious Blacks taking revenge on vulnerable whites. As has already been shown in §1.3. this discourse has no statistical basis, and relies instead on the powerful visual representations of dirty and injured white skin, of individual whites living in poverty whose very whiteness (it is implied) should have been proof against this kind of fate.

I argue that it is important to note that, in the debate over the land issue, whites are represented as *landless*, as *vulnerable*, as essentially *powerless*. It is a fairly standard response to militant Black land rhetoric that white people have not been a majority rural population since the early 20th century. The representation of whites as downtrodden and struggling with city life played an important political role in the ascent of the National Party to power in 1948, and continues to fuel the rise of "rights" organisations such as AfriForum and Solidarity in contemporary South Africa. The performance of white victimhood, I will show, is an essential ingredient in the persistence of white power.

The second pair of analytical chapters squarely address the environmental dimensions of discourses of the land. It is clear that many white South Africans *feel* the suffering of rhinos far more deeply than they feel the suffering of the poachers and their families who eke out an

existence at the frontlines of the rhino war (McKaiser, 2012, p. 180). I show through the analysis of a bumper sticker, an e-mailed meme, a Facebook post and comments, and two public communications campaigns, how the rhino poacher is constructed on the land, to use Frantz Fanon's evocative language, as a "biological-sexual-sensual-genital-nigger" (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 156). The representation of Black men as over-sexed and rapacious as evidenced in aspects of the anti-poaching campaign is complemented with the representation of the Asian men who buy rhino horn as under-sexed and effeminate. Only the white man – represented in Fanonian terms as the White Father, the heroic conservationist in his khaki uniform – has the right amount of masculinity, the right attitude to the rhino, and is thus the one who may be entrusted with the stewardship of the land. While these observations are specific to a particular aspect of the campaign, it is argued that it is in the creation of the notion of the trusted steward that a common-sense notion of the benefits of white land control continues to be hegemonic.

The second chapter on the environmental dimensions of the discourses of the land (Chapter 8) takes a more quantitative approach, analysing a targeted sample of the 100 most popular posts from four years' worth of discussions on the country's largest Facebook group devoted to stopping the practice of hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") in the Karoo. In the analysis of the conversations, which while formally multiracial were conducted in the main by white commenters, it becomes clear that specific ethical values centre a white sense of knowing what's best for the land: colour-blindness within a market system; rootedness and commitment to place; and the general ascription of reason and scientific thinking to white heroes, and of irrational and anti-scientific thinking to Black villains. It is furthermore shown in this chapter that a strong sense of the moral uprightness of white land control is grounded in a specific myth of autochthony that attempts to erase both the contingent nature of the

white presence on the land and the bloody events that secured it, covering over what is manmade and contingent with what is represented as natural and eternal. This, as we shall see, is ultimately where the core of the hegemonic discourse resides: it makes South Africa's "soul country" seem synonymous with a particular landscape, with windmills on the horizon and Black workers on the backs of bakkies. If this is "soul country" then it is clearly still haunted by the spirit of Cecil John Rhodes.

Ultimately, this dissertation makes the argument not only for imagining a different landscape, a different way of thinking South Africa, but for the critical importance of materialising our imagination in everyday practices. Too often in the social sciences does the culture/structure or idealist/materialist dichotomy empty out into a sense of futility: we can try to shift the ideas, but some other forces must fall into place before real change happens. I argue against this futility, as I do not accept the distinction: discourses are material practices, and material practices are discourses[10]. It is through policing property rights, through representations of landscapes, and in the way that shared natural resources are managed, that we reproduce the racial order. And there is nothing outside of these practices, no historical necessity that is going to arrive on a white horse to save us from it. To "cut the throat" of hegemonic whiteness in South Africa (as Julius Malema recently put it) requires both imagination and behaviour: a different relation to property, a physical reconfiguration of space, and pursuing material equality as an end in itself.

[10] See §4.1.3 for a full discussion of why this is the case

Chapter 2: Race and space: Imagining, controlling, and conserving the land

One of the "pillars" of the apartheid system was the "enforced coincidence of racial and spatial relations" (Cohen, 1988, p. 8). From separate entrances and beaches, to ethnic "homelands" established in tiny far-flung territories, the social imaginary of apartheid was inscribed not only on the discursive horizon, but on the very surface of the land. This was not only the case in South Africa. The racial order in many different contexts around the world is associated with restricted access to land, unequal property rights, and distorted spatial relations. Consequently, the critical scholarship on the various ways in which racial and spatial relations intersect is quite substantial. This is ultimately the nub of much decolonial, anticolonial, and postcolonial scholarship, which is in some way inevitably about land control. A growing body of innovative research on race is also being pursued by critical, or radical, geographers. Sociologists and critical race theorists have been equally interested in the spatiality of the racial order.

In this chapter, I will review a broad cross-section of that work. I will focus the discussion here on three main areas, discussed in the three sections below. The first introduces the intertwining of land ownership and the racial order in the 'liberal' tradition, focusing on the conversation about "whiteness as property" (C. I. Harris, 1993). The second presents critical research on the imbrication of racial and spatial orders, investigating how racial imaginaries structure and produce space, and whiteness may be established as a "socio-spatial relation" (Dwyer & Jones III, 2000). In the third section, I focus on the specific case of contemporary environmentalist discourses, examining attempts to deconstruct green ideology, the movement against environmental racism and towards environmental justice, and the growing

body of work in the humanities and social sciences that attempts to take a more critical view of discourses of the earth.

In approaching the literature, a certain amount of conceptual fuzziness around the borders between disciplines and subject matter has been useful. Taking my cue from the Fallist movement discussion above, I echo the discourse of *#IzweLethu* (i.e. #OurLand) by referring to "the land". However, empirical investigations of the social role of the land might refer to property, or landscape, agronomy, autochthony, conservation, or a host of other search terms. At the same time, foregrounding the word "land" is not merely an attempt at topicality: it comes with a host of specific associations: land may be stolen, or claimed back; land may be cultivated or left as wilderness; we may come from a faraway land, or long for the land of milk and honey. As we shall see in the liberal tradition, one of the key functions of the word 'land' is to anchor discussions of *ownership*.

2.1. Owning the earth: The origins of the racial order in liberal property regimes

Western history and geography typically represent the story of world civilization as the myth of *Eurocentric diffusionism*, the idea that Europe had "some unique historical advantage, some special quality of race or culture or environment or mind or spirit, which gives this human community a permanent superiority over all other communities, at all times in history and down to the present" (Blaut, 1993, p. 1). What this "folklore" hides is the extent to which this superiority has to be constructed and repaired, defended from challenge, and reproduced through relations of injustice and domination. One of these legacies, as I shall lay out in this section, is the liberal regime of private property.

The racial order has often been described as a hierarchical power structure with the category "white" at its apex, that "works to shift both material and symbolic resources from the bottom

[…] to the top" (Hill, 2008, p. 23). Racial domination is thus constructed as a kind of systematic conveyor belt for property to 'white' people from everybody else. This idea was given specific content by W.E.B. Du Bois in a passage he wrote in 1896:

> "But what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it?" Then always, somehow, some way, silently but clearly, I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen! (Du Bois, 1920)

One hundred years later the American legal scholar Cheryl Harris (1993) echoed Du Bois when she argued that whiteness may be understood *as property itself*. In this section, I will explore research that has investigated the racial order as inhering in the often taken-for-granted and common-sense notions of individual rights and freedoms that undergird liberalism.

2.1.1. Property under "Racial Liberalism"

"Liberalism" grew from the Western philosophical tradition that, since people started reading their own Bibles in the 15th century, increasingly centred individual rights and duties within a *secular* socio-political order (Goldberg, 1993, p. 18). Specifically, "contractarian" liberalism (which is hegemonic today) is grounded in two "key insights":

> The first (against theological views of divine creation or secular conceptions of an organicist kind) is that society and the polity are artificial, human constructs. The second (against classical and medieval views of natural social hierarchy) is that human beings are naturally equal and that this equality in the state of nature should somehow translate into egalitarian sociopolitical institutions. (Mills, 2008, p. 1381)

This supposed egalitarianism, according to Mills, is undermined because "unequal treatment of [racialized people] was not seen as unequal, not flagged as an internal inconsistency, but accommodated by suitable discursive shifts and conceptual framings" (Mills, 2008, p. 1381). The notion of a European "race" of people (Goldberg, 2006) imbued with Reason had been born within borders defined by barbarity, as a proxy for religion: Turks to the east, Arabs and Moors to the south, and other savages far away. It was quite common to find supposed advocates of universal egalitarianism such as Immanuel Kant theorising about Black people as if they are "subpersons […] by virtue of their inferior rationality and diminished capacity for autonomy" (Mills, 2005). Another father of liberalism, John Stuart Mill, argued that some races "may be considered as yet in their nonage" – i.e. not fully adult – and that in these cases maximising utility required overriding their autonomy (Goldberg, 1993, p. 18). These dimensions of the liberal tradition require, according to Mills, that we call liberalism by its real name: "Racial Liberalism".

A founding theorist of contractarian liberalism was John Locke, who wrote the work that went a long way to defining the Western notion of private property, *Two Treatises of Government* (1690). Locke's argument goes as follows. Because God gave the world to *all mankind* who share an *equal right* to subsistence, nobody can have "originally a private Dominion, exclusive of the rest of Mankind, in any of them, as they are thus in their natural state (Locke, 1690/1960, pp. 303–304). He proposes that the only thing that people can be said to *own exclusively* in this state is their own bodies[1], and, crucially, the labour of those

[1] Locke clearly only considered this to apply to certain types of bodies, as he "invested in African slavery, […] and helped write the Carolina constitution of 1669, which gave masters absolute power over their slaves" (Mills, 2008, p. 1382).

bodies. It is when they work the land that they "mix" their labour with it and thus "exclude the common right of other men" (1690/1960, p. 306). Thus does land that nobody owns *become* owned by them, merely because the labour mixed within it is exclusively theirs. Mixing labour with the land and owning more and more of it can carry on as long as there is "enough, and as good left in common for others" (ibid.).

Locke describes Europe and America as being at different stages in this process. In Europe, the "Civiliz'd part of Mankind" (1690/1960, p. 307) started working the earth very long ago, and dealt with a transition from Edenic plenty to an economy that uses money. Because money is non-perishable, it allows Mankind's labour to be distributed across fruits that do not go to waste. Native Americans, however, have obeyed no godly injunction to labour. They *still* live in Eden, the state that Europe was in before Mankind was condemned to toil: "Thus in the beginning all the World was *America*" (1690/1960, p. 319). Surrounded by plenty, they however live in a "needy and wretched" state, lacking the "conveniencies [sic] of life" (1690/1960, p. 312). They are

> rich in Land, and poor in all the Comforts of Life […] for want of improving it by labour[2] […] [A] King of a large and fruitful Territory there feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day Labourer in *England* (1690/1960, p. 315)

[2] That indigenous people were lazy was a 17th-century European commonplace; the Dutch East India Company station at the Cape complained of the "incorrigible indolence" (Coetzee, 1988, pp. 13–14) of Khoi herders, and so in this respect Locke was aligned with the conventional wisdom.

Locke variously asserts that cultivated land is worth 10, 100, or even 1000 times more than land "that is left wholly to Nature [which] is called, as indeed it is, *wast* [sic]" (1690/1960, p. 315). In fact, the American does not profit from it: if someone were to take this land and cultivate it, there would only be an upside: "let [a European farmer] plant in some in-land, vacant places of America, we shall find that the Possessions he could make himself [would not] prejudice the rest of Mankind" (1690/1960, p. 311). In fact, "there are still *great Tracts of Ground* to be found, which (the Inhabitants thereof not having joined with the rest of Mankind, in the consent of the Use of their common Money) *lie wast [sic]*, and are more than the People, who dwell on it, do, or can make use of, and so still lie in common" (1690/1960, p. 317).

The implication of this is clear: if a case can be made that intensive European agriculture would increase the productivity of the land, it is not just permissible to bring it under private ownership, it is a moral duty. The philosophically suborned theft of Indigenous land thus seems to be a foundation stone in the edifice of racial liberalism[3].

2.1.2. Whiteness as property in the United States

Native American nations had in fact been farming the land since at least 5000 B.C. (Hurt, 2002, p. 3) and had developed systems of trade and exchange, including forms of money (see Sayre, 1997, pp. 144–217). The point is that these facts were ignored by the colonists, whose law was grounded in racially contingent rules. Cheryl Harris describes the impact of Lockean notions of property on the racial order in the United States. Examining the recent history of

[3] The "explicit connection" of Locke's work to the colonial project was however for a long time simply not taken into account (Said, 1978/2004, p. 13).

racial inequality in that country, she observes that “the set of assumptions, privileges, and benefits that accompany the status of being white have become a valuable asset that whites [have] sought to protect” (C. I. Harris, 1993, p. 1713). She traces the origins of this form of property to two historical dimensions of whiteness. Firstly, because white people were not enslaved in the early Colonies, whiteness was “the characteristic, the attribute, the property of free human beings” (1993, p. 1721). Secondly, land ownership (on explicitly Lockean grounds) was defined “to include only the cultural practices of whites” (ibid.) and therefore “the possession maintained by the Indians was not 'true' possession and could be safely ignored" (1993, p. 1722).

As the law developed over hundreds of years, these facts were “wrapped in the rule of law... a naturalized regime of rights and disabilities, power and disadvantage that flowed from it so that no further justifications or rationalizations were required” (1993, p. 1723) even as treatment of Native and African Americans changed. Decades after the end of slavery, when Jim Crow legislation was submitted to legal challenge, the Supreme Court ruled that schools should be desegregated, but “declined to guarantee that white privilege would be dismantled, or even to direct that continued existence of institutionalized privilege violated the equal protection rights of Blacks” (1993, p. 1752). The judges thus “dismantled an old form of whiteness as property while simultaneously permitting its reemergence in a more subtle form […as] expectations of continued race-based privilege” (1993, p. 1753).

Following the same logic, the American jurisprudence on affirmative action further entrenched the expectation of a particular standard of white privilege as a baseline: repeatedly, courts have taken the position that “innocent” whites are entitled to the current distribution of property in the United States (1993, p. 1769), and that the only thing required

by their Constitution is that people are *formally treated* as equals, but not that they actually experience *substantive equality* with other Americans.

If whiteness was not the legally entrenched ownership of the expectation of privilege, she argues, then a kind of affirmative action would become possible that "conceives of equality in transgenerational terms, and demands a new and different sense of social responsibility […to] begin the essential work of rethinking rights, power, equality, race, and property from the perspective of those whose access to each of these has been limited by their oppression" (1993, pp. 1778–1779).

American law is quite clearly an important determinant of the social construction of the racial order, both materially and symbolically. As Harris points out, the law "masks what is chosen as natural; it obscures the consequences of social selection as inevitable" (1993, p. 1777). Can the same be said of the South African Constitution?

2.1.3. Whiteness as property in South Africa

During European land grabs in southern Africa from the 17th century onwards, "[white] supremacy as a total system of hegemony and subjugation grew [outwards] from the centres of [imperial] power" (Keegan, 1997, p. 36). A striking feature of this history is just how incremental it was. Whites dominated large swathes of land through conquest or concession, but without everywhere enforcing specific patterns of land ownership and use, which were only decisively disrupted at a national level at the fairly late date of 1913. That year saw the passing of the Natives' Land Act, which turned Black tenants off their land overnight, and was part of a broader legislative project to exclude Black people from 87% of the land mass of present-day South Africa. Sol Plaatje's (1916/1982) described the process that turned every Black person into a "pariah in the land of [their] birth (1916/1982, p. 21). Plaatje's

analysis in *Native Life in South Africa* became at this time one of the first locally produced works of sociology to show how "the control of land and the disruption of land tenure are central to the pattern of domination, the play of interests and the consciousness of groups and the process of social change" (Connell, 2007, p. 110).

By this time, 'land' referred to a particular complex of economic relationships that saw relatively stable and self-supporting individuals and families living as tenants on what was in many cases already white-'owned' or at least white-controlled territory. The Land Act reduced people, as the early 20th century attorney Richard Msimang put it, echoing Plaatje, "to a state of vagabondage" (Ngcukaitobi, 2018, p. 151). Once an area was proclaimed for white settlement, Black people on that land were transformed de facto from "law-abiding citizens to criminals" (2018, p. 168). White farmers 'acquired' at massive discounts (and in some cases, for nothing) almost all of the livestock of their previous tenants, who no longer had access to pastures (2018, pp. 152–156). Over decades, government entities had been increasing the pressure on Black people to pay taxes to their colonisers in cash (2018, p. 98); now, in order to get cash, once their livestock and improvements they had made on the land had been expropriated without compensation, they were forced a move to urban areas, to work on the labour-hungry mines (see also Christopher, 1994). The "class of labourers" (Ngcukaitobi, 2018, p. 156) that Black people became had very little power to challenge their remuneration or their living conditions once they were in the urban areas. As the early liberation activist Charlotte Maxeke pointed out, this process shattered entire families, fundamentally disrupting social structure and cultural life (2018, p. 290). Landholding was also part of the qualification for the limited Black franchise in the Cape Colony, so being robbed of land meant in certain cases being robbed of the vote (2018, pp. 243, 263).

In a manner typical of the paternal dimension of racial liberalism, much of the white rhetoric that underpinned these repressive extensions was argued to serve the interests of Black people. The Natives' Land Act was described in parliament as an attempt to limit the rights of irresponsible (white) landlords to exploit their tenants, in order to "give it a semblance of a paper restriction on European encroachment on native rights" (Plaatje, 1916/1982, p. 61). A catastrophe was thus resemiotized as beneficial – or, as J.S. Mill might have said, of maximising utility on behalf of a race still in its 'nonage'. Even the existence of "traditional" forms of land ownership were integrated into the project of white supremacy, as Ramutsindela (2012) shows. Many Black people accessed land through a system of communal ownership, "a frozen moment in the civilisation of Africa" (2012, p. 761) that continues to this day, while Whites had freehold rights. This was important for the engineers of grand apartheid because the "fact that communal land was [effectively] owned by the state meant that the state could relocate black people at will and, more importantly, could use communal land as building blocks for the former Bantustans" (Ramutsindela, 2012, p. 757) where, in the words of J.B.M. Hertzog[4], the "Native ought to feel at home" (quoted in Ngcukaitobi, 2018, p. 278). The definition of where 'home' is continues to structure social relations in South Africa, as will be discussed below.

That whiteness could be defined us property under these conditions is quite clear: to be white was to be entitled to individual freehold in 87% of the Union, and thus to the entitlements to livestock and other improvements that flow from secure land tenure. In the post-apartheid dispensation, however, Harris (1993) pointed hopefully to the new draft proposal for the South African Constitution as a document that expanded "the application of affirmative

[4] Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, 1924-1939

action to a much broader domain" (1993, p. 1790). The new Constitution could conceivably take as its remit the decisive ending of racialized and unfair 'end-state'[5] property distributions. And indeed, the property clause of the South African Constitution (Constitutional Assembly, 2011, §25) makes expropriation of land possible in a way that does not imply a strong right of white property holders to be reimbursed for the market value of their property, as this would have to be balanced against "the nation's commitment to land reform, and to reforms to bring about equitable access to all South Africa's natural resources" (2011, §25(4)a) as well as the "history of the acquisition of and use of the property" (2011, §25(3)b). The complex prospect of having to legally balance these factors, combined with the actual track record of land reform, suggest however that South Africa has yet to made a clean break with the property distribution established through centuries of racial oppression. And so while whiteness as property in the new South African order may not be a Constitutional necessity, it clearly still structures the lived experience of its citizens.

2.2. Race, space, and place

The operative distinction in this section is between 'space' and the more specific notion of 'place', "in which people anchor a dense complex of symbolic and material practices" (Blommaert, Collins, & Slembrouck, 2005, p. 206). The socio-spatial dimensions of the land must therefore come into view, including the ways in which spaces are occupied by social life, and the contestations over meaning, belonging, and mobility that accompany social divisions such as race. This section divides a large and heterogeneous literature into three

[5] Theories of justice often distinguish the fairness of end-state distributions (i.e. who got how much) from the historical fairness of the procedure that produced the end-state (see Young, 1981).

loose themes. The first explores how cultural production both suborned the expansion of the racial order, and resisted it. The second theme focuses on the social construction of space, and various research agendas currently being explored in radical or critical geography. In the third theme, I consider some novel ways of thinking about race, belonging, and autochthony, specifically in discussions of the nation and of migration.

2.2.1. Land, colonialism, and the 'cultural unconscious'

Raewyn Connell (2007) has pointed out the intricate connections between cultures and the land on which they develop, advocating for a particular approach that I will present in the theoretical chapter. She quotes the Aboriginal and Torres Island Strait social justice commissioner Michael Dodson:

> Everything about Aboriginal society is inextricably interwoven with, and connected to, the land. Culture is the land, the land and spirituality of Aboriginal people, our cultural beliefs or reason for existence is the land. You take that away and you take away our reason for existence. We have grown the land up. We are dancing, singing and painting for the land. We are celebrating the land. Removed from our lands, we are literally removed from ourselves. (Yunupingu, 1997, p. 41)

The fact that European empire-building in many cases alienated people from their land therefore needs also to be understood in its cultural dimensions: what I have called the 'thick' sense of the land. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1994/2014) Edward Said examines how Europe was able to create an imperial culture in which colonialism and white supremacy could thrive, and how these cultures were in turn resisted. In metropolitan centres, a culture

was created to support overseas expansion politically, to involve their families, and to promote risk-taking in the name of empire. Said argues that in the imperial process

> [territory] and possessions are at stake, geography and power. Everything about human history is rooted in the earth, which has meant that we must think about habitation, but it has also meant that people have planned to *have* more territory and therefore must do something about its indigenous residents. At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others. (Said, 1994/2014, p. 5)

Thinking about controlling other peoples' lands is furthermore inevitably wound up with thinking about other people. Imperialisms thus variously benefited from character sketches of the noble imperialists and savage Other that were presented in the metropolitan narratives of the day; empire was alluded to "everywhere" (Said, 1994/2014, p. 73). As we have seen, these character sketches are visible in philosophical texts, but they get a lot of their cultural power from story-telling. Stories are after all

> at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world... The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative. (Said, 1994/2014, p. xiii)

To be able to tell the story of the Other – to represent them – they must in turn be constructed as unable to represent themselves (Said, 1978/2004, p. 21). Said's analysis of the vast

intellectual project of Orientalism showed how European knowledge-production set about *knowing* the East in order specifically to dominate it, which very often took the form of representing its peoples as the victims of despotic governments and the colonisers as liberators (e.g. Said, 1978/2004, p. 33). *Knowing* the Orient means being able to *speak for* the Orient. Through these processes Europeans were able to represent themselves as the protectors of the peoples of the world. Where they found civilizational achievements that challenged a sense of European hegemony, they represented themselves as the discoverers or the protectors of these achievements, whose current stewards had lapsed into barbarism (Said, 1978/2004, p. 86). Knowing the Orient must therefore be understood not as intellectual curiosity, but as the parent of domination and possession.

Wound up in the global processes of colonialism, these stories were also complicit in producing raced, gendered, and sexualised notions of both coloniser and colonised. Race, sexuality, and gender "come into existence *in and through relation* to each other […] in contradictory and conflictual ways" (McClintock, 1995, p. 5 original italics) appealing to and constructing a normativity of colonial dispossession and violence. Violence was often strategically deployed in narrative, as in for example, foundational myths for colonial enterprises that revolved "around the sanctification implicit in the imperial martyr's suffering – a sanctification that allied imperial pain with redemption and with the beginning, rather than the end, of history" (Kucich, 2007, pp. 4–5). Lurid scenes of the slaughter and rape of white colonialists at the hands of Natives could thus be enjoyed *masochistically* in imperial cultural production for the extent to which they purified the moral conscience of the colonist's own crimes. These stories have furthermore had real staying power in the world, and continue to show themselves in media representations and popular narratives in the present day. The South African media is very quick to represent Muslims, for example, in a

two-dimensional caricature clearly inspired by Orientalist knowledge production (Baderoon, 2002). The discourse of the "War on Terror" is similarly drenched in these lazy and violent reductions (see the 25th anniversary preface of Said, 1978/2004, pp. xv–xxx).

It is from the Saidian perspective that it becomes clear why the narrative preoccupations of South African cultural production have been "the diastole and systole of appropriation and renunciation, aggression and resistance" over the land and its resources; an "endless drama of domicile and challenge" (van Wyk Smith, 1990, pp. 2–3). Focusing specially on white writing, J.M. Coetzee identifies two broad traditions, both inextricably bound up with the land. The first, the pastoral, is a "dream topography" of a patchwork of "thousands of farms, each a separate kingdom ruled over by a benign patriarch" (Coetzee, 1988, p. 6). Structured around the cultural elaboration of the idealised family farm and its social implications, this vision is anchored in the classical (and, we might add, Lockean) requirement that man preserves his virtue in the rural idyll through honest toil. The fact that ownership of the land is white, while the labour is mostly Black, must be "[occluded] from the scene… [for] how can the farm become the pastoral retreat of the black man when it *was* his pastoral home only a generation or two ago?" (Coetzee, 1988, p. 5). The anti-pastoral tradition on the other hand sees the land not as bountiful and parcelled off in farms but as a mysterious, silent, and blank presence, representing a "failure to imagine a peopled landscape" (Coetzee, 1988, p. 9). Where communion with the land happens it brings forth monsters, from "under the earth… the return of what is repressed in the poetry of the silent landscape" (Coetzee, 1988, p. 10). This neat taxonomy of the pastoral and its negation encapsulates what van Wyk Smith calls the "puzzled 'reading' of a terrain which is both familiar and unknown, welcoming and hostile, a place where the European feels he has somehow always belonged – indeed, to

which he feels he has a right – while at the same time sensing its utter strangeness" (van Wyk Smith, 1990, p. 2).

Similar patterns have been observed by David McDermott Hughes in white colonial writing in pre-liberation Zimbabwe (2010). For reasons that may be understand against the backdrop of the foregoing discussion of Locke, "Rhodesian writers crafted a property claim and self-image around the figure of an absent native unworthy of his environment" (Hughes, 2010, p. 7). The whites of Rhodesia did not have to feel guilty about expropriating land from people if they could both devalue them as people (i.e. not see them, or see them as caricatures) while at the same time constructing the landscape they found themselves in as timeless, magnificent, and worthy of protection. It becomes clear in landscape writing that the whites "did not see [Black people]" and that this "form of exclusion aroused little attention" (Hughes, 2010, p. 12)

Discourses of resistance also centre the land. As Frantz Fanon observed, for "a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity" (Fanon, 1968, p. 44). There are some complex analytical tensions in this simple statement, of the relationship between the terms "land" and "bread", and the more diffuse notion of "dignity", tensions of which Fanon as a critic of simplistic class reductionism was aware (Gordon, 2015, pp. 56, 124). Fanon argued that a colonised society has "suffered the loss of its basic structure" (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 72) which thenceforward becomes a colonial structure. By subjecting all colonial subjects, both Black and white, to the same culture, children grow up investing the 'civilised' missionaries or explorers they meet in stories with their own aggression when facing "the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage [who] are always symbolized by Negroes or Indians" (1952/2008, pp. 113–114). When the enemy is defeated, the child

experiences a catharsis (a release of psychic energy) that is *anti-Black*. As this catharsis is repeated through continued exposure to this shared culture, the child adopts this white explorer or missionary as a kind of paternal authority figure. For white children, this figure harmonises with, and is analogous to, the authority of society, while for Black children, the family must be rejected and "ascended" from (1952/2008, pp. 109, 115).

The identification of the Black child with the white missionary furthermore has *spatial* implications: the Black child, who has been alienated from their own bodies, is reduced to a two-dimensional "racial epidermal schema" under the white gaze (1952/2008, p. 84), and Fanon refers to the space thus inhabited by Black people as the "zone of non-being" (1952/2008, p. 2). The classic sketch of the way these forces work together is provided by Fanon as a study of himself: he is on a train, and a white child points at him and cries out "Look, a Negro!" (1952/2008, p. 82). Fanon relates:

> [The] corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema … I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects, slave-ships… (1952/2008, pp. 84-85)

The white child and Fanon are both subjects of France, and thus participate in the same cultural unconscious, which is populated by caricatured figures – which will be discussed in more detail as racial *imagos* in Chapter 7 – imprinted through storytelling about drums and cannibals and slaves that achieved a collective catharsis in the culture, fixing their characters. In the moment of being interpellated as a "Negro" Fanon is reduced to the two-dimensional imago, the slave, the cannibal, the "racial epidermal schema" which to a certain extent he is

himself in thrall to – he is "battered down" – alienated, when he realises, on objective examination, that he is the savage caricature.

These savage caricatures play a particular role in a colonial "commerce […] of the gaze" (Mbembe, 2017, p. 110). As Achille Mbembe points out in his discussion of Fanon,

> Power in the colony […] consists fundamentally in the power to see or not to see, to remain indifferent, to render invisible what one wishes not to see. […Those] who decide what is visible and what must remain invisible are sovereign. (Mbembe, 2017, p. 111)

Culture, recognition, and the law are thus intricately interwoven. Not seeing the "Negro" as a human but as a caricature makes it easy to push him into the "state of exception," a "space without law" (Agamben, 2005, pp. 50, 60). These interlocking spaces of differential treatment together constitute a global "necropolitics" (Mbembe, 2003) where the value of human life is determined through the interplay of culture and space. Culture thus constructs a world that hierarchizes the category of the human being (Agamben, 1999); while space is distorted to create distances or nearnesses between certain bodies thus hierarchized and categorized; and codes such as laws are strategically suspended or enforced in these spaces, working them into the fictional notion of a siege that justifies lethal force (Mbembe, 2001, p. 203). Whether in the Mediterranean or the refugee camp, the mines of the Congo or the stock market floor in Johannesburg, the value of human lives both derives from and determines spatial affordances.

While these strategies are necessitated by administrative contact "between races", another prominent strategy in the colonial arsenal is simple erasure. While there is plenty of archival evidence of how various Indigenous people were absorbed into or ejected from colonial

space, a particular historical myth emerged in South Africa that facilitated a nobler narrative of settler expansion: the Mfecane, the idea that the interior of what came to be called South Africa had been significantly depopulated under a series of "tribal" wars associated with the amaZulu king uShaka (Cobbing, 1988). While there was indeed a great deal of political machination and military state-making among Black African people in southern Africa, this phenomenon has been debunked as an attempt to present South Africa as *terra nullius*. This erasure has meant that it is "a truism of South African history that black people have been invisible for centuries – erased out of history, erased out of place, erased out of cities, erased out of mind" (Mokoena, 2015, p. 169).

This erasure was resisted. Mokoena (2015) advises listening to the voices of the "Black Interpreters" – the intellectual tradition of resistance that was theorising the racial order as it was being rolled out. For example, she draws attention to the journalist and churchman Tiyo Soga, who wrote against race biology's notion of inferior blood in 1871 (2015, p. 174). She also profiles the poet I.W.W. Citashe, who called for a specific response to the superior military might of the colonisers in his 1882 poem *YIlwani ngosiba*[6] (full text reproduced in Mona, 1999, p. 59):

Thambeka umhlathi ke;	Put pressure on the page
Bambelel'ebunzi;	Engage your mind;
Zigqale iinyaniso	Focus on facts,
Umise ngomxholo;	And speak loud and clear;
Bek'izitho ungalwi;	Don't rush into battle;

[6] isiXhosa, "Take up this pen," trans. Mona.

Umsindo liyilo. Anger stutters.

A key resistance strategy was thus representation – to take up the pen – in order to fight against the advance of white supremacy. The development of an independent press was crucial for this process. The first non-missionary controlled newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu*[7] was launched by D.D.T. Jabavu – in 1884 (Mokoena, 2015, p. 181) – directly answering Citashe's admonition, *"thambeka umhlathi ke"*.

Stories about who belongs on the land – who is at home and who is a 'pariah' – structure the cultural field of struggle over the advance of racial hegemony. The equation of landlessness with pariah status in the context of the racial state is an important one. We have already seen through Fanon how Black people may be reduced to two-dimensional images through the imposition of colonial structure. A Fanonian interpretation of the "pariah" was to be offered 60 years after Plaatje in a subtle exposition of the way that territory, political rights, and the psychology of the colonised depend on each other, by political theorist and leader of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, Steve Biko. From the 1950s, the apartheid government developed a system of granting Black people sovereignty in tiny far-flung territories that were called "homelands". This system was clearly designed to "divert the energies of the black people towards attaining false prescribed 'freedoms'" (Biko, 1978/2006, pp. 66–67). The notion that territory that was taken would be given back with rights, as Biko analyses it, was a potentially beguiling one:

> Slowly the ground is being swept off from under our feet and soon we as blacks will believe completely that our political rights are in fact in our

[7] isiXhosa, "African Opinion," trans. Mokoena

> ‘own’ areas. Thereafter we shall find that we have no leg to stand on in making demands for any rights in ‘mainland White South Africa’ which incidentally will comprise more than three-quarters of the land of our forefathers. (Biko, 1978/2006, p. 40)

Biko’s assertion that Black South Africa is the whole of South Africa threatened not only the apartheid order, but even some supposed allies. Given the confutation in the liberal tradition between land productivity and ownership, it is not surprising to find Biko taking aim most bitterly at white liberals. He accuses them of a self-interested paternalism that decried the excesses of Afrikaner nationalism while cynically remaining invested in the perpetuation of white racial power. The liberals act is if they have a “monopoly on intelligence” that authorizes them to “set the pattern and pace” (Biko, 1978/2006, pp. 65–66) of Black liberation, while all they are really doing is distracting the energy of Black intellectuals, and soothing their own sense of innocence.

Biko’s legacy is being elaborated and challenged in the present-day student movement. Specifically, the links between land dispossession, rights, and personhood are a fruitful area of both theory and praxis. Writing of the need for a “psychology of liberation,” Sibisi (1992) argues that Biko’s assertion of the importance of Black South Africans claiming for themselves “nothing less than full humanity and dignity” (Sibisi, 1992, p. 136) exists in a necessary but insufficient relationship to the realisation of true liberty: its condition of sufficiency is the material base of the South African economy, including, though Sibisi does not state this explicitly, the land. Accordingly, one of the contributions that the research presented in this thesis aims to make is to offer some conceptual scaffolding both between the critical whiteness literature and the Bikoist critique, including through the adumbration of the

role that land plays in white supremacy, as a conceptual pair to a future theorising of the role of the land in a psychology of liberation.

2.2.2. Race and geography: The "territoriality of power"

While Biko advanced Fanon through political action, the latter's spatial insights have been fruitfully applied in academic geography. Indeed, for Pile (2000) the "way that space is conceptualised [by Fanon] modulates the kind of politics that can be thought of as radical" (2000, p. 260). Drawing on Fanon's essay *Algeria Unveiled* (Fanon, 1959/1994), Kipfer (2007) argues that Fanon "analyzed everyday racism as an alienating spatial relation, treated colonization as spatial organization, and viewed decolonization in part as a form of transforming spatial relations" (Kipfer, 2007, p. 703). This reading of Fanon is based on interpretations of his work that focus on how space works to coerce: "how it is that the colonized subject as a black body is at once sequestered and forcefully given space" (Sekyi-Otu, 1996, p. 72). Spatial coercion thus structures aspects of the racial order.

Drawing on Fanon and the French Marxist Henri Lefebvre's theorisation of the production of space, Kipfer and Petrunia (2009) analyse the redevelopment and privatization of Regent Park, the Canadian city of Toronto's largest public housing project. They argue that the project has been "captured by racialized territorial relations" that privatise property ownership while socializing risk, a "new territorial strategy [that] is colonial because it is based on paternalist and place-based strategies of managing current public housing tenants who, in contrast to the original Regent Park residents, are no longer racialized as white" (2009, pp. 126, 131).

The focus in critical geography and related fields on the overlaps between race and space is theoretically quite diverse. As is the case with much American scholarship, the initial

conceptualisation of the overlap is attributed to W.E.B. Du Bois (e.g. Schein, 2002; Wilson, 2002). In their review of multidisciplinary work on this topic, Neely and Samura (2011) observe that "spatial theory offers racial theory a unique lens for examining the complex processes by which racial difference and inequality are organized and enacted" (Neely & Samura, 2011, p. 1934). Written with a clear North American bias that excludes Fanon, they identify four conceptual categories shared between racial and spatial analysis: "Contested", "Fluid and historical", "Relational and interactional", and "Difference and inequality" (2011, p. 1939) They conclude that continued investigation would both enable researchers to see "*how* racial positioning, access, achievement and engagement are all about racial politics and the struggles to maintain or resist the existent racial hierarchies" and provide a language to "talk about the discrete ways race still operates in everyday interactions as well as the subtle forms of racism that are overlooked or ignored" (Neely & Samura, 2011, p. 1947). The "space that race makes" has furthermore been described as "the territorial division of continuous social space into dichotomous 'insides' and 'outsides' [that facilitate] the polarization of a continuous range of colors (browns, beiges, tans, and pinks) into 'white' and 'black' and hence the freezing of identities into 'we' and 'they'" (Delaney, 2002, p. 7). Delaney draws attention both to the scalar dimension of the race-space relation, and to paradigmatic cases of the interrelation of race and space: racial "mixing", and the phenomenon of "passing" as white (Delaney, 2002, pp. 8–11). Other research has found that nter-racial relationships in the South African context are spoken of as "territory", and metaphors of boundaries and crossing are common (Steyn, Tsekwa, & McEwen, 2017).

As we have seen, land control is crucial to the expansion of white supremacy, and increasingly geographers are arguing that "land control can be understood as embedded within broader political struggles over identities – religious, ethnic, racialized, or gendered

and change the ways we think about enclosure, territorialization, and property as iterative processes productive of environmental subjects" (Peluso & Lund, 2013, p. 3). A key analytical avenue is the analysis of whiteness as a particular "socio-spatial epistemology": the "non-relational" identity characteristic of whiteness is mapped onto the discourse of scale, boundary and extension, creating white space as discrete, enabling segregation and the restrictions on (non-white) spatial mobility typical of the racial order (Dwyer & Jones III, 2000). The meanings and practices attached to particular spaces to a certain extent constitute identities, and so "one place" may come to be associated with "one identity" (Natter & Jones, 1997, p. 150). Scholarship has also drawn attention to the social and political implications of the *performance* of identity in space (Glass & Rose-Redwood, 2014).

Geography is of course a diverse field; in the specific example of South Africa, ideological mapping and counter-mapping played an important part in the implementation of apartheid and resistance to it (see Christopher, 1994 for the classic treatment of apartheid geography). Although there are theoretical and methodological issues, geographers are grappling with the task of mapping power relations, a project that might see further advances in deconstructing the racial, political and economic geographies of power (Faulconbridge, 2012).

Geography has also been criticised as a "white discipline" (Pulido, 2002), and an anti-racist geography has been outlined and defined (Peake & Kobayashi, 2002). Geographers have been encouraged to reflect on the production of their subjectivities in what is described as the neo-liberal, white supremacist world order (Berg, 2012). Some argue that current efforts do not go far enough, and that geography needs to develop a "critical decolonizing geography of violence" to properly break with its past (C. Holmes, Hunt, & Piedalue, 2015). According to leading scholars in the field, critical geography has yet to achieve its aim of becoming a

"peoples' geography that is grounded in a desire for working towards social change" (Peake & Sheppard, 2014, p. 306).

In the United States, a radical geographer who is also an activist for social change has made an important contribution to the study of the spatial dimensions of race. Ruth Wilson Gilmore argues that racism works both legally and extra-legally by producing, renewing, and exploiting group-specific vulnerabilities to *premature death* (Gilmore, 2002, p. 16, 2007, p. 247). She insists that a geographical approach to racism must analyse the "territoriality of power… [which]… entails investigating space, place, and location as simultaneously shaped by gender, class, and scale" (Gilmore, 2002, p. 22). Analysis must therefore address the dialectical relationship between a complex of co-constructing social divisions, and their spatial context. She adopts an approach to social divisions inspired by Antonio Gramsci, in that race, gender, and other social divisions may be just as salient as class, and social life is understood to be overdetermined – i.e. open to overlapping socio-cultural and political-economic explanations.

Gilmore's central case study has been the political geography of the Californian penal system. In the last two decades of the twentieth century the state locked up disproportionately high numbers of African American and Latino men: prison populations grew 500% even as the real crime rate was falling. There were material crises arising from surpluses that were solved by "carceral Keynsianism"[8] (Gilmore, 1999, p. 174). The specifically *racialized* form and effects of this practice however arose from the concerns of a particular power bloc: white men who "fostered a connection between and among masculinity, state power, and national

[8] Stimulating economic growth by spending public money, as advocated by the economic theory of John Maynard Keynes.

belongingness, with everyone else thus characterized as to some degree alien" (Gilmore, 2002, p. 21). Blocking immigrants from accessing social services, locking people of colour in prison, and limiting access to opportunity (Gilmore, 2007, p. 246) relied on renovating and maintaining the hegemony of an existing racial hierarchy which placed people who were not white into a sub-category of non-human persons (Gilmore, 2002, p. 16). These ebbs and flows of power across territory are analysed by Gilmore in their economic, necropolitical, and *discursive* dimensions, offering a thoroughgoing geographical toolkit for analysis of the hegemony of whiteness.

In other contexts the interaction of space and race have been theorised from a number of perspectives. In South Africa, the geographer Keith Beavon has shown how city development has followed racialized lines, creating the spectre of "neo-apartheid" in suburban development that undermines racial integration (Beavon, 2000). In their case study of how racial meaning-making processes underlie the justification of on-going segregation in a small Karoo town, McEwen and Steyn (2013) revealed the extent to which "racialised epistemologies" in white talk reproduce racial space. They found that white people deploy what they understand to be common-sense ideas about tourism and economic growth in ways that reproduce the racially divided spatiality of the town, their privileged position within it, and protect their consciences from any complicity in current racial inequality or past apartheid practices (McEwen & Steyn, 2013, p. 16). Another classic study of the South African context focuses on how "place-images" of formerly whites-only beaches in post-apartheid South Africa continued to be reproduced through a "neo-separatist discourse of manners" that normalised the white family, while problematizing the presence of Black people on newly desegregated beaches (Durrheim & Dixon, 2001). We see it for example in the way that white South Africans have continued to assert their "rights" to define

"neighbourhood character" (Ballard, 2005b), a strategy that artfully combines the rhetoric of the non-racial Constitutional order, with a logic of exclusion and cultural chauvinism (see Buku, 2014 for a good case study). If neighbourhood segregation and the on-going divisions of everyday life in South Africa are the symptoms of the problem, then examination of the underlying ideology is an important part of the remedy.

2.2.3. Nation, belonging, and autochthony

The very notion of the nation-state involves the notion of some kind of national story – how did this nation come into being? And where is it going? These stories, or discourses of national identity, are in an important dialectical relationship with the people of the nation – and the gendered, racial, or other social hierarchies into which they have been arranged (Hogan, 2009). While the national story co-constructs the social meanings of the bodies contained in the nation, it also constructs the space of the nation itself. As Michael Billig has pointed out, the very concept of nationhood "involves a distinctive imagining of a particular sort of community rooted in a particular sort of place […] not mere geography, or physical setting: the national place has to be imagined, just as much as the national community does" (Billig, 1995, p. 74).

Colonialism introduces conflicting stories, and it is important to analyse how stories interact with each other. Mona (1999) for example in his discussion of the Citashe poem cited above traces the discursive origins of the South African constitutional order, ushered in in 1996, to how Citashe and other poets re-interpreted the fatal undermining of the nascent construction of an isiXhosa nation at that time, with its own territory and borders, by the creeping proletarianization of all Black people in South Africa, necessitating the development of the sense of a broader polity that could resist the advance of settler colonial capitalism (Mona,

1999, p. 70). Biko's critique of the connection of political rights and territory under the apartheid system, cited above, is also relevant here.

Stories of the origins of nations often deal with who was "here first" – and these have been analysed under the rubric of "autochthony", which is generally seen as an excluding, intolerant form of the politics of belonging (Geschiere, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2013). In the ancient Greek an autochthon was one "born of the soil" whose political equality with other people relied on a shared place of birth (Geschiere, 2011). While the term has an apparent natural dimension, both Yuval-Davis and Geschiere point to its selective, non-necessary, and socially constructed dimensions. Whereas indigeneity (or indeed aboriginality) has taken on a specific meaning linked to the discourse of "marginal racialized people in settler societies claiming rights" (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 62) autochthony is a sorting practice where claims to autochthony compete with each other, often in conflict-ridden zero-sum situations (see for example Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 2000).

In majority white societies, concerns that migration will overwhelm the cultural "essence" of the nation serve as a rallying point for a "new racist" politics of autochthony (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 63). For example, as has been shown in the Swedish context, the politics of autochthony may respond to migrants and their descendants, who do not appear to be ethnically Swedish and thus "interrupt the connection between people and territory" (Lundström, 2017, p. 82). This assertion of an ethnic Swedish connection to territory in turn has to suppress the autochthony of the Sámi, who were displaced from large parts of Sweden over centuries of settler-colonial incursion.

In the Australian context, Rob Garbutt has pointed out that an invented white autochthony conceals the stronger and far more ancient claim of Aboriginal autochthony, through the sheer force of a majority white, settler-colonial society that has high levels of controls over

its own and Aboriginal discursive representation (Garbutt, 2006). Claims to autochthony are thus unstable and contingent, though they are often articulated as natural. There is no reason to suppose that autochthony has any discoverable essence, nor any reason to think of autochthony in anything other than mythical terms, given that genetic lineage and territorial control are only accessible to us through systems of meaning-making, and unknowable outside of discourse. To recall Said's point (1994/2014): autochthony is reflected, contested, and decided in narrative terms, and we should therefore play close attention to how these stories are told

There is a sense in which the stories of the land must be seen as fundamental to studies of race and racism. Andrea Smith (2012) argues that a lack of attention in ethnic and racial studies to the specific dimensions of colonialism as experienced by Indigenous people in the United States hinders the development of the field to the same extent as studies of indigeneity are hampered by insufficient attention to race and ethnicity. In her view,

> racial justice theorists and activists unwittingly recapitulate white supremacy by failing to imagine a struggle against white supremacy outside the constraints of the settler state, which is by definition white supremacist… [while] Native scholars and activists recapitulate settler colonialism by failing to engage how the logics of white supremacy may unwittingly shape our visions for sovereignty. (A. Smith, 2012, p. 88)

Smith's distinction serves as a useful warning for applying American research to the South African context. She is asserting Native American scholarship as distinct from race and ethnicity studies, which have been to a certain extent dominated by the concerns of African American, Latinx, and Asian American scholars. How would this be different in South Africa, where the white settler state is (supposedly) no more, and the Indigenous scholarly

perspective is complicated by distinct Black African and Khoe-San histories, contrasted and complicated by and with histories of slavery, indentured Asian labour, and the creation of the category of "Coloured"? The politics of belonging in the context of indigeneity is thus perhaps best explored through a "shift from a one-dimensional to a relational approach to settler colonial analyses that is connected to the *issue of other Others*" (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 27), as researchers in Canada have recently suggested.

One focused way to push research forward in this space is to focus on and problematize white belonging in (post)colonial settler contexts, though this runs the risk of repairing or perhaps even recentering the European experiences of colonialism and its aftermath. For example, in responding to research in Scotland that constructed a set of "identity rules" Bell (2009) found that among young white New Zealanders awareness of their own difference from First People "fundamentally highlights their own lack of cultural particularity and reminds them of their status as Second People; that their claims to belonging can only ever come after those of Maori, that in relation to Maori their own claims to ancestral belonging are always relative" (Bell, 2009, p. 159). A recent set of articles on white identities in Africa has found that they "may claim belonging and African identity, but they nevertheless remain part of structures of racialized power and privilege that mean they carry little of the burden African identity may otherwise entail" (van Zyl-Hermann & Boersema, 2017, p. 658).

To return to the cultural production theme, it is clear that white settler communities project themselves into the landscape creatively, and that new stories and representations are nothing more than "a political technology of belonging" (Hughes, 2010, p. 24). Rhapsodies about the Zimbabwean landscape functioned as "a special optic, [that] threw blacks out of focus while zooming in on landscape, plants, and animals" (ibid.). From being citizens of the settler-colonial world, they must after all begin to feel at home, and "extra-European whites […]

seek autochthony" (Hughes, 2010, p. 25). The process of feeling at home must never be understood as innocent if it is accompanied with that special optic, and if the distributive patterns it accompanies are constitutive of a racial ordering. Scholarship cannot afford to be sanguine about white settler communities becoming rooted in the land.

2.3. The greening of whiteness: Race and environmental discourse

Locke's dismissal as "*wast*" of land neither cultivated nor improved might seem antithetical to the modern environmentalist movement, grounded as it is in various attempts to set limits to humanity's exploitation of the planet. And yet many of the argumentative structures we saw in 1690 may be observed in the present day. For example, the conservation of wild land is still framed in terms of an expanded notion of 'productivity': wild spaces are productive of the kind of recreation that makes working life bearable; it produces contemplation and self-development; it has scientific utility in its biodiversity; its carbon sinks and water tables keep the earth hospitable to our way of life.

Furthermore, a rational weighing of these utilities is still the core of public policy on mining, agriculture, and environmental management, where the demands of Indigenous communities are unintelligible to the decision-making process until translated – and often distorted – in the language of modernity (see Hornborg, 1994 for a classic study of the Mi'kmaq in Canada). It is perhaps for this reason that critiques of the environmentalist movement tend to be more common in the positivist tradition, where the excesses of certain green articulations are regularly shown to interfere with the achievement of developmental objectives such as poverty reduction, job creation, or good science. For example, Muller (2015) argues that environmentalists who capture public attention based on flimsy analysis of good energy policy "abuse democratic processes to enforce their preferences" and thereby "constrain the

ability of state and private sector alike to take expedient action in support of national development goals" (2015, p. 5). Famously, the "skeptical environmentalist" and statistician Bjørn Lomborg (2001) has argued that environmentalism broadly construed plays a distorting role in collective decision-making processes, playing on the innumeracy and gullibility of voters and consumers by invoking implausibly apocalyptic scenarios. Many committed environmentalists themselves agree that the intellectual foundations of environmentalism are actually rather "shaky" (Milton, 1996, p. 3).

What the positivistic interpretations in turn miss is the slippery and unpredictable relationship between what they are measuring in the environment or the economy, and the systems of meaning that people – including the 'rational' scientists themselves – construct. The current and future state of the earth, along with what we ought and ought not do to it next, are clearly enmeshed in systems of meaning-making, wherein claims of 'truth' cleave to particular power relations. Furthermore, it is precisely because environmental degradation is such a serious issue for the whole of humanity that critical attention to what we ought to do about it cannot simply be shut down by holding all reasoning about the relationship between people and planet hostage to predictions of the impending end of days. A proper critical approach to environmentalism should thus include critical attention to the *discourse* of environmentalism.

2.3.1. Deconstructing green ideology

There are many analytical overviews of environmental discourse. In *The Politics of the Earth,* Dryzek (1997) seeks to make sense of the "double complexity" of environmental discourses, situated as they are at the "intersection of ecosystems and human social systems" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 8). Dryzek (like Said) draws attention to how *narrative* techniques give coherence to environmental discourses: they have a "storyline," constructed from a specific ontology, assumptions about what is natural, characters (agents and their motives), as well as key

metaphors and other rhetorical devices (1997, p. 15). In his analysis, there are four main storylines: “Survivalism” centres on an earth with finite resources that are fast running out, requiring drastic action; “Environmental Problem Solving” (what other analysts refer to as “eco-modernism”) seeks answers to environmental problems within the existing processes and institutions of industrial societies; “Sustainability” finds creative ways of synthesising environmental and economic challenges; while “Green Radicalism” rejects industrial society, and the world economy as it is, altogether.

Environmental discourse is also an area of critical inquiry within anthropology. Kay Milton relates how her sense of urgency as an environmental activist is often in tension with her anthropological need to stop and ask questions such as “Why do we believe what the scientists tell us?” or “What kinds of assumptions underlie the claim that the earth is in danger?” (Milton, 1996, p. 2). She outlines how environmentalism may be studied as a cultural formation using a cultural studies approach, and how this approach has useful explanatory and conceptual power in strengthening the social scientific understanding of environmental discourses. She argues both for the rejection of the myth of pre-industrial environmental wisdom, and for the value of cultural diversity in the attainment of environmentalist goals (Milton, 1996, pp. 109–141).

A 2001 special issue of the *Anthropological Quarterly* on environmental discourses noted that across the world, the environment had become a master narrative for a variety of cultural concerns which on one hand contributed to “building grassroots activist networks, forging coalitions across ethnic boundaries, and empowering public participation” while on the other hand being “deployed by scientific institutions, government bureaucracies, and corporate enterprises in ways that co-opt grassroots concerns and marginalize public participation in decision-making” (Harper, 2001, p. 101). This Janus-faced aspect of environmental discourse

is a common theme in the scholarship. Brosius (1999) for example notes that anthropologists are especially well-placed to critique the "essentialized images" mobilised by certain environmental organisations, such as those of Indigenous people who are uniquely connected to nature, as anthropologists "are concerned with the ways in which essentialisms have historically been employed to perpetuate systems of inequality" (1999, p. 280). He also observes that northern NGOs circulate local articulations in ways that shift power away from local people speaking for themselves (1999, p. 281) and proposes areas of future engagement by anthropologists with environmentalism that will resolve some of these problems.

Mühlhäusler and Peace (2006) work between linguistics and anthropology, defining environmental discourse as "the linguistic devices articulating arguments about the relationship between humans and their environment" and elaborating an approach to discourse based on an "ethnography of speaking" (Mühlhäusler & Peace, 2006, pp. 458–459). This methodology, which requires identifying who is being addressed, who is participating, with what goals, etc., in the discourse, is adumbrated as supportive of various critical analytical approaches to green discourses that include metaphor studies, Critical Discourse Analysis and cultural studies (what they term 'ecocriticism'), and a "biocultural diversity" approach. These close, critical analyses of environmental discourses have for example problematized the role that environmental discourses play in deferring, politicising, or covering up environmental problems: a phenomenon that has been dubbed *greenspeak* (Harré, Brockmeier, & Mühlhäuser, 1999).

In the sociological literature, by 2002 the sub-discipline of environmental sociology was described by the editors of a prominent edited collection as being "a quarter of a century old… [but] yet to reach maturity in terms of theoretical closure or crystallization" (Buttel, Dickens, Dunlap, & Gijswijt, 2002, p. 3). They identified three theoretical traditions, which

pay various levels of attention to discourse *per se*: classical sociological theory (Durkheim, Marx, etc.); mid-century functionalist, neofunctionalist, Critical, and World Systems theory; and finally what they refer to as "postmodernism" and social constructionism, which approach environmental problems based primarily on their *representation* in human culture, rather than as objectively knowable facts about the world (2002, p. 24).

Another overarching critique of environmental discourse is visible in the environmental humanities, which become a catch-all term for a growing field of enquiry that spans cultural studies, literary theory, philosophy, and other "humanistic" approaches to the social (see Heise, Christensen, & Niemann, 2017). The environmental humanities includes increasingly popular perspectives that (counter to what might be assumed of the "humanities") seek to *de-centre* the human being (Haraway, 2008, 2015) from the perspective of a race-critical and socially conscious analysis of modernity (Haraway, 1989).

Essentialising and power-laden categorisations of the human are an area of critical inquiry for many environmental humanities scholars. Salleh (1993) for example adopts an ecofeminist frame for a discourse analysis of "deep ecology" texts that reveals the failure of the adherents of this tradition to "shrug off their conditioning as white-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant-professional property holders" (Salleh, 1993, p. 230). In her comparative analysis of the way that environmental discourses have addressed scale – whether local or global – in American and German environmental movements, Heise (2008) presents "ways of imagining the global that frame localism from a globalist environmental perspective" (2008, p. 9) in a way that she argues escapes the essentialisms of "place" that frame "local" people as being frozen in space and time.

Finally, recent work has opened up lines of enquiry that challenge the promotion of an ecological subjectivity connected directly to a "nature" outside of human culture (Glasson,

2014, 2016). This is quite clearly a positivist mirage, and critiques of "ecologism" (Glasson, 2016) target the attempt to "suture" the meaning (i.e. to attempt to make it seem permanent and unchanging) of what are in fact historically contingent and socially constructed approaches to the natural world. The theoretical impulse to transcend social and political discourses with an appeal to the natural should be investigated further for the consequences this has on actually existing power relations between human beings. "Green ideology" has also been analysed as inherently unstable, as it is constructed around a nodal point that "resembles a Janus head – on the one hand it is presented as a consideration of supreme meaning and, on the other, it is revealed as an empty name without substantive content" (Stavrakakis, 1997). What Stavrakakis means here is that different 'Green' political formations agree on very little except that (earth/Green/etc.) works as the organising ethical principle: its content depends on who you ask. As such, far from being the end of ideology, it is just as ideological as any other discourse.

2.3.2. Environmental racism, environmental justice

Black resistance to the way that the racial order takes up space was developed powerfully in the United States by W.E.B. Du Bois, who as we have seen equated whiteness with ownership of the earth. Du Bois is often cited as the originator of the field of environmental justice. He argued that, for example in Philadelphia, it was the racism of city planners and landlords that resulted in the poor living conditions of Black people there, rather than sociocultural dynamics (Du Bois, 1899/2014, p. 115). This allocation of dirtier, more rundown, less well appointed, and more cramped space is a signal achievement of the racial and colonial order.

Environmental justice is one of the major discursive frames of the environmental movement, reflecting (in the context of the United States, at least) a "disappointment" with the

mainstream environmental movement's failure to address the strong correlations between environmental harms, and the human social order (Brulle, 2009). The field was pioneered by Black activists opposing the location of specific environmental harms such as toxic waste dumps near African American and Latinx communities (Bullard, 1983; United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, 1987). Its theoretical orientation from the early days has been around measuring the incidence of environmental hazards and correlating these to race (Bryant & Mohai, 1992), finding again and again that minority race groups in the United States (and marginalised people around the world) disproportionately bear the burden of environmental harms and risks. This largely positivistic framework is important for the establishment of legal proof of discrimination: the claims of environmental justice activists must be assessed in courts (Bryner, 2002; D. E. Taylor, 2000), and indeed one of the early legal defeats the movement faced was because they had failed "to prove discriminatory purpose" (J. McDonald, 1979). Environmental justice became a national priority under the Clinton administration (Clinton, 1994), and since then the movement has been studied under a number of different frames, including from a critical theory perspective (Brulle, 2000), as an interdisciplinary endeavour with the field of public health (Brulle & Pellow, 2006), as a builder of "community capabilities" (Schlosberg & Carruthers, 2010), as a case study in the philosophy of race (Mills, 2001) or indeed as a kind of laboratory for social and political philosophy (Shrader-Frechette, 2002), as well as a phenomenon challenging and unsettling traditional environmental politics, and therefore requiring political re-theorisation (Schlosberg, 1999, 2004, 2007). Studies of environmental justice typically involve historical accounts of the development of social movements interacting with local economic and political forces, including town planning (e.g. Sze, 2007). In addition to the study of the distribution of environmental harms and risks, environmental justice is also concerned to promote inclusive environmental policy development (Hoppe & Dunn, 2001).

Predictably, it has engendered its own conservative backlash, with business lobbyists claiming that there is no solid proof of active and intentional discrimination (e.g. Boerner & Lambert, 1994). Cultural studies scholars have noted that this opposition has real results: where the paradigm is rejected, "contemporary policy processes […recreate] and [reenact…] power/knowledge dynamics" that cause social and environmental harm (Sze et al., 2009, p. 808). Visible in the discourse of environmental justice has been a continuity between the discourse of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, and environmental rights (Heinz, 2005). The movement has also developed its own iconography (Kurtz, 2005).

Twenty-first century environmental justice in the United States has included studies of New York (Gandy, 2003), the impact of eco-tourism on destination communities (Meletis & Campbell, 2009), air pollution in California (Morello-Frosch, Pastor, & Sadd, 2001); and examination of the inclusion and participation of Latinx people in the movement (Pena, 2003). The environmental justice paradigm grew symbiotically with academic interest in it, and has undergone refinement and evolution as it has expanded across the globe (Sze & London, 2008). It has been applied to activist contexts in the United Kingdom (Bickerstaff & Agyeman, 2009) and was early on developed to critique Western environmental practices in the global periphery, such as toxic waste dumping in Africa (Mpanya, 1992), and the behaviour of multinational oil companies in Nigeria (Nixon, 1996). North American scholars have applied the paradigm to resistance to development in China (Nixon, 2010), Kenya (Nixon, 2007), and India (Sinha, Gururani, & Greenberg, 1997).

Environmental justice research is especially popular in Canada (see Haluza-Delay et al., 2010), where it has been applied to a number of phenomena: air pollution in Toronto (Buzzelli & Jerrett, 2007), and in Hamilton (Buzzelli, Jerrett, Burnett, & Finklestein, 2003); participation in environmental activism by the Latinx minority in Toronto (Gibson-Wood &

Wakefield, 2013); as well as structuring critiques of the propensity of the dominant environmental paradigm and its organisations to exclude social issues, and thus reduce the participation of ethnic minorities (Haluza-DeLay & Fernhout, 2011).

The development of the environmental justice paradigm in South Africa must be understood against the specific racial and political history of the country. Environmental historian Farieda Khan (2000) cites a comment from 1990 by the erstwhile vice-president of the Azanian Peoples Organisation, Dr. Gomolemo Mokae:

> [The] green movement agitates on behalf of flora, of fauna, of the entire animal kingdom, with but one exception: black mankind… we have better things to do than run along with the bandwagons of ignorant white people who need an interest to fill their time. (Khan, 2000, p. 172)

Mainstream environmentalism had all but made itself irrelevant to the struggle for liberation in South Africa. Indeed, the creation of national parks had forcibly removed "thousands of black South Africans from their ancestral lands" (D. A. McDonald, 2002, p. 1). And, though some early gains were made in including people in environmental policy-making under the new democratic dispensation, the triumph of neo-liberalism and "corporate-led globalisation" (Cock & Fig, 2001, p. 25) put paid to the deepening of a social compact around environmental issues. Khan explains that even though environmental justice had gained ground as a politically viable and socially relevant paradigm by 2000, it could not "yet be said that environmental issues enjoy mass support or that the concept of environmental justice is an integral part of South Africa's conservation ideology" (Khan, 2000, p. 176). Just six years later, the demise of one of the major environmental justice networking organisations in South Africa was being described, with racial division within its management structure largely accounting for its breakdown (Cock, 2006). Race has continued to be a divisive issue

in nature conservation (Kepe, 2009), and research has also focused on how the legacy of racially-defined socioeconomic dynamics determine the priorities people have when it comes to land use (Kepe & Tessaro, 2014), providing a material base for differing attitudes to the natural world. Mainstream environmentalism has however to a large extent continued to exclude the issues of poor people (Death, 2010, 2014), leaving environmental nongovernmental organisations (ENGOs) such as the World Wildlife Federation in South Africa in increasingly desperate appeals to elicit the support of a multiracial audience (e.g. Fakir, 2016).

Globally, a significant research theme that has developed within environmental justice is the examination of intersections between race, the environment, and gender (e.g. Buckingham & Kulcur, 2009; Di Chiro, 2008), as well as sexuality (e.g. Chen, 2012). This broadening of the perspective is continuous with a number of attempts to take stock of the field, to encompass or align it with a changing world, or to focus it on new areas of investigation. Methodological reviews have aimed to strengthen and focus the ability of environmental racism researchers to make a case for its existence (Pulido, 1996), in part through updating and making more nuanced the definition of 'racism' mobilised within the paradigm (Pulido, 2000), or through introducing elements of critical race theory such as Goldberg's notion of the *racial state* (2001) or Omi and Winant's *racial formation* (1994) (i.e. Kurtz, 2009). This development has mirrored developments in the critical race scholarship that have shifted attention from individual discrimination and disadvantage, to structure and macro-level effects; proving that the racism of differential environmental harm is 'intentional' is quite clearly missing the point (Teelucksingh, 2007).

Perceived deficiencies in what are described as overly simplistic sociological models of the aetiology and nature of environmental racism have resulted in new proposals, such as the

"environmental inequality formation" (EIF) perspective (Pellow, 2000), which posits an integrated theory of EIF that accounts for historical and network factors. In the South African context, Ruiters (2001) has similarly drawn attention to problems with environmental racism as a frame, arguing that its application has been "tinged by minimalist visions of change and reconstruction (visions set by the limits of possibility within a market system)" (Ruiters, 2001, p. 96) and that it therefore does not go far enough to "an understanding of how social difference and environmental problems are produced and distributed" (Ruiters, 2001, p. 102).

The field has meanwhile moved on from focusing only on measuring environmental harms and their proximity to various groups. In addition to the distribution of environmental goods and harms, it also addresses "recognition, participation, and capabilities" (Reed & George, 2011). More careful attention is given to how space is *produced* at the intersections of race, class, and gender (Holifield, Porter, & Walker, 2009). Measuring harms, increasing participation, and learning from critical race theory are still however usually mentioned as the key planks of the discipline (Mohai, Pellow, & Roberts, 2009). Even where a "critical environmental justice studies" has been proposed, criticism is not envisaged as directed at the fundamental assumptions of the academic project, but instead at the "[social] movement's tactics, strategies, discursive frames, organizational structure, and resource base" (Brulle & Pellow, 2006, p. 17). It is therefore unclear whether it is a capacious enough perspective to consider that occasionally the environmental justice activists themselves might be entrenching social divisions that, in certain cases, the corporation and government may be better placed to address. Because the paradigm started with a clear cost of industry – the distribution of the danger represented by toxic waste – it is to a certain extent anchored in a paradigm of measuring how bad development is, and celebrating community resistance to such development.

2.3.3. Critical approaches to environmentalism

Whether environmental justice is a workable paradigm for addressing the reproduction of the racial order through environmentalist discourses will be left as an open question. There are however many other traditions in which environmentalism in all its forms, whether community-driven or in the guise of international ENGOs, has been subjected to careful critique. Discourse analysts specifically have addressed the quite frequent co-occurrence in political discourses of white supremacist and environmentalist projects. As John Richardson has pointed out in a recent discourse-historical analysis "the timelessness of land – that is, the 'countryside', farmlands and wider rural environment – [is] a key trope" of British fascism (Richardson, 2017). Historians and cultural geographers have also explored the specific environmentalism advocated under Hitler's "Third Reich" in an edited collection (Brüggemeier, Cioc, & Zeller, 2005). In fact, as Heise (2008) has argued, modern German environmentalism has moved away from a concern with connection to local spaces because of the Nazi obsession with *Blut und Boden* – i.e. racial purity and connection to soil – to a far greater extent than in other contexts, while German far right movements continue to articulate environmental protection as central to their political aims (Olsen, 1999). *Blut und Boden* also animates some North American white separatism, who also embrace environmentalism as a "good cause" to popularise their movements (Mix, 2009). The notion of *Blut und Boden* is intrinsically linked to the claims to autochthony discussed above.

Other critics of environmentalism have noted how easily its rhetoric is tied up in and appropriated by neo-liberalism (e.g. Fletcher, 2013). The practice of "greenwashing" – which, in its narrow definition is environmentally friendly "corporate posturing and deception in the absence of external monitoring and verification" (Laufer, 2003, p. 253), can be more broadly understood as the practice of cloaking harm, including environmental harm,

in the buzzwords of environmental discourse, often aided by "the endorsement of Greenpeace and other key environmentalists" (Beder, 1999, p. 2). On this reading of the environmental movement, it can easily itself become a dissembling political player, valuing organisational sustainability and public relations coups over actual long-term environmental improvement.

Green discourse can reproduce racial stereotypes. As Soll (2007) points out in his discourse analysis of advertising in the "green" media, despair over environmental disasters in faraway places like China can be lightened through buying environmentally-friendly products, all advertised using white faces. "These white people were doing all they could to save the environment," he remarks sarcastically (Soll, 2007). I have already presented the critique that "green" is actually very "white", and indeed the history of environmentalism written in the United States before attention was paid to environmental justice was largely a history of white men (D. E. Taylor, 1997); environmentalism in that country has been described as representing the "atypical beliefs and values of white men" (Kalof, Dietz, & Guagnano, 2002). American environmentalists who are not white have powerfully drawn attention to the ways in which the white imagination structures the environmental movement in that country (DeLuca & Demo, 2001). Research in Canada has shown that these attitudes, values, and beliefs, are activated in the classroom through environmental education that reproduces whiteness as a socio-spatial relationship (McLean, 2013). It is the failure of these largely white movements, many of which are active in conservation in Africa, to engage seriously with race and the histories of exclusion that typify conservation efforts on the continent, that hinder broader inclusion in environmental issues in this context (Kepe, 2009).

Writing the history of the environmental movement in South Africa has been part of a critical project. The genesis of the celebrated Kruger National Park in violent dispossession (Carruthers, 1995), and other places and ways in which environmental protection has been

complicit in the reproduction of the racial order in South Africa (D. A. McDonald, 2002), have been part of that story. Histories of unjust social engineering linked to conservation are in fact shared between the United States and South Africa, which employed similar strategies, for similar reasons, at similar times (see Beinart & Coates, 1995). As in South Africa, Native Americans had to be dispossessed and moved *en masse* for the creation of today's national parks in the United States (Spence, 1999).

Ray (2013) has argued that environmentalism mobilises discourses of disgust "by describing which kinds of bodies and bodily relations to the environment are ecologically 'good,' as well as which kinds of bodies are ecologically 'other'" (Ray, 2013, p. 1). She takes aim at the 'Ecological Indian' as a clear instance of where environmentalism as a culture has racialized Native Americans in a simplifying and ultimately stigmatising fashion – in this case, as a 'good' body. Representing Native Americans as closer to nature erases, in what we should recognise as a Lockean gesture, the sophistication of Native American high-intensity farming and hunting which in some cases resulted in species extinctions and land degradation (Krech, 1999). The ecological Indian is however a very popular trope in American (and international) cultural production. In a recent example of its deployment, the 2009 James Cameron film *Avatar* represents the fictional N'avi people as the prototypical Indigenous people on the receiving end of colonial extractive practices. In the mobilisation of the Ecological Indian trope, the filmmakers ascribe "a static nature to a static Indigenous peoples [which] distorts culture and perpetuates many […] latent social evolutionary theories" (Fritz, 2012, p. 70). The Ecological Indian trope is of course not always a Native American specifically, and is applied to other Indigenous and colonised peoples around the world.

While Ray also addresses white "trash" and disabled bodies as objects of the disgust of environmentalism, other scholars have focused on other ecological 'others'. For example,

mounting Sinophobia and other species of anti-Chinese sentiment are encoded in discourses of toxicity and pollution that are evident in Western representations of goods manufactured in China (Chen, 2007, 2012). A very significant category of 'Other' is the "non-white" whose reproductive profligacy makes them a breeding horde from which North American environmentalists understand they have to save the world (Gosine, 2005). A great deal of American environmentalism takes as given the reality of Paul Ehrlich's "population bomb" (1968) – exponential increases in population struggling to live off linear increases in food production – and certain strains within it consequently construct the "Third World" specifically as producing more people than the world can support. Gosine (2010) argues that this neo-Malthusian panic articulates both the desire to reduce the number of non-white people in the world, and a heterosexist disgust with homosexual sex that arises from a concomitant desire to see white people reproduce. Blacks and homosexuals can thus be ecological others because, as Gosine puts it, they commit "Queer Acts against Nature" (Gosine, 2010, p. 149).

Some environmentalists, such as the popular documentary filmmaker David Attenborough, and the neo-Malthusian charity of which he is patron, Population Matters, are content to call humans "a plague on the earth" (Gray, 2013). This reflects a "deep misanthropy" in modern environmentalism that exercises a selective pressure on the hierarchy of the human (W. J. Smith, 2013), despite long-standing scientific debunking of Malthus's specific arguments (e.g. Rao, 1994). Some adherents have gone as far as arguing that growing resource scarcity caused by the poor management and overpopulation around the world will increasingly fuel conflicts over water, land, and food (Homer-Dixon, 1999), a phenomenon that has been dubbed "eco-violence" (Homer-Dixon & Blitt, 1998). In the United States this scenario correlates with hawkish foreign policy, and the construction of environmental issues as

constituting a geopolitical threat to the West, for example by the prominent military strategist Robert Kaplan (Dalby, 1996). Kaplan's world view has been described as constituting a "new imperialism," (Bacevich, 2005) where American military incursion into "Third World" countries, as well as the development aid targeting them, is strategically oriented around pre-emptive measures to control population and resources. This research and advocacy platform has a specific impact on Africa, as it "[conjures] up a surreal picture of an African continent in the throes of an apocalyptic crisis: overpopulated, undernourished, and driven to barbaric acts of violence by irrational spirit power […] once again the 'Dark Continent'" (Peluso & Watts, 2001, p. 3).

Overpopulation is also a *scapegoat* – i.e. "a fantasmatic construction serving to conceal the gap between the symbolic order of international development and its persistent failure in actual practice" (Fletcher, Breitling, & Puleo, 2014, p. 1196). On this reading, increasing global inequalities and environmental degradation can be ascribed to the globalisation of the capitalist world order, a process in which the United States is implicated. Overpopulation becomes a convenient fiction to displace attention from this fact, and one that plays into racial anxieties about white contraception and population decline, contrasted with the growth of non-white populations, epitomised by President Theodore Roosevelt's 1905 warnings of "race-suicide" (Fletcher et al., 2014, p. 1204). Anxieties about climate change, similarly, produce the notion of "climate barbarians," – refugees swamping the West from poor countries affected by climate change (Hartmann, 2010) – which in turn demand an administrative or governmental response (tighter borders, patrols on the Mediterranean, etc.), rather than a political analysis of the power relations underlying their specific situation (Bettini, 2013). Far from being a new phenomenon, this "climactic reductionism" has a long and deeply politicised history in the United States (Livingstone, 2015).

The creation of environmental 'others' is of course the mirror-image process for the construction of the environmental 'selves'. In the context of Sweden, a new type of moral sorting practice has been described as producing "The 'Certified Organic' Person"[9] (Ideland, 2016) – placing people in hierarchical status relations to each other. Organic food is more expensive, and associated with certain patterns of consumption linked to social class; being 'Certified Organic' thus becomes a proxy for on-going class (and race) distinctions in Swedish society. In the context of the United States, Alkin and McCullen (2011) have analysed how whiteness is "performed and perpetuated" in the practices and performances of various organic or other environmentally food practices in farmers' markets in California. The construction of these desirable (white) subject positions also has a gendered dimension. Hultman (2013) has shown how Arnold Schwarzenegger's performance of "eco-modern masculinity" during his tenure as governor of California both repaired and reproduced hegemonic forms of masculinity through incorporating critiques, and effectively "green-washed" a problematic 'green' technology.

The field of environmental criticism (or "eco-criticism") which was initiated as a way to bring ecology more strongly into literary criticism (e.g. Buell, 1996) and was therefore not particularly critical of environmentalism itself has in the last decade started to take human social relations more seriously. According to Feldman and Hsu's (2007) introduction to a special issue of *Discourse* on this topic, the field "conceives of environment more broadly,

[9] "Den KRAV-märkta människan", Swedish, own translation. "KRAV" is the Swedish word for "requirement" and refers to the national cooperative responsible for certifying and advising organic farming practices and produce; the direct translation would thus be "The KRAV-marked person"

exploring how our perception of nature is mediated by race, class, gender, and geography" and asks questions such as

> How do competing conceptions of nature effect the relative visibility of different aspects of environment and racialization? What environmental themes become foregrounded when we attend to narratives that concern the experiences of racialized groups? How do representational media shape our understanding of the environment and its relation to social conditions? (Feldman & Hsu, 2007, pp. 200–201).

Within eco-criticism, postcolonial eco-criticism has emerged. Recently, postcolonial eco-critics have applied scholars such as Fanon to environmental issues. So for example Wenzel (2015) argues that Fanon's "distinction between settler and native as that between adequate waste management and 'wallowing in the mire' anchors the literary topos of postcolonial trash, where privilege is not having to see, smell or think about waste and shit, whether one's own or that of other people" and that Fanon "suggests a way forward for a postcolonial environmental humanities unencumbered by the baggage of an ethnocentric, anthropocentric humanism" (Wenzel, 2015).

In the South African context, specific environmentalist discourses have been identified as being mobilised to manage racial space. From the earliest days of the post-apartheid period white South Africans deployed ecological arguments to problematize Black residential encroachment in formerly white-managed spaces (Dixon, Foster, Durrheim, & Wilbraham, 1994). More recently, suburban white condemnation of animal slaughter by Black people – again, in an attempt to manage who belongs and who does not in suburban South Africa – has been critiqued as anchored in "sentimental, ethical and material investment in the relationships between plants, animals and people, for example in the promotion of ecological

processes or the preservation of wild areas" (Ballard, 2010). The creation of expensive 'eco-villages' where only indigenous gardens are allowed "represents a certain kind of localism and attachment to place among a group of people [i.e. white South Africans] who feel in many other ways 'displaced'" (Ballard & Jones, 2011). These communities become for white people "bunkers for the psyche" (Ballard, 2005a) that are part of the post-apartheid processes of rationalising ongoing racial inequality and segregation (see also Ballard, 2004).

Recently, the discourse of attempts to prevent the poaching of rhino in southern Africa has received critical attention. Shoot-on-sight policies to protect biodiversity in Africa were historically enabled through discursive practices that debased the humanity of the poacher while anthropomorphising the animal, contrasting the "compassionate, sporting, and conservation-minded" white European hunter to the Black African poacher who "travels alone or in all-male gangs, and possesses cunning and superior arms" (Neumann, 2004, p. 826). The current poaching crisis has seen military and conservationist aims blur and the phenomenon of "green militarization" or "green violence" is increasingly criticized (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2016; Duffy, 2014; Lunstrum, 2014). This violence is supported by a "politics of hysteria" in social media, and addressed to state power (Büscher, 2016, pp. 992–993) most intensely by a white minority whose "belonging" in Africa is legitimized through conservation (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2016, p. 9). In this discourse, the state's ability to protect rhinos is equated with its ability to protect white interests, which are understood as being under threat. State power is entreated by rhino activists to visit extreme violence, and even torture, on rhino poachers, who are routinely represented as less-than-human (Lunstrum, 2017).

These themes – of conservation and belonging – are also discussed by Hughes (2005). Whereas there was an initial (first) nature that has been (second) ruined by man, Hughes

explores how "third nature" – the imaginary space of an idealized conservation project – represents for whites a "congenial postnationalist geography" (Hughes, 2005) – standing astride national borders in ways reminiscent of Rhodes's Cape-to-Cairo imperialist fantasy – that preserves for them a reason for belonging in Africa *after* the end of colonialism. The ways in which the white imagination constructs landscape and environmental protection has also been analysed in North America as a strategy to keep spaces white, such as in the green belt around Boulder, Colorado where "social relations [i.e. race, gender and class] are removed from their histories and portrayed as natural" (Hickcox, 2007). Similarly, through the strategic inclusion of Canadian First Nations, the white imagination constructs that country's boreal forests as spaces innocent of colonialism, and as the ethnic home of "liberal whiteness" (A. Baldwin, 2009; see also A. Baldwin, Cameron, & Kobayashi, 2011).

2.4. Conclusion

Critical approaches to property ownership, liberalism, race and space, and environmentalism have thus been opened up across a number of disciplines, in a variety of epistemological traditions. In order to carefully critique the specific dynamics I have singled out, a coherent theoretical framework is required to analyse some quite complex phenomena and the ways in which they overlap. It is this framework that I will present in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Deconstructing hegemonic whiteness: A theoretical framework

This chapter presents the case for deconstructing hegemonic whiteness using postfoundationalist discourse theory. In the previous chapter, I referred to research from a variety of disciplines that suggests that, as a result of European colonial expansion, modern systems of land control – including the environmental movement – are *permeated* with whiteness. 'Whiteness,' however, is a dense and contentious concept. The specific notion of 'hegemonic' whiteness only complicates matters. For this reason I will spend the first half of this chapter (§3.1) providing a rationale for these theory-laden terms. In the second half of the chapter (§3.2), I will link the study of 'hegemony' to a particular tradition of discourse analysis. Postfoundational discourse analysis in the post-Marxist, Gramscian tradition was to a large extent inspired both by the destabilising effect that the collapse of the Soviet Union had on certain tenets of historical materialism, and by the persistent difficulties experienced by scholars attempting to use more traditional class analysis to explain social divisions such as race, gender, and sexuality. While this approach has gone some way to assisting with the deconstruction of the racial order, I argue that a lot of its potential is still latent, and may be brought to the fore more assertively. In the third section (§3.3), I will also show how other theoretical traditions may be productively brought into conversation with this post-Marxist approach.

3.1. Why 'hegemonic' whiteness?

Critical[1] whiteness studies has a long and contentious history. It would be inaccurate to represent the vast literature in this space as representing a coherent theoretical perspective. 'Whiteness' has been analysed in its statistical, ethical, sociological, semiotic, psychological, embodied, and countless other dimensions, in a number of different and sometimes incommensurable traditions. What these approaches do however share is a pattern in the way that they are critically opposed. In the first part of this section, I will tease out the important areas of this critical pattern, and in the process suggest some grounding assumptions in my theoretical toolkit. In the second part, I will outline how my proposed focus on 'hegemonic' whiteness aims to navigate these critical areas.

3.1.1. Six puzzles of (Critical) Whiteness Studies

If the study of whiteness is indeed a critical endeavour, it should be a worthwhile project to read it through the prism of its less enthusiastic adjudicators. The appraisals I have in mind specifically are Aileen Moreton-Robinson's (2006, 2008) critique of the elision of the land and of native sovereignty in studies of whiteness and race; Sara Ahmed's (2004b) classic argument for the "non-performativity" of white anti-racism; Derek Hook's (2011) "retrieval" of Steve Biko's (1978/2006) analysis of white liberalism; Paul C. Taylor's (2004) conceptual critique of key debates in the literature; Robyn Wiegman's (1999) important distinction between universality and hegemony; and, as a general framing for some important themes in the critical literature, Steve Garner's (2007) "pitfalls" of whiteness studies. Instead of

[1] According to Ahmed, the word 'critical' is itself a discursive receptacle of the anxiety of white anti-racism (2004b) – as if just adding 'critical' makes it critical.

presenting these critiques individually, I will discuss how I think some of their arguments suggest six key puzzles. The metaphor is not to be taken too literally: the pieces of the puzzle shift their shapes depending on how you look at them; there are multiple ways in which they interlock; and the dimensions of the broader puzzle are constantly changing. 'Puzzle' then is more of a verb: to puzzle through, or puzzling with, a complicated conceptual terrain.

3.1.1.1. The puzzle of reflexivity

White researchers (like myself) are part of the anti-racist puzzle. As we produce "whiteness studies," we produce white anti-racist subjectivity, into which we are recursively interpellated. In producing the research, then, we produce ourselves; this is the social science equivalent of insider trading. While it may seem valuable for white anti-racist researchers to shift the anthropological gaze from the other to themselves (Wiegman, 1999, p. 122), the direction of the gaze can easily lapse into narcissism (Ahmed, 2004b; Hook, 2011, pp. 25–26). Researchers learn "to love their own whiteness, by transforming it into an object that could be loved" (Ahmed, 2004b). This transformation serves the purpose of recuperating a future white political identity (Wiegman, 1999, p. 123).

This identity is not harmless. An anti-racist whiteness oriented primarily around *disaffiliation* from overt racism and *affiliation* with Black resistance to it may position white practice as the central practice of anti-racist struggle (Hook, 2011, p. 21; Wiegman, 1999, pp. 119, 143). White subjects reap status rewards from others and ego-gains from themselves while necessarily suborning the "humanitarian violence" that comes from assuming the role of a benefactor (Hook, 2011, pp. 28–29). In a recent example, the critical whiteness British scholar Steve Garner, whose influential list of the pitfalls of whiteness studies was mentioned above, falls into one himself when he writes in an overview of the field that "[engaging] in this field is essentially an activist function, producing knowledge for the liberation of white

people from whiteness, so that the struggles of those not racialized as white can be better understood" (Garner, 2017, p. 1585). The idea that it may be *white liberation* that motivates scholars, and that part of their job is to make *Black pain intelligible*, suggests a failure to engage appropriately with one's own subject position as produced by a racist system.

Performing anti-racism does not make racism go away. Declarations of anti-racism count as "unhappy performatives" because the conditions for their completion are absent (Ahmed, 2004b). Ahmed here is referring to the linguistic theory that for a performative speech act such as "I now pronounce you man and wife" to be successful, existing conventions or acts of authorization, the fundamental social and material conditions that would 'complete' a performative speech act (such as the convention of marriage), need to be in place. And these in the case of declarations of anti-racism are quite clearly not available. For the researcher, then, the attempt to write a universalisable (post)white anti-racist subjectivity into being "can only reconfirm a universalist narcissistic white logic" (Wiegman, 1999, p. 123). However, it may be that in squarely addressing these contradictions that whiteness studies could contribute something, by "attending to forms of white racism and white privilege that are not undone, and may even be repeated and intensified, through declarations of whiteness, or through the recognition of privilege as privilege" (Ahmed, 2004b).

3.1.1.2. The puzzle of disciplinarity

The position of a piece of research within the idea-history of the sub-field of whiteness studies must also be puzzled through. Although there are many possible stories that one could tell about the field, I will mention three here. The first two are true-blue American stories. In the first, Peggy McIntosh's (1988/2011, 1989/2015) highly influential work on the "invisible knapsack" of white privilege, David Roediger's (1991) analysis of U.S. labour history to reveal how inclusion in white racial identity undercut latent class allegiances between

working people (also, Ignatiev, 1995), and Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) articulation of the salience of race for white feminists specifically, are the (white) ur-texts of the discipline. In the second story the centrality of Black feminist writing is asserted (Ahmed, 2004b). Here, it is Audre Lorde's examination of how whiteness functions as a mythical norm (1984/2007), bell hooks's notion of "whiteness as terror" (1992), Toni Morrison's analysis of the role of Black unfreedom in liberating the white imagination (1992), and Cheryl Harris's "whiteness as property" (1993) (itself rooted in critical race forebears such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1987, 1991)) that take centre stage. This story has deeper roots in the African American tradition that go through the oeuvre of James Baldwin and the "people who think they are white" (1984), back to the foundational race-critical work of W.E.B. Du Bois (1920, 1903/2008, 1899/2010, 1899/2014).

The first two stories may be combined, which strengthens the sense of a discipline that went through its "first" (Du Bois) and "second" (the 90s) waves in the United States, before spreading thence across the world in its "third" wave, the picture presented by Twine and Gallagher's influential review of the discipline (2008), and recently reinscribed as the 'official' history (Garner, 2017). It is however possible to trace different genealogies. In just one alternative, Frantz Fanon's powerful accounts of the nature and effects of European colonialism (1968, 1959/1994, 1952/2008) form the basis for critiques of whiteness in (South) African scholarship. The human psychodynamics between the colonial periphery (Martinique, Algeria) and metropolitan France have a resonant and disturbing currency in the twenty-first century (post)colony that is arguably fainter in the American canon. Fanon's phenomenology has the virtue of serving both as a diagnosis of the Black colonial condition,

and a forensic pathology[2] of the whiteness that is its underlying cause. This liberatory psychology was central to the work of Steve Biko (1978/2006; see Sibisi, 1992), Fanon's southern heir. Biko both addressed the specific dynamics of the South African *apartheid* condition, which have to a certain extent changed, and the nature of Black life under South African capitalism, which (largely) has not (Hook, 2011, p. 24). The Fanon-through-Biko story would clearly orient studies of whiteness very differently to other traditions.

That being said, these are not uncomplicated legacies, and it is not simply a matter of choosing one and being 'covered'. As Hook points out, white whiteness studies researchers may merely re-represent the Black critique; Hook is alert to the possibility that he might be "speaking for, or over Biko, […] using him to my own ends" (2011, p. 20).

Questioning one's own theoretical and research motives[3], is not only important for white scholars. The Australian Indigenous feminist scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues that the American whiteness studies tradition centres histories of migration and slavery, orienting itself around a Black/white binary that makes "Blackness" synonymous with race, thereby positioning the claims of Native American sovereignty "outside racism[,] which serves to protect and reinscribe possessive investments in the nation as a white possession" (2008, p. 91). Whiteness 'wins' when justice claims are framed within the individualised rights

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[2] Metaphors of 'pathology' in relation to racism are problematic on two levels: (1) they miss the rational foundations of contemporary racism (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, p. 468); (2) they distract attention from the moral responsibility of agents for its perpetuation. In many other ways, however, the idea that the racial order is like a disease in the social body is an attractive one. *Forensic* pathology makes it possible to hold agents responsible for poisoning/harming the social body.

[3] I explore the various issues raised in this section about my own positionality as a researcher in the next chapter.

framework of the existing United States, not appropriately understood as an on-going colonial project that elides Native sovereignty while centring "the universal white liberal subject" (2008, p. 87). Some American whiteness studies literature explicitly claims to centre the Black experience as the 'true' American story, cloaking white subjectivity in a new, cleansed nationalism that reclaims white humanity (Wiegman, 1999, p. 141), while (once again) erasing Native Americans from the scene.

The historical and epistemological commitments of scholars also cleave to the exigencies of their academic careers. Paul C. Taylor argues that whiteness scholars exploit vague and imprecise notions such as making whiteness 'visible' or 'abolishing' whiteness in order to, in the case of Ruth Frankenberg, make "some elbow room for herself, with a space-clearing gesture that allows her to mark out her own location on an increasingly crowded discursive terrain" (2004, p. 236). There is of course nothing special about whiteness studies in this regard. However, within the context of the precarious natures of careers in American universities in the post-Cold War era of "downsizing" and "proletarianization" of [the] intellectual work force" (Wiegman, 1999, p. 148), it is possible to question whether heightened attention to whiteness in the university is/was not reflective of a need for job security, continuous with a "possessive investment in whiteness" (ibid.). We may puzzle with what appears to be a *necessary* contradiction: the existence of "whiteness studies" as a legitimate knowledge object distinct from 'ethnic' or 'racial' studies inexorably works not to "divest whiteness of its authority and power but to rearticulate the locus of its identity claims" (Wiegman, 1999, p. 149). Furthermore, that these claims are refined in the exclusionary space of the university reproduces the classed (and therefore self-defeating) notion that becoming a "good white" is an elite pursuit (Ahmed, 2004b).

3.1.1.3. The puzzle of vulnerability

Dismantling whiteness supposedly saps it of power, but it seems to get a lot of that power back again when damaged whiteness comes into analytical focus. Samantha Vice's (2010) subtle exposition of the ethics of the white anti-racist subject position reveals just how puzzling this space can be. Vice rightly evokes the positionality of the white South African as morally challenging. Born into a bizarre racial order from which we cannot help but benefit, we inherit "habits" of white privilege that are incredibly hard to change (2010, p. 325). This does not reduce our responsibility, and we are morally "damaged" by our role as oppressors (2010, pp. 325, 335). We face "daily and tenacious moral tests" that make it "hard to be comfortable" and "almost impossible to lead a good life" (2010, p. 338). Like sinners retreating to a cloister, we should therefore embark on a private project of self-care that includes truly inhabiting our shame, making ourselves "invisible and unheard, concentrating rather on those damaged selves" (2010, p. 335).

It is hard not to pity the poor souls who have the "moral luck" (2010, p. 330) to be born white South Africans, even with all that privilege. The language of damage and self-care suggests injured animals limping into the bush to lick their wounds. Vice recognises that it is easy for this project to "degenerate into a morbid egocentricity [instead of a] recognition of one's faults" (2010, p. 335). The problem with her solution, however, is that while she admits that the self-as-oppressor is produced by history, she defines its moral progress as "inward-directed, non-political" (2010, p. 338) because she is "irresistibly impelled" to protect the notion of an "essentially private self, some core" (2010, p. 339) that is *prior* to social or political concerns. This, as Eusebius McKaiser has pointed out, constitutes a "practical absurdity" (McKaiser, 2011, p. 459), for it places the core of the moral progress of white

South Africans *outside* of a social dialectic with other people, in a kind of moral 'Group Area'. Whites may be encouraged to wallow in a profoundly personal project.

Vice's essay can still be read as an important contribution to whiteness studies that points to compelling and important contradictions. However, she dismisses the field as "unnecessary"[4] in her opening remarks. This is a pity, as other critics of whiteness studies have had perhaps more useful things to say about race and the politics of shame than Vice's philosophical lodestar, Aristotle. Ahmed (2004b, 2014) has explored in detail how feelings of shame can serve as proof that actually, deep down, we really are good people. She provides the example of apologising for colonial land theft and genocide: white Australians temporarily and tactically take up "bad feeling" in order to restore "an identity of which we can be proud" (Ahmed, 2004b, n.p.). While this is clearly not what Vice had in mind, it is instructive to place the suggestions of moral philosophers in real-world social and political settings. Insidiously, argues Ahmed, white shame acts as a cloak that collectivizes white responsibility, while calling for repeated, individual performances of Aboriginal pain and dispossession (2004b, n.p.). Because it allows the (white) nation to be celebrated in the present, she asks who the 'shame' is for, if not to cleanse the sins of white Australia. Ahmed notes a parallel process in institutional attempts to implement anti-racism programmes, where "the transformation of the collective into an individual (a collective without individuals) might allow individual actors to refuse responsibility for collective forms of racism" (2004b, n.p.) A collective performance of vulnerability thus has the confounding effect of producing *invulnerability*.

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[4] "[While] I concentrate on whiteness in this paper, this is not because I feel that whiteness demands further and ongoing study; that we need, for instance, a discipline called 'whiteness studies.' I do not." (Vice, 2010, p. 324)

Presenting white people as permanently excluded from "a good life" opens the door to the logic of "me too": i.e. "I, too, have suffered" – a tactic that works to downplay or even neutralise the existence of racial hierarchies (2004b). A whole theme in the whiteness studies literature focuses on the status of some white people being downtrodden, crucially, *as white people* (Wiegman, 1999, p. 140). So-called "white trash" in the United States do not represent merely a class identity, but a subaltern *racial* identity (Newitz & Wray, 1997; Wray, 2006). Because white people are particularised in this way, "the empowered privileges of whiteness and the stereotypes that degrade blackness take on an analytical equivalency as whiteness is situated as an identity object in need of the same resignification that has accompanied the civil rights and black power struggle over and in the name of blackness" (Wiegman, 1999, p. 144). It is not too difficult to imagine Vice's monastic vision of whiteness becoming a certain type of (walled-in, inward-looking) "liberation" in Garner's (2017) sense, and we must therefore face and problematize the analogy to the struggle for *Black* liberation. These discourses promote a sense of "alongsidedness" (Ahmed, 2004c), where racial identities all exist on a kind of level social field (Garner, 2007, p. 9). "White" is not just another racial identity among many. Instead, it is the logic of the racial hierarchy itself, in a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship to other racialized social identities (see C. I. Harris, 1993; and Lorde, 1984/2007).

3.1.1.4. The puzzle of invisibility

Richard Dyer (1997) points out that for the racial hierarchy to work, whites must be *seen to be* white, and yet "whiteness as race resides in invisible properties and whiteness as power is maintained by being unseen" – so puzzling, he calls it a "paradox" (Dyer, 1997, p. 45). Visibility and invisibility are in a dialectic relationship that can make Black people invisible to white people *as* full human agents, such as Fanon's racial epidermal schema (1952/2008),

or altogether, like Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952/2008). Taylor, who builds his theory of whiteness around Marilyn Frye's (1983) coinage 'whitely' – says that 'whiteliness' makes the "the perspectival nature of [whitely] perspectives" invisible, meaning that "the way they see the world just is the way the world is" (P. C. Taylor, 2004, p. 230). Invisibility in Taylor's terms is thus not just about what they see and what they don't see, but about whether they are seen to be seeing, or not seeing.

These complex and important arguments have become flattened into the vague idea that whiteness is invisible, and that it is the mission of whiteness studies to make it visible. This project "only makes sense from the point of view of those for whom it is invisible" (Ahmed, 2004b) – i.e., for white people. But whiteness is not even 'invisible' in this sense for all white people, as Melissa Steyn points out, the "particular historical and political configuration in South Africa has meant that whites have never experienced their whiteness and the advantage it afforded them as invisible" (Steyn, 2005, p. 121). So whiteness studies cannot conceive of itself merely as being about the project of making whiteness visible, as (as Ahmed reminds us again) this has performative implications for the white anti-racist, who in the moment of seeing whiteness constructs themselves as having transcended it.

For Biko, whiteness is visible as "police brutality and intimidation [and] general harassment… soiled beyond recognition… a concept that warrants being despised, hated, destroyed" (Biko, 1978/2006, p. 77). Whiteness is a terror perpetrated by people "who think they can 'safely' imagine that they are invisible to black people" (hooks, 1992, p. 340). How can these two perspectives exist side by side? Surely the terrorist knows that they are visible to the people they terrorise? How can the terroriser be so unremarkable? This curious duality may be considered from the vantage point of Hannah Arendt's notion of the "banality of evil", which was built on her observation that the Nazi Adolf Eichmann was not a monster,

but “terrifyingly normal” (Arendt, 1977/2006, p. 276). His work to exterminate the Jews was “institutionalized, depersonalized and mundane” (Swift, 2009, p. 132; see also Borba & Milani, 2017 for application of this concept to cisnormativity in clinical settings). These systems of mundane terrorism function at least partly through refusing to see. The suffering of the victims cannot be seen as the suffering of full human beings, as this would dehumanise the perpetrators. They must therefore be reduced to two-dimensional caricatures, or animals or, in the final solution, numbers of trains and quantities of gas. To recognise them as humans would be to become infected with their suffering.

3.1.1.5. The puzzle of agency

A thicket of puzzles for whiteness studies grows in the dialectic between structure and agency (see McKenzie, 2011). These puzzles arise from on-going controversies between structural and cultural explanations of race and racism (see Golash-Boza, 2016). The disagreements play out along related and often parallel axes, contrasting whiteness as fixed, natural, material, necessary, and essential on the one side, to whiteness as fluid, social, immaterial, historically contingent, and chosen on the other. At issue fundamentally is the question of human agency: what can we actually do about race?

Critics of whiteness studies frequently warn of the risk of “‘substantialising’ whiteness, re-centring it as a fixed category of experience, thus reifying it, lending it an essence” (Hook, 2011, pp. 22–23), making it seem “an object, a monolith, a fetish, in the singular, an ‘essential something’” (Ahmed, 2004c); in short, a “natural” category (Garner, 2007, p. 8). On the other hand, whiteness is not so fluid nor so contingent (Garner, 2007, pp. 8–9) that, as Paul Gilroy suggests, we can think ourselves “beyond race” (Ahmed, 2004b).

Debates over the scope of individual agency – or what Marxists might refer to as the potential for *voluntarism* – are thus relevant to this axis. Showing that the current form of whiteness is contingent on history may suggest that an agent can merely shrug it off. Roediger's (1991) location of 19th century working class Irish people as a "prewhite ethnic," for example, provides these whites with "discursively black origins" (Wiegman, 1999, p. 137). Because whiteness is both historically contingent, and irreducible to skin colour, he concludes that it may be *refused in the present*: it is in the class interests of the white proletariat to reject their racial identity in favour of class struggle (1999, p. 138). Roediger aims to *abolish* whiteness through acts of the will. For Wiegman, he ascribes "no psychological depth to whiteness as a social construction, merely an interpretative inscription based on skin that can be consciously refused" (1999, p. 142).

If whiteness is not an essence, can it be refused? Ahmed limits the scope of agency: a racial category "shapes what we can do, even if it does not fully determine our course of action" (Ahmed, 2004b). Taylor also keeps his theorisation of whiteliness flexible on this point. There is room for white people to reject *seeing* the world in a 'whitely' way, he says, it is merely unlikely that they will (P. C. Taylor, 2004, pp. 229–230). This is because, as Cheryl Harris (1993) has argued in *Whiteness as Property*, white people tend to take their existing allocation of privileges and possessions as the baseline for defining "rights". This explains why "proposals to distribute social goods in ways that deviate from the old, asymmetric, racist distributions strike whitely perceivers as unjust" (P. C. Taylor, 2004, p. 230).

It is important to note, with Moreton-Robinson, that the material dimension of whiteness is reflected in how the (white) private property owner is "embedded in everyday discourse" (Moreton-Robinson, 2008, p. 83) and "emerges as a mode of rationality" in knowledge production and other everyday power relations (Moreton-Robinson, 2006, p. 388). Similarly,

when Biko rails against the white "monopoly on comfort and security" (Biko, 1978/2006, p. 76) in apartheid South Africa it is not merely the racist laws of a particular government he has in his cross-hairs, but the internal logic of "structural oppressions resulting from capitalist modes of dominance" (Hook, 2011, p. 24). On this reading, while whiteness is clearly the result of historical contingency, it remains a material reality that is both produced by and produces white identities intimately connected to unequal distributions of social goods such as comfort, security, wealth, including, of course, land. To return to Vice (2010) in this context, it is hard to see how material distributions could be addressed by a hypo-political morality, or by work on the damaged self. One can imagine a student activist saying to her: I don't need you to feel shame, I need you to give back the land.

3.1.1.6. The puzzle of particularity

The final puzzle can also be seen as inherent in Dyer (1997). Part of the power of whiteness is understood as how it becomes encoded in apparently universal norms that govern the rights and affordances of the human being that are not particular to any body. And yet, the very universality of whiteness can itself be read as a "social geometry […of…] infinite particularity," which presents us with another "paradox" (Wiegman, 1999, p. 118). This infinite particularity depends of course on cultural production: it is in Western cultural production that white people are represented first as their profession, or their passion, or their beauty, or their talent, before they are represented as white, while Oprah Winfrey will remain a Black billionaire, and Barack Obama was a Black president. The hope that study of particular white groups such as "white trash" or the "prewhite ethnic" Irish will puncture the illusory universality of whiteness, sending it shrivelled to the ground, does not take account of the elasticity of whiteness in moving between the particular and the universal. These particularised forms of whiteness are neither "essentially non-essentialist" nor have they

disaffiliated “from the powers and pretensions of universality” (Wiegman, 1999, p. 147). This critique was also made by Biko in the 1970s, when he was faced with white people trying to convince Black people that they were not racist, disaffiliating themselves from other whites by claiming their individual uniqueness. His response was clear-sighted: he insisted that whites are in fact a “homogeneous” (1978/2006, p. 19) group, homogenised in fact by their tacit acceptance of the privileges that whiteness offers.

Proving particularity turns out merely to reproduce hegemony. Wiegman observes that for whiteness, particularity is the “necessary contradiction that affords to white power its historical and political elasticity” and that it is for this reason that, instead of trying to particularise whiteness, scholars should focus on “the ways that being particular will not divest whiteness of its universal epistemological power” (Wiegman, 1999, pp. 149–150).

3.1.2. Hegemonic Whiteness

Talk of “universal epistemological power” brings us smoothly into a discussion of hegemony. While I do not claim that focusing on whiteness as hegemonic decisively solves all six of these puzzles, I do claim that it provides scholars with clear and useful theoretical perspectives on them. The foregoing section thus serves as motivation for introducing the language of “hegemonic whiteness”.

The analytical potential of the term “hegemonic” remains latent when it is used merely as a synonym for “dominant”. The theoretically rich Gramscian conception of hegemony served as the kernel for Connell’s (1987) conception of “hegemonic masculinity,” and it was in conversation with this application and directly with Gramsci that talk of hegemony and race has evolved. Perhaps the earliest robust model of hegemonic whiteness was presented by Amanda Lewis (2004), who used it to solve a similar set of theoretical and methodological

puzzles to the six puzzles presented above. The term had of course been used earlier (e.g. Gold, 2004; Makabe, 1999; Steyn, 2001b), and also critiqued. Patricia Hill Collins uses a specific notion of hegemony in the way she describes the racial order, while warning that hegemony inappropriately historicized or over-emphasized can become suffocating, making it seem all-powerful, and distracting from its potential as a theory of social change driven by human agency (Collins, 2000, p. 51). After all, Gramsci was fundamentally concerned with the ways in which people can and do drive social and economic change (Nteta, 1987).

Hegemony in the Gramscian sense must be understood in contradistinction to the domination of the state; it is a social force marshalled by powerful social groups that elicit the "spontaneous consent" of the masses to the direction of social life (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12). Gramsci's argument is that no state can dominate all of the people all of the time; a guiding ideology is required that appears to articulate the interests of all classes in society. If we are to take this as one of the fundamental ideas, then it is clear that a concept close to hegemony informed the thought of Biko[5]: the mind of the oppressed, he wrote, is "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor" (Biko, 1978/2006, p. 68); police and state violence was a part of the apartheid equation, but the decisive factor was the oppressed's "acquiescence in their own subjugation" (Nteta, 1987, p. 58). After Biko, after apartheid, the on-going work of maintaining white supremacy continues in South Africa; this work, as Elizabeth Spelman (1999) argues in the American context, is work that white people demand of the people they do not consider to be white.

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[5] One scholar at least has called Biko a "Gramscian" (e.g. Gorlier, 2002), though Biko does not mention Gramsci in his own writings. Chris Nteta (1987) argues that both Biko and Gramsci "take seriously the power of human subjective intervention to prevail over structural barriers" (Nteta, 1987, p. 56).

Considering the violent consequences for refusing to do the work, this acquiescence should not be considered blameworthy. The consent of the masses is secured only tenuously – it is backed up with the threat of violence. Whiteness however secures this consent, and masks this violence, by inscribing itself as "rational," "natural," and "common-sense". Whiteliness, according to Taylor, relies on "tapping into a system of ideas and images that provides a kind of commonsense background for much of Western culture" (P. C. Taylor, 2004, p. 230). For Matthew Hughey (2015), hegemonic whiteness is a "shared understanding [that] constitutes a 'net' – simultaneously constraining and guiding the ongoing formation of one's white social identity through everyday social interactions"; the system through which "a host of actions are simultaneously enabled and constrained" (Hughey, 2015, p. 220). In this context, whitely perspectives just seem like the logical ones.

Incisively, again, Biko gets to the heart of this "logic". When forced to wage the liberation struggle alongside white liberals, he writes, "the blacks were made to fit into a pattern largely and often wholly, determined by white students [and hence] our originality and imagination have been dulled to the point where it takes a supreme effort to act logically even in order to follow one's beliefs and convictions" (Biko, 1978/2006, p. 19). The 'pattern' into which Black students are being forced is the institutional, discursive pattern of white supremacy that skews the social space to their advantage. Biko sees that this quite literally also skews *logic*: to fit their pattern is to *illogically* abandon your own convictions, and yet getting out from under this suffocating and dulling structure requires a "supreme effort".

Whiteness is able to appear as "common-sense" because of the role it plays in structuring social space, setting meanings and the rules governing meaning-making. It therefore makes sense that racism is often studied as a kind of "racial grammar" that structures intelligibility, governing everyday life (Bonilla-Silva, 2012). The racial hierarchy must be discursively

produced (Hall, 1992, 2001; Kaposi & Richardson, 2017; Reisigl & Wodak, 2000) and defended (Foster, 2009). This discursive work draws master narratives that present racial hierarchies as natural and unchanging, attempting to fix the inherent instability, artificiality, and contingency of social identities such as whiteness through presenting them as natural and unchanging (Steyn, 2001b, p. xxxviii).

While whiteness needs to be sustained by people, the patterns of social roles and ordered systems of meaning that result from its repeated articulation become sedimented, meaning that its everyday operation is fairly independent of individual agency (P. C. Taylor, 2004, p. 230). In hegemonic systems, subjects both produce and are produced by discourse (Althusser, 1971). That is why it takes a "supreme effort" for Biko to resist reproducing the logic of whiteness – he is "hailed into" white supremacy as a discursively produced subject. To speak outside of what people think of as logical or common-sense is to make your position unintelligible; the boldness to think outside of hegemony turns the subject into an oddity, a clown figure[6].

Hegemonic whiteness as a theoretical framework is often invoked to explain specific power structures that persist over *time* and *space*. In terms of space, Hughey (2010) studies two (white) groups – one explicitly racist, and one explicitly anti-racist – both in Detroit in the United States. Although the groups are oriented in politically opposing directions, they employ a discourse that has an overarching hegemonic structure. Thus contiguous, coexisting ideologies with different content may interpellate white subjects synchronically into the same form of hegemonic whiteness. Hegemonies have also been studied as being delimited by

[6] The popular ravings of Slavoj Žižek may be understood as part of a conscious effort to play the fool, and thus as conscious counter-hegemonic strategy.

specific spatial dynamics. Nolan Cabrera (2009) for example argues that higher education in California incubates a specific form of hegemonic white masculinity in the university space. There are also hegemonies specific to particular nation-spaces. In Sweden, for example, hegemonic whiteness has evolved over decades in response to specific historical developments. The supposed end of a mono-racial society in that context, it is argued, quite far from undermining hegemony, has created the new hegemonic formation of "white melancholia" (Hübinette & Lundström, 2015a).

Synchronically, then, it seems possible to propose that if hegemonic whiteness is a global phenomenon, it has internal borders separating California from Sweden. These borders may however be 'soft' borders, as empirical studies suggest an overarching structure that makes whiteness portable across noncontiguous space (Halvorsrud, 2017; Lundström, 2017). Whiteness is thus theorised as a kind of globally tradeable currency, a MasterCard that works in almost any setting. The same insight seems to apply across time, irrespective of political change. One of the central motivators for new research on whiteness is thus its "morphing" properties in response to historical developments (Duster, 2001). Tobias Hübinette and Catrin Lundström (2011, 2015b) have shown in the Swedish context that political rhetoric can range from naked scientific racism to solemn commitment to anti-racism and multiculturalism, without dramatically affecting the underlying racial regime (see also Mulinari & Neergaard, 2017). Rhetoric around race undergoes significant change, and yet social outcomes don't. In South Africa, the end of apartheid resulted in increases in white prosperity and between-group inequality. How could this happen? Clearly discursive shifts happen, but why does so little change?

This has been perhaps the defining theme of research on race in the United States. The time before and after the Clinton administration (as the lingering effect of the Civil Rights

movement) signalled a shift to the denial of racist beliefs or intentions (Bonilla-Silva, Foreman, & Padin, 1998), necessitating the theorisation of structural models of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 1997); these models in turn apprehended "color-blind racism" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) or racism masked as "color-blind egalitarianism" (Gallagher, 2015). The Obama years signalled the beginning of the "postracial" (Goldberg, 2015), which served only as cover for the persistence of racism, so that people had to get over their "Obama hope hangovers" (Bonilla-Silva & Ray, 2015). Use of the term 'hegemony' and its cognates thus seems to arise in the U.S. context at least from a frustration with the persistence of the underlying structure despite political and cultural changes. Whiteness adapts organically and quietly, "without much fanfare" (Bonilla-Silva, 2012), a signal of its enduring hegemony. The resurgence of blatant racism in the United States and Europe – with Nazis marching on the streets of Swedish cities, and the Ku Klux Klan resurgent under Donald Trump – will probably soon get its own catchphrase in the literature, but it is arguably just a newly evolved (or atavistic) form of the same white hegemony. Instead of trying to catch up with the morphing properties of whiteness in the present, the study of hegemonic whiteness might usefully shift its attention to how whiteness manages to inscribe itself on the future (see A. Baldwin, 2012).

A few vantage points for consideration of the six puzzles have thus already suggested themselves. First, we should expect that researchers – especially, but not only, white researchers – would be hailed into hegemonic power structures even as they claim to be dismantling them. A properly theorised engagement with the dialectic between the subject position and articulatory practice of the researcher is thus a priority. Second, careful attention to disciplinary discourses as themselves implicated in over-arching power structures requires that it is never assumed that "critical" work is also counter-hegemonic: our practice is hegemonic until proven otherwise. Third, there can be no assumption that a "harmed" or

"vulnerable" or "damaged" whiteness is any less dangerous. Fourth, the "invisibility" of whiteness is revealed as a pernicious essence, artificially "fixing" a social identity. Fifth, individual agency is problematized as produced by discourse, and attention is drawn to the "supreme effort" of Biko, or Žižekian clowning, that counter-hegemonic practice demands. Sixth, a theory of hegemony is also a theory of change over time and space, and so we can accommodate a patchwork whiteness that is both separate from any particular part and yet produced as a universal effect by the whole.

These are only guidelines, and there is one epistemological problem that they do not address. This problem arises from the potential challenge to the picture I have sketched above from a more traditional Marxist position. There is, on this account, a much better and simpler explanation for the persistence of what I have been calling hegemonic whiteness, and that is that 'whites' over the history of colonialism developed a class consciousness along racial lines that naturalised the domination of others; the problem is clearly that this class/race identity continues to be produced by their daily relations of production. Whiteness may be a complex and evolving discursive formation, but it cannot be dismantled discursively. Discourse (or more accurately, ideology) is ultimately caused by the relations of production, and causation does not flow from ideology to the economy. On this view it is clearly important to study ideology, but only insofar as this study reveals the underlying violence of the economic relations that ideology masks.

This is a compelling and important objection. To address it, I will present in the next section some of the key debates in Marxism that in my view justify the adoption of a specifically *postfoundationalist* approach to the theory of hegemony, which I will present as the theoretical framework for my study. I will argue that discursive change, premised on the

notion of discourse as a material practice, can indeed shift economic relations, and that even research projects may tangibly erode the hegemonic nature of whiteness.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

I will sketch below the rationale for approaching hegemonic whiteness through "postfoundational" discourse theory (Marttila, 2016), an approach to political discourse developed in the work of Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, and others in the so-called "Essex School" (Howarth, Norval, & Stavrakakis, 2000; Laclau, 1990; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985/2014; Mouffe, 1979). In keeping with the theoretical tenets of this approach, I will not present it as an Archimedian point outside of the social: it is a theory that is as much implicated in social relations of domination as any other. To keep these relations in view, I will discuss the problems of importing Essex to Africa in the first part of this section, before presenting the theory in the second. In the third part, I will introduce additional theoretical tools from other traditions that aid in connecting the theory to the specific research question.

3.2.1. "What could Essex know about Africa?"

The next section presents some quite arcane debates in Western Marxism dominated by white people: Marx and Engels, Gramsci and Althusser, Laclau and Mouffe. What could these theorists possibly have to say that offers anything new or useful to theorisations of race that have been originated in decolonial, racialized settings that they did not really engage with? How can one expect to sweep away racism with "mother Europe's broom" (Nzwegu, 1999)?

It is not my contention that these theorists had anything useful to say about colonialism or race specifically. For the most part, the debate they were having revolved around why there was no successful Communist Revolution in Western Europe, or, in the 1970s and 1980s, why Marxist theory seemed to have lost both explanatory and visionary power. In the course

of this debate, some compelling models of how human meaning-making interacts with our material conditions were developed. I treat these models as a useful substrate for actual theorists of the racial order, such as Ahmed, Biko, and Fanon.

Still, there are a number of dangers inherent in my approach. Connell (2007), from a positionality not very dissimilar to mine, argues that sociological research tends to betray its epistemological commitment to Western hegemony in four ways: (1) by failing to mark the limitations and contextual applications of ideas, merely writing as if conclusions may be universally applied; (2) by reading 'data' gathered at the colonial periphery through 'theory' developed in the metropolitan centre; (3) by excluding the interpretive power of thinkers and theorists outside of a narrow 'northern' canon; and (4) through what she calls "grand erasure" where "the formation of social institutions and systems [are theorised] from scratch, in a blank space" (Connell, 2007, pp. 44–47). These blank spaces have no histories or power relations; they are the "ideal" political and social theories we encounter in the liberal tradition. As she points out, "*[terra] nullius*, the coloniser's dream, is a sinister presupposition for social science" (Connell, 2007, p. 47). Colonialism can be understood as a process of double erasure, removing the people from the land, and then removing or excluding the meaning and knowledge-making processes associated with this dispossession.

It is very demanding to hold all four of these hazards in mind at the same time. Inevitably, I apply Althusser/Gramsci/Laclau[7]/Mouffe as *theory* to South African *data* (2) in a way that affords their theory a kind of provisional universality (1). I say provisional, however, as I can

[7] "But he's Brazilian!" is not, in my opinion, a helpful observation. What may look from the outside like a "South-South philosophical dialogue" (Dussel, 2013) is not: Laclau clearly takes explaining global discursive and economic formations as his purview, and is not concerned with presenting a 'Southern' perspective.

only push back with careful attention to local interpreters and theorists of the colonial situation as reliable guides. I can triangulate my own data with Gramsci, for example, and Biko[8]. Furthermore, I take Connell's advice to theorists to "sink roots into the mud of particular landscapes" and to *ground* their theory where "their boots are planted" (Connell, 2007, p. 206) as fundamental. Connell herself is only connected to her homeland, Australia, through a history of dispossession that enabled her presence: it is in paying attention to this specific history, to the connections of histories and peoples and meanings to land, that she hopes to generate "southern" theory.

Connell admits that avoiding all four gestures is difficult, if not impossible (Connell, 2007, p. 48). While eschewing universalising and decontextualizing gestures, I will not abandon the practice of generalisation, the "lifeblood of social science as a cultural formation" (Connell, 2007, p. 207). Knowledge about social division (along racial or ethnic lines) seen through the prism of the land, whether produced in Benin, Australia, Sweden, or India, may be relevant as long as it is appropriately contextualised within its specific setting.

The orientation of the theory I will present below must furthermore be troubled by epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009), which entails, among other things, rejecting disembodied knowledge in order to centre a "body-politics of knowledge," and shifting from supposed geographies of reason to a "geo-politics of knowledge" (2009, pp. 165–166) – a concept not unlike Connell's 'grounded' theory. The presentation in the third part of this section of

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[8] Connell's own citation practice leaves something to be desired. While she cites both Biko and Plaatje, it is unclear whether she has considered contemporary theorists working to uncover the coloniality of knowledge. She cites neither Ramón Grosfoguel on subaltern epistemologies and global coloniality (2005) nor Walter Mignolo on the geopolitics of knowledge (2002). The Comaroffs' (2012) "theory from the South," in turn, cites Connell without meaningfully engaging with her ideas.

Ahmed and Fanon must therefore not be taken merely as political citation practice, but as a crucial orientation of this theoretical perspective around bodies and spaces that come with histories of dispossession and oppression.

3.2.2. From Ideology to Discourse: "It's all about the base"

The argument will now move quite quickly through the complex but informative debate that saw a post-Marxist conceptualisation of *discourse* grow out of Marxist theories of *ideology* (see Purvis & Hunt, 1993 on the shift from 'ideology' to 'discourse'). Attention to the terms of this argument is vitally important for critical race theory, as it ultimately revolves around how social and political change happen, and how social meaning-making interacts with the materiality of economic[9] life. The harm of race after all comes largely from the way that it distributes social goods such as wealth and health, so any analysis that fails to account for the economic base of race and racism must be rejected outright.

3.2.3. Marx & Engels

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1846/1970) presented the German idealist tradition inspired by G.W.F. Hegel as laughable. In identifying *ideas* as the fundamental driving force of human history, Max Stirner, Ludwig Feuerbach & co. had gone so far down the rabbit hole of a free-thinking and liberatory philosophy, they suggested, that they were like men who believed they could prevent themselves from drowning merely by disabusing themselves of

[9] It is useful to remember the ancient Greek root of 'economy', which referred to the everyday management of our households or 'hearths': working and eating, producing and reproducing.

the "superstition" of gravity (1846/1970, p. 37)[10]. Idealism misses the fundamental, material point: that the things people think depend on their *material* conditions. Because consciousness is "conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process" (1846/1970, p. 47), attention to this life-process should be the real work of philosophers. This attention reveals that it is the daily conditions of working, eating, drinking, and sleeping and our relations with other working, eating, drinking people that determine what we think about the world. Our ideas arise from our material conditions.

While Hegel was right about history being driven by the synthesis of contradictory forces, these forces were not *spiritual* but *material*, and the whole dialectic therefore had to be turned on its head. So when Marx writes in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach that "philosophers have only *interpreted* the world […] the point, however, is to *change* it" (Marx, 1888/1959, p. 245 original emphasis) he must be understood as making a materialist point. Marx is not merely rallying philosophers to activism, he is clarifying the *nature* of philosophy: you can't really change dominant ideas without changing the underlying material conditions. This is the heart of the concept of the *philosophy of praxis*: we think things because we do things. Furthermore, the things we think (our consciousness) are not just thought by us, but by all who are on the same side of the productive relation under a particular mode of production. Consciousness thus arises at the level of *social class*.

This consciousness may be no more than an 'illusion' that makes life under conditions of exploitation more bearable. Religion, for example, is the "sigh of the oppressed creature, the

[10] This may seem like a silly joke for them to make. But consider that the important English Enlightenment thinker William Godwin (partner of Mary Wollstonecroft and father of Mary Shelley) believed that thought alone would greatly prolong human life, and end the need for sexual reproduction (Porter, 2004, p. 431).

heart of a heartless world" (Marx, 1844/1959, p. 263). It works as "opium" precisely to the extent that class suffering needs the dulling effect; it serves as the *illusion* of happiness that prevents us from accessing our *real* happiness, outside of the realm of capitalist exploitation. Our notions of private property are also like a religion: we would find it unjust that the owners of the means of production hoarded the surplus value of our labour unless we had somehow disconnected the value of our labour from the value of a commodity, turning the commodity into a "fetish" (§4 of Marx, 1867/2011), an arbitrary human creation presented as an ironclad matter of fact. It is to the extent that we as a class accept this injustice as a natural part of the world that we do not wage a revolution. And yet, under certain conditions, we are able to see through this illusion and indeed we do wage revolutions. So a significant part of Marx's project was about explaining why and under what conditions revolutions happen, i.e. why communism was "haunting" Europe (Marx & Engels, 1959, pp. 4–5).

For a revolution to happen, there had to be sufficient urban concentration of the working 'proletariat' class, and industrial overproduction ('surpluses') that exacerbated contradictions (e.g. I work harder to produce more, staying poor while watching the factory owner grow rich). The development of a revolutionary proletarian consciousness *depends* on these two factors (Mouffe, 1979, p. 173). But did this mean that the revolution itself would happen spontaneously out of these historical conditions? Or was it an act of the will, driven by revolutionary voluntarism? The ambiguity here has to do with how we conceive of the role of ideology. If ideology is just illusion, and we rip away the ideological veil with an 'objective' examination of our interests, will we as a class rise up? Or is 'ideology' so constrained by material conditions that one must wait until they are conducive? The "negative" notion of an illusion, or the more "sociological" notion of a necessary result (Larraín, 1979; Purvis & Hunt, 1993) dogged debates in Marxism, and pointed to the underlying problem that Marx's

theory of ideology just wasn't very clear at all. In fact, these and other ambiguities proved to be "the main impediment to the development of Marxism, both as a theory and as a political movement" (Mouffe, 1979, p. 168).

The problem for Marxists after Marx can be reduced to a choice between the Scylla of economism and the Charybdis of an autonomous superstructure. The latter option forces the abandonment of historical materialism, and thus of Marxism altogether. Strict economism, on the other hand, stalls the revolution, as it becomes unclear what the role of individual agents are except to wait for the right economic conditions. Economism consists of two related propositions. The first (*epiphenomenalism*) is that the sociopolitical is the *phenomenon* of an economic *essence*: it can no more *cause* economic change than wetness can cause water. It is a "superstructure" that is "a mechanical reflection of the economic base" (Mouffe, 1979, p. 169). The second (*reductionism*) is that ideological formations are reducible to the class belonging of the social actors within them. The strong form of economism, associated with Karl Kautsky and the Second International[11], leaves would-be revolutionaries sitting around waiting for the revolution to happen *spontaneously* (hence, economism is associated with *spontaneism*). This theoretical problem for Marxism was only squarely addressed in the late 1960s and 1970s by Louis Althusser, and in the work of Antonio Gramsci, whose work became more easily available in Althusser's time.

[11] An organisation including the Communist Parties of around 20 countries that was formed in Paris in 1889 that petered out during the First World War in 1916

3.2.4. Althusser & Gramsci

Althusser explained why Lenin's 1917 revolution had not satisfied *any* of Marx's conditions, and yet succeeded. Economism, he argued, was based on a faulty reading of Marx's inversion of the Hegelian dialectic (Althusser, 1967). Hegel had reduced entire societies and ages to an abstract, singular idea which could be negated by a similarly singular antithesis, and then "sublated" into the new, simple principle. In inverting the dialectic, Marx could not have been so naïve as to believe that the whole complexity of human social life reduces to the simple contradiction of 'Labour' versus 'Capital' (1967, p. 26). Our material practices include our social lives, our occupations and our preoccupations, as well as the forces of production, and these are all intertwined in the contradictions of unfair social relations. In a specific historical conjuncture, which simply refers to the balance of forces and contradictions at the time, many contradictions come together into a "ruptural unity" (1967, p. 23), and so it is inaccurate to speak of a purely economic contradiction *entirely determining* a rupture. We should instead think of ruptures as being overdetermined by the *fusion* of many contradictions, determined only (as Althusser reminds us Engels said) "in the last instance" by the economic base. This describes what Lenin did in 1917. Althusser thus claimed to be able to explain the efficacy of political action in a Marxist framework. But what does "in the last instance" mean? Does this not all just boil down to an economic explanation again? We will return to this question shortly.

Althusser's other significant contribution was to theorise ideology as a *material* practice that produces subjects (Althusser, 1971). We submit to the particular rules and common-sense philosophies of the cultures of our professions, or apparatuses such as the police or schools or factories, in a process that is constitutive of what we come to think of as our subjectivity (1971, pp. 127–128). Ideology resides in the various *obviousnesses* of our daily lives. We

recognise ourselves as we *recognise* that something is obviously true, and it is in this act of recognition that we are interpellated as subjects by and of a particular ideology (1971, pp. 160–162). Again, this recognition is not in a simple economic dimension: we are interpellated as sexed, gendered, or raced; as members of a nation; or even as people with particular tastes. Subject positions, through recognition, mutually imply ideological formations – i.e. we must understand them as interdependent (see Mouffe, 1979, p. 173). The problem with Althusser's understanding of subject formation however was that it seemed to be a little too stiff: if what we think of as our consciousness is produced by the dominant ideology, can there be any room for political agency? It was arguably only in Gramsci's theorisation of hegemony that this room was convincingly created (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 16).

Antonio Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony contains a *strategy* for revolutionary change. Imprisoned by Mussolini's fascists in 1926, Gramsci spent his time in jail comparing the failures and retreats of Communist parties in Germany and Italy in the 1920s to the relative success of the Russian revolution. As former head of the Italian Communist Party, he was convinced that spontaneism was a lost cause, but saw this as no reason to reject materialism. The economic base was certainly visible in the way that revolutions had swept across Europe: it just wasn't the only factor. Through close attention to Italy and other contexts he argued that the bourgeois class had captured the State *not* by simply imposing its class interests on the rest of society, but through a negotiated process of *accommodating* the interests of other groups in a way that facilitated their support. This central aspect of the concept of hegemony clearly rejects class reductionism, as groups with different productive relations are shown to share ideological space.

We have discussed some of the basic Gramscian concepts in §3.1.2. which we can now place in their appropriate context. Hegemony is clearly not the same thing as domination. For one

group to "have the function of 'domination' without that of 'leadership'" entails "dictatorship *without* hegemony" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 106 emphasis added). States are weakened if they spend all of their energies dominating the masses through force, and must secure the consent of critical groups of people, or be swamped by opposition. It secures this consent through inscribing its interests as universal, by reaching "a certain compromise equilibrium" (1971, p. 161) between groups. Hegemony is achieved through a sociopolitical process that yields an "indissoluble union of political leadership and intellectual and moral leadership" (Mouffe, 1979, p. 179). People do not acquiesce to be dominated unless they take this domination to be part of the way the world just is, a product of common-sense. Today's common-sense is born of yesterday's class struggles: opposing classes[12] produce "organic intellectuals"[13] (1971, p. 6) who elaborate a particular ideology, the success of which depends greatly on their ability to "assimilate" and "conquer" the "traditional intellectuals"[14] (1971, p. 10). Ideology is thus the crucial battlefield for control of the State.

In this battle, Gramsci specifies the national-popular elements of a particular ideology as particularly important for its success, because if a group's ideology can articulate the interests of enough of the nation, it may also secure their consent to lead[15]. Democracy loses the

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[12] Gramsci wrote under the threat of Fascist censorship, and so he usually speaks of "fundamental social groups" rather than "classes"

[13] Gramsci does not mean 'intellectual' in an elitist sense: he is talking about any politically engaged person who articulates a way of making sense of the world (see Althusser, 1967, p. 27 f. 23 for a discussion)

[14] These intellectuals articulate the common-sense notions of previous equilibria arising from historical struggles – intellectuals of the monarchy or the Church are examples

[15] If the working class can speak for the nation, argues Gramsci, their ideology is particularly stable because *nobody is dominated under working class ideology*. This is a similar point to Harris's (1993) and Wiegman's (1999) about the asymmetry of racial categories: some categories imply domination of others (white, bourgeois)

negative valency it acquired under Kautsky, for whom all elements of bourgeois ideology (including democracy) were *essentially* bourgeois. What *matters* is the *articulating principle* of the ideology – the set of *values* around which the elements are articulated – which, according to Gramsci, are determined by the *relations of production*. So we finally have a way to interpret Engels' and Althusser's idea that the economy is still the cause "in the last instance" – though, as Mouffe (1979) points out, the solution has been narrowed down to a particular area, rather than decisively pulled out of a hat. While it is tempting to think that a traditional materialist approach that successfully escapes economism is yielded by freeing up ideological elements from full determination by the economic, with only the central articulating principle being economically determined, this position ultimately recedes into a weaker but still reductive dualism . It was this dualism that was decisively addressed by Laclau and Mouffe's poststructuralist interpretation of Gramscian hegemony.

3.2.5. Laclau & Mouffe

While the 1917 Russian Revolution was grist to the mill of Gramsci and Althusser, it was a series of lectures in linguistics the previous year by Ferdinand de Saussure, combined with the influence of psychoanalysis, that was to interact with historical materialism to yield a "post-Marxist" approach to hegemony in the 1980s. After de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*, a simple word-to-meaning mapping of language onto reality became increasingly untenable. The parts of language were themselves arbitrary signifiers that had no necessary relation to the things they were supposed to signify; instead, their meanings arose from the differences between them (Culler, 1982). While for some time it was assumed that

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while others (Black, working class) do not. We should however remember Moreton-Robinson's (2008) warning that centring Black racial domination side-lines Native sovereignty.

there were fixed points in this structured web of meaning that connected social practice to a real and objectively knowable world, this assumption came under increasing attack from theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan. In the search for signifiers that could *transcend* meaning as difference, and provide a fixed point of reference, they came up empty-handed: all they found were lacunae and empty signifiers, signs like 'God' that seemed to contain so much, and yet served only as the receptacles for almost limitless projections of meaning (Culler, 1982; Howarth, 2013). All there is, is text (Derrida, 1976/2016). Other attempts to anchor representation to something concrete revealed that it was power, rather than any essence, that created the illusion of a fixed system of meaning; even claims about what was 'true' or 'false' were determined by power, rather than by being compared to an objectively observable reality (Foucault, 1991).

According to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, these 'poststructuralist' insights decisively addressed the "desperate contortions" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985/2014, p. viii) of Marxists trying to apply Althusser and Gramsci within the strictures of a "traditional" Marxism. Crucially, they argue that "determination in the last instance by the economic" distils eventually to traditional economism, as social space is "sutured" with no effect-causing remainder left after the economic has been subtracted from it (1985/2014, p. 85). The concept of a "suture" is important: sutures are everywhere and yet impossible; they represent attempts to permanently "fix" contingent meanings. In the standard poststructuralist formulation, any notion of a stable "sign" must fail, as the sign is "an impossible suture between signifier and signified" (1985/2014, p. 99).

They argue that in Althusser and Gramsci the "naïve positivism" (1985/2014, p. 91) of Marxism prevents their models from comprehensively explaining social and political life. Of the many problems that positivism causes, a central one is the naturalist vision of the

economy, the idea that an ontological line can be drawn between the "economic" and the "social" (1985/2014, p. 67). They insist that the elements of a discourse "appear articulated not like pieces in a clockwork mechanism [as in Althusser], but because the presence of some in the others hinders the suturing of the identity of any of them" (1985/2014, p. 91). "Economic" elements are in "social" elements and vice versa; their meanings cannot be permanently "fixed". Far from implying the non-existence of a material reality, they argue that this perspective explains how material reality is socially structured. While an earthquake happens independently of thought, whether it is constructed as a natural tectonic shift or "the wrath of God" depends on the way that the discursive field is structured (1985/2014, p. 94). The discursive field, in turn, is not some ephemeral psychological web: it is materialised (as in Althusser) through rituals, institutions, rules, and artefacts. The material world however cannot be *conceived* of by social actors outside of discourse, and what we think of as familiar material reality is revealed as "sedimented discourse" (Laclau, 1990, p. 35; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985/2014, p. viii; Marttila, 2016, p. 60). The processes of discursive change – of the sedimentation and dislocation of certain articulations and identities – must therefore be materialised in our analysis, and idealist/materialist dualism rejected outright.

Articulation thus "pierces the entire material density" of the world (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985/2014, p. 95) while being a very ordinary process, defined as: "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulating process" (1985/2014, p. 91). An element, once enchained in a discursive formation, becomes a "moment" of that discourse: its meaning is relative to the rest of the formation, and specifically to the "nodal point" – what in Gramsci was referred to as the central "articulating principle". The identities of the moments and nodal point have a necessary character in relation to each other; to change one part is to change the whole (1985/2014, p. 92). These

necessary relations do not prevent change only because the formation as a whole is not sutured: there are always free-floating elements available for articulation, and the "transformation of elements into moments is never complete" (1985/2014, p. 93).

The nodal points serve as partial fixations of meaning that make the flow of differences possible. In plain language, they are (temporary) still points that allow meaning to coalesce around them without being "transcendental" (1985/2014, pp. 98–99). Specific discursive formations interpellate specific subject positions: we as people both construct and are constructed by the formation. Moreover, far from eroding the centrality of human agency, or of making people seem like arbitrary fictions in the flow of history, they argue that their model allows true humanism precisely by opening up the space to deconstruct the category of 'Man' as the transcendental subject of European colonialism and of patriarchy (1985/2014, pp. 102–105).

It is because of the antagonisms between these subject positions, and because of the incomplete nature of the discursive formation as a whole, making society never completely transparent to itself (1985/2014, p. 115), that struggles for hegemony are possible. Articulatory practices are only hegemonic when the frontiers that separate the antagonistic forces are unstable; in fact, the character of a hegemonic formation is such that it embraces its opposing force, which accepts the system of basic articulations (1985/2014, pp. 121–124). For example, the framing of American race-relations along a Black/white axis within the sovereignty of the settler nation-state that Moreton-Robinson (2008) critiques meets these conditions. And it is quite clear in this example that (as Laclau and Mouffe would argue) there is not one, 'unitarian' basis, no ultimate nodal point, to this hegemonic struggle, as we would expect to see in Gramsci (1985/2014, pp. 126–127). Indeed, in Moreton-Robinson's analysis, the Black/white axis in whiteness studies *takes as given* the "system of basic

articulations" constituting the sovereign United States as a nation; we see that this particular discursive formation around one tradition in whiteness studies does not challenge the hegemony of colonial property rights in the U.S. Moving on to another example, it is clear that the legacy of the Civil Rights movement and actually implemented affirmative action policy in the United States in Harris's analysis (1993) rearticulated spatial relations between Black and white without undermining the system of white property entitlements that is the foundation of white supremacy in America. Indeed, multiple hegemonies with multiple centres (rather than the Gramscian assumption of an articulating principle that could be distilled to specific class interests) are the hallmark of modern societies in Laclau and Mouffe's analysis.

The hegemonic status of a discourse resides in its (temporary) ability to determine the discursive horizon, beyond which things no longer make sense: Laclau (1990) called this "the horizon of intelligibility". It is within this horizon that Gramsci's common-sense philosophy is reproduced. To theorise outside of a hegemonic discourse is, quite literally, to speak nonsense: to play the role of a Shakespearean fool (Milani, 2014a). To speak from here is to refuse the subject position into which rational people – people with common sense! - are hailed, and therefore to place oneself "outside" of "society" (which of course has no exteriority). Counter-hegemonic articulations may therefore be dismissed as nonsense by hegemonic formations, and the people who utter them ridiculed as clowns.

3.2.6. What's Marxist about Post-Marxism?

For traditional Marxists, the poststructuralist solution is no longer Marxism (see Geras, 1988); it is tendentious "postmodernism" (e.g. Eagleton, 2001). Key to these critiques is dissatisfaction with the obliteration in Laclau and Mouffe of *class* analysis. From my perspective, it is important to take seriously what Laclau and Mouffe say about returning to

the 19th century conditions of Marx and Engels's theorising: why did class analysis seem like a good idea at the time? The urgency of Marxism had a lot to do with the working conditions of the proletariat. A theory of oppression built on the Hegelian metanarrative about historical change was to a large extent bound to distil all antagonism to class antagonism. And it is absolutely true in my view that it is our material conditions – our own economies, i.e. "hearths", the amount of work we put in to feed the people we love, our daily joys and sorrows – that must be the fundamental unit of social analysis. What is utterly unsustainable, however, is the idea that patterning in our lived economies distils to a grand narrative in the relations of production. Our hearths themselves are sites of oppression, and bipolar relations of production shatter on the points of race, language, ability, nationality, and so on. The attempt to bind these multiple antagonisms into an overarching (white, masculine) narrative seems to me entirely continuous with the transcendental notion of 'Man' referred to above. Frantz Fanon dismisses Jean-Paul Sartre's attempts to shoehorn anti-racist struggle into a Marxist mould: he says Sartre ignores that the Black man "suffers in his body quite differently from the white man" (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 106). Moreover, Sartre and even Fanon perhaps have forgotten about people who are not "men"; people whose entanglement in discourse as bodies, desires, or abilities make their relation to some grand notion of the "proletariat" profoundly more complicated than was ever theorised by Marx. To be a true revolutionary today, and to continue to centre the material 'bases' of our lives, thus requires an outright rejection of naïve positivism, class reductionism, and economic determinism.

3.3. Building a toolkit

I will now go through some very brief sketches of how I plan to apply Laclau and Mouffe's notion of discourse in combination with other theoretical perspectives. The theory presented above is ontologically robust, but is profoundly inadequate when it comes to analysing actual

discourse. Some theoretical bridging is needed between the grand theory, and the actual data. For the most part, as I outline in the next chapter, I use the toolkit developed by Marttila (2016) based on the extended practice of the Essex School. Here, I give brief introductions to some non-Essex school theorists, making the case for their broad compatibility with postfoundationalism.

3.3.1. Discourse theory and psychology

I will mobilise the work of two critical psychologists from different traditions in my analysis: Frantz Fanon and Michael Billig. Both Billig and Fanon are, broadly speaking, responding to Freud. While Fanon is the preeminent theorist of race; Billig focuses on how we construct our psyches and our social worlds through language.

For Edward Said, Fanon is Freud's "most disputatious heir" (Said, 2003, p. 18). Fanon's genius lay in his combination of psychoanalysis, critical social analysis, and phenomenology into "a completely new theorization, where thought is originated from a sexed, colored, and colonised suffering body" (Dayan-Herzbrun in Gordon, 2015, p. xi). As we have already seen, theorisation from the body is in an important tension with traditional Marxism. Fanon's advance on Freud was critically to analyse the psychopathologies of race as not residing in the patient – i.e. search for the *ontogenetic* factors – but to look for them in society – i.e. identity the *sociogenetic* factors. While Fanon's sociodiagnosis spans grand historical, and personal phenomenological, themes, he describes how subjects are hailed into the racial order through "a constellation of postulates, a series of propositions that slowly and subtly – with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio – work their way into one's mind and shape one's view of the world of the group to which one belongs" (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 118).

Fanon thus seems to agree that subject formation happens through interpellation. He is however more a Gramscian/Althusserian than a post-Marxist, as escape from the dominant discourse is gestured to but not theorised. Fanon articulates the feeling of being trapped in a hegemonic discourse: the process of cultural imposition makes it normal for Black people to be anti-Black (1952/2008, pp. 150–151). Fanon himself cannot write without references to the Western canon, for "[there] is no help for it: I am a white man. For unconsciously I distrust what is black in me, that is, the whole of my being" (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 148).

Billig, on the other hand, applies the insights of the linguistic turn to analysis of the psyche. His position is that by paying close attention to the way that people construct the world in talk, we can understand how society itself is constructed. Specifically, his work on the imaginative dimensions of nationalism, and on the societal functions of humour, will be applied in conversation with post-Marxist theory. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) consider discursive psychology a parallel school to Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory. The field's focus is on "spoken language as constructions of the world oriented towards social action" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 96). While Billig's approach is certainly in a different tradition to post-Marxism, there appears to be no clear epistemological clash; while there is, for example, a distinction in discursive psychology between the discursive and non-discursive, it is "not as sharp" as Norman Fairclough's distinction in Critical Discourse Analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 103) and in my reading of Billig, does not play a meaningful role. Billig's critical theory of humour will be presented in detail in Chapter 5.

3.3.2. Discourse theory and *affect*

Another key theorist whose work I will deploy at a number of points in the analysis is Sara Ahmed, the feminist theorist whose work on race, embodiment, and affect responds to (in addition to the phenomenological canon) poststructuralists such as Judith Butler, and racial

psycho-phenomenologists such as Frantz Fanon. For Ahmed, Marxism is the "philosophy of wonder" because it analyses objects that appear to human perception in all their "sensuous certainty" as in fact being "the effects of history" (Ahmed, 2004c, pp. 179–180). In the discussion of whiteness studies above, it was clear that Ahmed both constantly undermines the reification of race, while theorising how the racial order is embodied, i.e., how it may be felt in everyday life. There is a clear affinity here to the post-Marxist approach, where the discursive formations of race must be theorised as material practices that interpellate subjects, while ultimately failing to fix their meaning.

In terms of affect theory, Ahmed has theorised the political dimensions of the production of feeling – in its adhesive and cohesive dimensions – between people. In postfoundational discourse theory, affect is a necessary condition for a subject's affiliation to the discourse; in fact we only accept discourses because we have a "passionate affinity" (Marttila, 2016, p. 38) for them. Affect supports the illusion that the relationship between signifier and signified is a natural one. We need only to go back to Moreton-Robinson's observations about the United States as a sovereign (white) nation disconnected from Native American sovereignty to see how crucial these affective attachments are for the maintenance of hegemonic discourses. As I shall show in Chapter 8, these affective attachments also connect people to space. In Ahmed's terms, the politics of good and bad feeling may be understood to interact directly with space, other people, and specific moments in a discourse, as attempts to unstick or stick people, places, or practices together or apart. Affect thus becomes both the indicator and the enabler of discursive struggle.

3.3.3. Discourse theory and *space*

Poststructuralist readings of Marx lend themselves well to the analysis of the spatial dimensions of social life, not least because of the critical role that Henri Lefebvre's

theorisation of the social production of space has played in influencing theoretical accounts of the semiotics of social space (e.g. Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010, p. 7; Lefebvre, 1991). The spatial dimensions of the racial order interact with embodiment and the reproduction of hegemonic discourses in a number of theorisations, many of which leverage Fanonian psychodynamics (Hook & Vrdoljak, 2002; Kipfer, 2007; Kipfer & Petrunia, 2009; Saldanha, 2010, 2015). I will also expand some of these analytical frameworks built for space to apply them to digital space, specifically to social media networks (see Jones, 2010).

3.4. Conclusion

The six puzzles of whiteness studies are brought into sharp focus through the prism of Laclau and Mouffe-style postfoundationalist discourse analysis. Careful attention to research *as articulation* reveals the danger of the (re)production of subject positions congruent with existing hegemonic racial orders. Tensions such as the in/visibility or universality/particularity of whiteness may now be apprehended as attempts to suture specific social identities. Whiteness may not be about the production of a specific 'white' subjectivity after all, and more about a dispersed pattern in discourse that enables historical antagonisms to be covered over by nodal points that need not explicitly name race as their articulating principle. And we have also outlined a clear model for how hegemonic struggle is possible, i.e., how the lack of a permanent fixing of identities makes room for dislocation and re-articulation.

Because multiple hegemonic nodal points are possible, we should be careful of assuming that 'hegemonic whiteness' is to be found in a discursive formation organising racial identities. The complex relations between hegemonies of race, class, gender, may mean that what we are now calling "hegemonic whiteness" may be the effect of a number of hegemonic

discourses. It will be the work of the analytical chapters of this monograph to unpack more precisely the nature of this hegemonic whiteness, and to gesture towards the counter-hegemonic action required to eradicate it.

Chapter 4: Methodology & Positionality

The previous chapter provided some of the key terms required to clarify the research question stated in Chapter 1. Setting out to research "hegemonic whiteness" and "land" in the South African context unavoidably co-constructs its research object, as I have offered no theoretically clear dividing line between the discursive field and the "brute facts" of social reality. Great care in applying the theory is thus required. Methodology, however, happens to be one of the acknowledged deficiencies of the Essex School. I therefore lay out (and respond to) at some length in §4.1. a methodology specifically designed to fill this gap. In §4.2. I describe step-by-step my decision-making process around a refined research question, how I decided which data to collect, and provide a broad outline of how the analysis may be "collocated". I then comment on the ethics of the type of approach I have chosen, in §4.3. before discussing the interaction of my social location with the research object in §4.4.

4.1. A postfoundationalist discourse analytical methodology

An oft-mentioned problem with applying Laclau and Mouffe's theory to actual discourse analysis is that, while it may be theoretically supercharged, it has a "methodological deficit" (Marttila, 2016, p. 118; see also Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 24, 49; and Fairclough, 1992, p. 93). A number of guidelines have developed to bridge this gap. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) suggest working imaginatively within the theoretical conceptualization of four categories:

- "key signifiers" such as nodal points (which organise meaning), myths (which organise social space), or master signifiers (which organise identity);
- "chains of equivalence" which (they say) invest key signifiers with meaning;

- "concepts concerning identity" such as identity, group formation, and representation; and
- "concepts for conflict analysis" such as floating signifiers, antagonism, and hegemony (2002, p. 50).

This approach has the unfortunate effect of turning the careful work they have done explaining how these concepts form part of an intricate whole into something of a methodological *smörgåsbord*, where you can start anywhere you like, and work out the logic as you go along. Furthermore, it is not clear how, for example, the meaning of the key signifiers may be apprehended purely through "chains of equivalence", which, after all, develop a discourse paradigmatically (i.e. multiplying the terms that can be substituted for each other), but not syntagmatically (i.e. expanding the realm of what can be signified). So, while they present a useful and creative toolkit, it leaves open questions about where to begin, and how to maintain the logical coherence of the whole.

Keeping the coherence of a discourse intact is the focus of the so-called "logics approach" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) to postfoundationalist discourse analysis. According to Marttila (2016), however, this approach requires deploying tools that are in an uncertain relation of consistency to Laclau and Mouffe's overarching theory, and, furthermore, fail to accommodate an analytically clear treatment of nodal points (2016, p. 121). Marttila does however agree with Glynos and Howarth on the starting point for analysis: identifying the discursive relations in which discursive identities are articulated, in relation to a specific discursive regime. This approach has the virtue of not imposing on a given discourse (up front at least) any complicated categories: analysis starts with a light touch – which identities are there in this discourse, and in what relations are they? – permitting the basic outlines of a discursive map to be drawn, which Marttila calls the "structural topology" of the discourse

(2016, p. 134). Discursive identities and discursive relations are furthermore "empirically applicable mid-range concepts" (Marttila, 2016, p. 124) in common across all discursive formations. This would seem to meet the requirement of not assuming too much about a discursive formation *a priori*. I will now consider these Marttila's three "phenomena" (2016, p. 124) of discourse in turn.

4.1.1. Discursive identities

Discursive identities are the components of an articulation that become the moments of a specific discourse from the available elements in a discursive field. Simply put, they are the units of meaning of any discourse. Articulations may be interpreted across paradigmatic (the equivalences evoked by a particular identity) and/or syntagmatic (the combination of identities into sentence-like associations) planes (2016, pp. 129–130). A discourse is not a disembodied object: it is a pattern that may be observed across the field of articulations. So, for example, in a patriarchal discourse we may expect to observe *syntagmatic* regularities such as "woman cares for child" as well as paradigmatic patterns such as "beautiful young woman" or "crazy old hag". It is important to remember that a relational ontology of meaning (as assumed in a poststructuralist approach) requires that none of the signifiers in these chains have objective meanings. Meaning is fixed only temporarily by differences between signs. They do not "possess" meaning; they have "meaning-potentials" (2016, p. 131). These potentials are valorised in a discursive web governed by nodal points that originate both protagonists and antagonists, a typology of which (taken from Marttila, 2016, p. 133) is provided in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1: A typology of discursive identities

Type	**Subtype**	**Phenomenal Characteristics**
Values	Ethical ideals	Paramount values and ideals embodied by nodal points

Type	Subtype	Phenomenal Characteristics
	Antagonistic others	Opponents and threats that endanger the attainment or sustainment of the ethical ideals
Subjectivity	Protagonist	Champions and protectors of the paramount ethical ideals
	Opponent	Subjects that endanger or obstruct the attainment of the ideal social order
	Helper	Subjects designated a supportive role vis-à-vis the attainment and maintenance of the ethical values
	Destinator	The assumed originator or instigator of a course of action
	Receiver	The individual or collective subject on behalf of whom social subjects conduct actions and interactions
Activity	Action	Activities associated with subject roles and institutions
	Interaction	Interactions and processes that interlink the activities undertaken by social subjects and interactions
Objects		Objects social subjects and institutions act upon and which they manipulate during their actions
Resources		Resources that support social subjects and institutions to accomplish their actions
Strategies		Strategies and means that social subjects and institutions utilize for the sake of achieving certain effects and outcomes

I will apply some of these in concepts to an example in §4.1.4. below.

4.1.2. Discursive relations

Laclau and Mouffe understand hegemony as subsisting in a dialectic between logics of equivalence and logics of difference. What do they mean? Usefully, given the orientation of this dissertation, they explain these logics through a racial/colonial example. In a colonised

society, they argue, the material practices of the coloniser – their customs, dress, their skin colour – form a chain of equivalence that reflects some underlying unity, an "identical something" underlying them all; these elements are not themselves moments in the discourse, as they are not distinguishable from each other through relations of difference; rather, the underlying unity is. Similar chains of equivalence distil the colonised to a single moment, and a perfect bipolarity, or antagonism, evolves where one or the other side has no positive reality. One is merely the negation of the other: "the colonizer merely is the anti-colonized" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985/2014, pp. 113–114). Hegemony cannot evolve in such a situation, as discursive frontiers are fixed.

The picture of this perfect negation is drawn only to tease out its inherent impossibilities and contradictions. The antagonism between coloniser and colonised is expressed in universal terms, and yet we know that in unsutured social space no social actor from either group will ever be able to transcend their own particularity. Political projects[1] that seek to bind subjects together through logics of *equivalence* face this inherent instability: their entire content is a negation, as their paradigm relies on a Manichean division of the world in which 'good' is entirely reducible to the negation of 'evil'[2]. Political projects[3] on the other extreme that seek to expand infinite particularity through logics of *difference*, where positive differential identities become possible in an ever-expanding combinatorial logic that pushes antagonism to the borders of the social, constitute rationalist utopianism, a "positivist illusion" (Laclau &

[1] Discourses that move towards this extreme are defined as "populist"

[2] This point is an echo of Frantz Fanon's diagnosis of the psychopathology of the coloniser: a "Manicheism delirium" is one of many colonial "errors of analysis" (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 141).

[3] Discourses that move towards this extreme are defined as "democratic"

Mouffe, 1985/2014, p. 116). A society of neatly articulated differences with no internal antagonisms would be a sutured society, entirely transparent to itself. The realm of hegemony – and the realm of most actually existing human societies – is in between these two extremes.

It is useful to understand Marttila's "relations of representation[4]" and "relations of contrariety" (2016, pp. 125–128) in contrast to Laclau and Mouffe's dialectic logics. Relations of contrariety distinguish the inside from the outside of a discourse; they form the condition of the possibility of a discourse being distinctive and durable: in short, they keep one discourse distinct from that which is not (or "contrary to") it. We might therefore think of these relations as inter-discursive. At the level of ethical orientation, plain *antagonism* can distinguish Discourse A (e.g. statism) from Discourse B (e.g. libertarianism). The relation between moments of the discourse and the 'unused' elements in the discursive field can be thought of as a relation of *dissociation*; while those of particular elements whose lack of "fit" in a discourse is not arbitrary, but governed by the internal logic of the discourse, are relations of *incommensurability*. Relations that bind the moments of a discourse together, on the other hand, are relations of *representation*. These relations are internal to a given discourse, as they *represent* its logic of commonality as exerted by a nodal point (2016, pp. 127–128). They constitute the internal dialectical dynamic of a discourse, and therefore include relations both of equivalence *and* of difference. The relationships between the terms of the discourse need not necessarily be thought of as "logical" in the strict sense, as this

[4] Confusingly, Marttila occasionally uses the word "equivalence" when talking about relations of representation, which can unhelpfully make relations of difference part of the logic of equivalence, rendering his attempted typology opaque.

would rely on the spurious assumption of human rationality; their relationship typically has the coherence of a good story rather than that of a mathematical theorem.

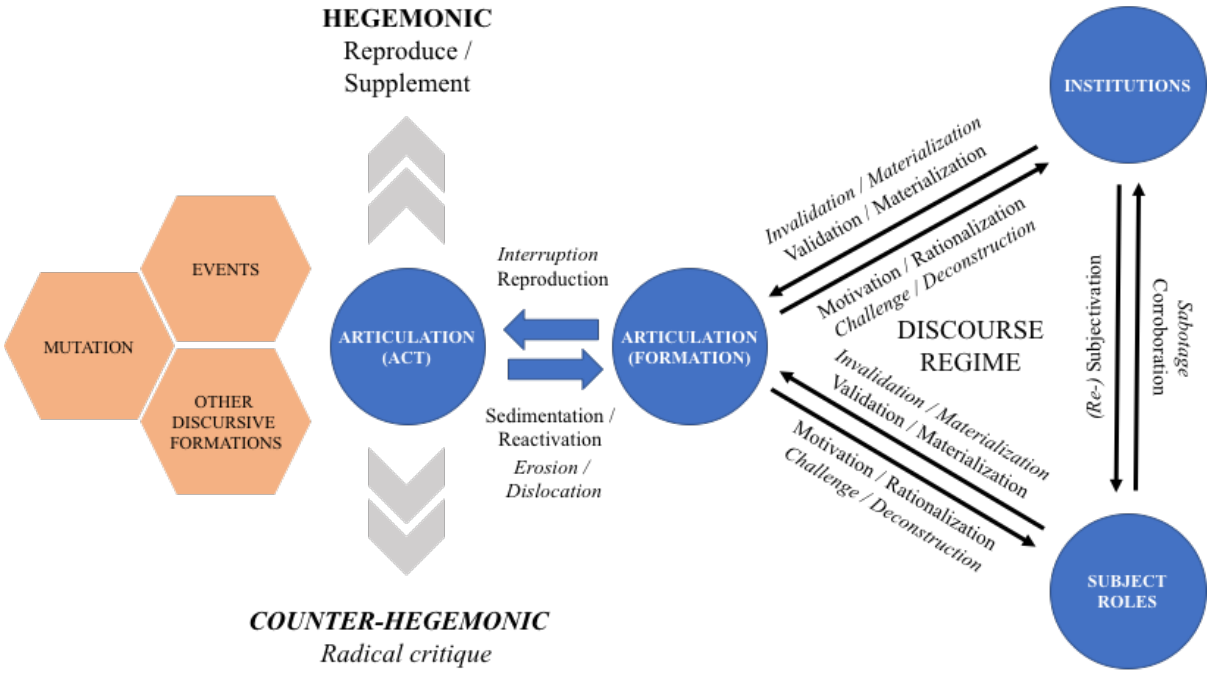
4.1.3. Discursive regimes

The concept of a discursive regime is informed by three premises: first, that a particular discursive formation is identified by its "relative regularity" across articulations; second, that this regularity arises from constraints on the enunciative possibilities of subject roles; and third, that these constraints or stabilising effects in discourse arise from reciprocal relations with discursive materiality (2016, pp. 124–125). It is however quite easy, in sketching these constraints and limitations, to fail to also show how they may be exceeded or overcome. Marttila's own model of the discursive regime (2016, p. 135 fig. 6.2) includes counter-hegemonic acts, but it is not clear from his description how they interact with the rest of the model. The model of a discourse regime needs to take into account that over the patterns that count as discourses, formed over space and time through a great number of articulations, specific hegemonic formations are potentially always in the process of being broken down even as they tend towards being reproduced. It is in the distinction between articulation as an act of meaning-making and articulation as a discursive formation that I wish to insert Marttila's more detailed descriptions of discursive change (Marttila, 2016, pp. 58–66).

Acts of articulation interact with the discursive regime as a whole, which is a triangular structure spanned between the discourse itself (the articulation as a formation), subject roles, and institutions. A particular articulation that structures the discursive formation in its specificity is sustained through *practices* of articulation, patterned discursive acts by social actors. These patterns may become *sedimented* in the discursive formation, which is to say that the historical conditions or motivations that animated the original articulation get covered over through habitual repetition. The act of articulation can also *reactivate* the

original conditions or motivations of the articulation as a formation. But at the same time as they sediment one discourse, they erode or dislocate a different formation: the 'vicious' triangle between formation, subject role, and institution always has two faces, i.e. what is formed, and what is not. The formation in turn serves to reproduce the articulation (or on the other side interrupt articulations of other possible discourses): it makes certain things (un)sayable or (un)thinkable, setting the limitations of enunciation. I therefore propose an adaptation of his model that makes more prominent both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic articulatory possibilities, in Figure 4-1.

Figure 4-1: An adapted model of a discourse regime: The vicious triangle



The formation constructs notions of the right kind of subject through a particular relationship between discursive identities. These subjects become empirically visible as discourse-generated "model practices" (2016, p. 136) – such as, in the earlier example, the woman caring for the child. These practices are regular acts of articulation that materially pattern the social space, thereby (in turn) sustaining and validating the discourse.

"Institutions" (which refers to the full range of codified human systems, from laws to mp3s to singing "Happy Birthday") are rationalised (or challenged) by the discursive formation: they are the material elaboration of the discourse itself, as mediated by the practices of social subjects. To clarify just how important this institutional materialization is, it is worthwhile to note that it may

> among other things, mean that institutions implement discursively motivated social hierarchies, enforce distributions of material resources such as financial assets, and symbolic resources such as access to socially influential subject roles (Marttila, 2016, p. 137).

Furthermore, institutional assumptions about who people are and what they want – what we can also call the "actor fictions" – feed into the subject roles as *subjectivation*. These subject roles in turn *corroborate* the institution. On the flipside in relation to what they are not, new subject roles can *sabotage* existing institutions, and new institutions can *re-subjectivate* existing subject roles.

In Laclau and Mouffe's theorization, it is clear that people are not permanently locked into a dominant ideology (as was said to be the case in the Althusserian model). Instead, "social subjects are continuously participating in problematizing and modifying already prevailing discourses" (Marttila, 2016, p. 58). This is logically enabled in the model because *no discourse can fully determine a social subject's identity*. To represent this in the model, I have placed on the left hand side three hexagons giving other potential determinants of overdetermined acts of articulation: other discursive formations that compete with a particular discourse regime, unfolding events that undermine the power of the discursive formation to make sense of the world, and mutations in discourse caused by accident, or other extra-discursive forces independent of an actor's will. These other factors enable acts of

articulation that challenge the prevailing articulation rather than reproducing it. This challenge can be fairly mild. Discourses can change without fundamental dislocations of the identities: they may be "supplemented" in piecemeal ways that respond to historical change, broader discursive shifts, or sheer accident. In these cases, it makes sense to say that the hegemony is "renovated" rather than "reproduced" (Norval, 1996). Counter-hegemonic articulations on the other hand only manage to get entangled in the "vicious triangle" if the existing sedimented identities become *dislocated*, and the new articulations are *credible* to enough social actors. Eventually, they start to replace one discursive formation with another, edging towards hegemony. This truly counter-hegemonic practice is called "radical critique," and usually comes about in revolutionary situations, where historical contingencies dislocate the discursive identities and their relations, and the old discourse no longer "makes sense" of the world (Marttila, 2016, pp. 59–60).

4.1.4. Applying the concepts: an example of 'immigrant' discourses

In order to clarify how these concepts work together I will construct a simplified historical example, and one not in the South African racial order (so as not introduce any confusion with the results of my research) by tracing some themes in discourses of the 'immigrant' over four historical 'phases'. Let us suppose that in the 'pre-modern' phase, the material practice was to treat all strangers as enemies, competitors or aggressors whose imminent threat to one's own prosperity required that they be killed on sight[5]. As a given society moves into the

[5] Jared Diamond, in a characteristically Hobbesian passage, observes that in some hunter-gatherer societies it is "suicidal to travel into an unfamiliar area to whose inhabitants you are unknown and completely unrelated. If you do happen to encounter a stranger in your territory, you have to presume that the person is dangerous, because (given the dangers of traveling to unfamiliar areas) the stranger is really likely to be scouting in order to

'modern' phase, however, trade in goods and ideas requires the production of categories of strangers that may not just be killed on sight, one of which is the 'immigrant'. This identity is secured through material practices, such as issuing documentary proof of permission to live in a particular town. For example, the existence of a small Jewish community in the Tuscan city of Siena in 1229 is attributable to a license issued by the city's rulers for the practice of money-lending (Beit Hatfutsot, no date), which was crucial for the growth of the banking industry[6]. When the Jews are blamed for the Black Plague in 1348, many are killed; from 1439 all Jews who are not bankers are forced to wear a yellow star on their clothing. There are also periods of prosperity, and community expansion. Under our next phase, which in this example is 'Fascism', 14 Jews from Siena are sent to die in Nazi death camps (Beit Hatfutsot, no date). In our current phase, the 'contemporary', just over 200km from Siena, 28-year-old Luca Traini spent two hours driving through the town of Macerata on the evening of 3 February 2018, shooting every Black person he could see (he shot six); a copy of Mein Kampf was later found by police at his house (Associated Press, 2018).

The first thing to note is that these four phases as I have described them are shifts in the overall patterning of articulatory acts. One cannot point to a 'decision' that made a discourse 'hegemonic' and thenceforward determined actors' articulations. Instead, patterns emerge from articulatory acts that indicate the process of sedimentation, reactivation, or dislocation. In the pre-modern phase, the immigrant is *unthinkable*, i.e. the identity is not yet an

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raid or kill your group, or else trespassing in order to hunt or steal resources or kidnap a marriageable woman." (Diamond, 2013)

[6] Northern Italian families established an early hegemony over European banking. The oldest surviving bank in the world, Monte dei Paschi di Siena, which was founded in 1472, and is still headquartered in Siena (see 'Monte dei Paschi di Siena', 2018).

enunciative possibility. There are only strangers, who are in a relation of pure antagonism to the social subjects inside the group. These insiders are produced by the actor-fictions of "protector" or "warrior" whose valency in the system is organised around the nodal point of band-loyalty. Dramatic changes in social life in the 'modern' phase, such as living in communities where it becomes more difficult to distinguish strangers from group members, require that the notion of an 'immigrant' is plucked from the discursive field (a sub-category of foreigner, perhaps: not somebody you can just kill, nor a traveller planning to leave soon). This identity develops in a relation of equivalence (in our narrow example) to 'Jew', and is materialised in institutions such as charters for money-lending, ghettoes, and the bureaucratic issuing of yellow stars. Discursive struggle characterises this phase. In the discourse of the financial city-state, the Jew is a necessary evil, a 'helper' to achieve financial dominance for the banking families. In the discourse of a Manichean theology, however, Jews are the source of Plague and other evils: they are the opponents of the kingdom of heaven on earth, and they may be materially negated through the practice of killing. We can see here how the struggle for hegemony operates along the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes: immigrant-Jew-money-lender-helper competes with immigrant-Jew-bringer-of-plague as logics of equivalence, while logics of difference structure a financial network of meanings that competes with a similarly expansive network of theological meanings. The institution of the pogrom and the institution of bureaucratic population registration merge into the institution of Auschwitz under fascism in the next phase. Money-lending is decisively 'won' for the antagonistic discourse as equivalent to social malaise, and a metaphor for Plague. The 'helpers' have been unmasked as 'opponents', and this makes sense to enough social subjects after the dislocations of WWI, which in Italy have been broadly described as a kind of national emasculation (Hughes-Hallett, 2013). Although anti-Semitism per se was not as powerful an organising principle in Italy as in Germany, the social imaginary structured around the nodal

point of a youthful, vigorous, and manly Italy produced a Jewish paradigm that was effeminate, weak, old, and diseased. But Fascism was not an exemplary hegemony: it required constant domination and was only partly propped up by consent. The hegemony in the fourth and contemporary phase, on the other hand, seemed until very recently to be far more stable. Here, the rights framework of the European Union is in a supplementary hegemonic dynamic with the economic justification for immigration. The absorption by Europe of successive waves of immigrants produces model practices of commercial endeavour, entrepreneurship, and the 'good' immigrant. Under this hegemony, the dislocation of identities presumed to be stable – such as national language and skin colour – now combine with institutional mal-distributions to reactivate the old antagonism of the immigrant as a killable stranger.

One thing that suggests itself from this (over)simplified tale is that the discourse of the immigrant makes certain things unthinkable to the same extent that the discourse of the stranger did. The terrain of the discursive struggle is delimited by the logic of economic benefit as much in medieval Siena as it is in 21st century Europe, however cloaked in human rights rhetoric. No such discourse is necessary to justify the presence of the 'expatriate'– a discursive identity that only applies to certain types of people moving between certain contexts (Lundström, 2017). What first seem to be immigrants may become "incorporated" into existing power structures – if they are white enough (Drzewiecka & Steyn, 2012). Indeed 'immigrant' is in a constellation of identities not only with 'expatriate' and 'migrant' – or even 'emigrant' – but with citizens and refugees, a constellation that clearly points to the salience of the nation state and the negation of cosmopolitanism. At this level, there has been no (successful) 'radical critique' and therefore no new hegemony. A further point to note is that 'hegemony' is most analytically useful in the 'modern' and 'contemporary' phases,

where the internal frontiers between the antagonistic forces are unstable. Neither Fascists nor the pre-modern band were looking for anybody's consent, and their discourse tended to be one of simple negation: i.e. antagonisms that split *all* of social space into two camps: that which we are, and that which negates us. A final point is that certain sedimented identities and practices, as well as subject roles and institutions, have survived throughout. What is Luca Traini responding to if not the familiar actor-fiction of the warrior/protector of the band, as he roams the streets of Macerata shooting dark-skinned people, strangers that may be killed on sight?

Now that the terms of analysis have been sketched in general and in relation to a specific, simplified example, we can to move on to research stages involved in investigating discursive formations linking the racial order to land ownership and control in South Africa.

4.2. Research staging and implementation

In this section, I aim to respond to, rather than merely replicate, Marttila's (2016) guidelines on an approach to research planning and implementation appropriately informed by the premises of postfoundationalist discourse theory. As a point of departure, I accept his proposal to divide the research process into three main stages: (1) co-construction; (2) reconstruction; and (3) collocation. In the next three sub-sections I will present his suggested plan, as well as describe how I adapted and implemented it.

4.2.1. Co-construction

The research question constructs a research object that is itself *already a social construction*: and so formulating a research question is a process of *co-construction* (Bryman, 2016, p. 17; Marttila, 2016, p. 138). Delimiting the thematic or spatiotemporal context is a key dimension of this process. Invoking specific terms in my research question is an articulatory practice

that unavoidably constructs its own object. And it is still not at all clear how the rather vague notion of "hegemonic whiteness" ought to be approached. Is it reducible to the subject positions of "white" people, or does it name the structuring of all subject positions in a racial order? Is "white" the nodal point of a "discourse of whiteness", or is it "European"? Or is it some other organising principle that plucks the elements "white" or "Europe" from the field of discursivity to try to fix them as moments in a particular discourse?

Marttila mentions three different approaches that work to co-construct the object: method-driven, problem-driven, and theory-driven approaches (2016, p. 138). In a method-driven approach I could emphasise a particular tool, such as for example corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, and then construct my research object so as to fit the tool. Articulations between whiteness and land control would be observed through the keyhole of the frequency of specific words (*lemmas*) in available corpora. Alternatively, I could start with the problem: racial oppression. A problem-driven approach would examine how racial oppression has arisen and continues to be reproduced through land control.

While the method-driven approach may yield unexpected and exciting conclusions, starting with a methodology distracts attention from the broader implications and potentialities of postfoundationalism, and risks obscuring its demanding ontology. The problem-driven approach, on the other hand, which nobly commits to siding with "dominated and oppressed groups and against dominating groups" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 259), potentially keeps the researcher beholden to particular normative political standpoints that foreclose critical analytical attention to common-sense conceptions of the world. I therefore agree with Marttila (2016, p. 140) that the position of the researcher, the research question itself, and the methodology should all be brought within the purview of a theoretical deconstruction, reducing the "taken-for-grantedness" of either method or problem. I however disagree with

Marttila that a full "epistemological break" is possible, or indeed that the epistemic influence of common sense conceptions may simply be "deleted" (2016, p. 144). It is always disingenuous to presume to be able to escape your own political commitments; nevermind that it is undesirable. In presuming to be able to think entirely outside of common sense, I think Marttila underestimates hegemony: he forgets that, even as a researcher, he is thinking within a particular horizon of intelligibility.

But how ought one to approach "hegemonic whiteness" in a theory-driven way? Hegemony *stabilises* social relations, albeit contingently, and the social relations in South Africa that will be examined in this dissertation are far from stable. The "more unstable the social relations, the less successful will be any definite system of differences and the points of antagonism will proliferate" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985/2014, p. 117). The proliferation of points of antagonism pushes a social formation into what Gramsci would call an "organic crisis" – out of which new hegemonies are born. It is useful to question whether the current historical moment in South Africa is not better understood as "organic crisis" rather than even as a precariously stable hegemony (see Hart, 2014). Hegemony (as was suggested by Robyn Wiegman's analysis in the previous chapter) operates in the elasticity of subjects between the particular and the universal: it is a hegemonic relation in fact within the "split body" of a social actor whose particularity has assumed the representation of a universality entirely incommensurable with it (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985/2014, pp. xii–xiii).

Methodologically, it is unlikely that the social field in South Africa is structured by an absolute white power centre able to fix white skin to all that is good, and black skin to all that is bad. The starting point for analysis should therefore not be a fundamental antagonism or reified white power structure, as this would be begging the question. Norval's (1996) study convincingly analyses how the hegemony of apartheid in South African political discourse

was replaced by the hegemony of non-racialism. It is apparent, as I showed in Chapter 1, that this hegemony has hardly dented economic, symbolic, or status distributions between race groups in the present conjuncture, which still cleave to their apartheid logics. This is clearly *the problem*, and the one I am politically committed to addressing through my research. In approaching this conjuncture *theoretically*, however, I do not claim to (or aim to) transcend my positionality. What I do aim to do is to try to *see* the conjuncture through the *lens* of the theory rather than through the lens of racial justice; to take a particular model of discourse as a starting point rather than the evil of the racial order. This is, in the hope that this act of seeing supports future strategizing for racial justice. As a point of departure will have to be in an iterative relationship with the guiding theory, including both inductive and deductive procedures (see Bryman, 2016, p. 23).

The question my research thus seeks to answer is: Given that discourse is a material practice with material effects, (1) what effect do discursive struggles over 'the land' have on the reproduction of racial inequality in contemporary South Africa, and (2) what role, if any, is played by 'hegemonic whiteness'?.

4.2.2. Reconstruction

Reconstruction is the process of collecting, analysing, and presenting data in order to as faithfully as possible represent the discourse as a research product. Where Marttila advocates a choice at this stage based on the classic Foucauldian distinction between an archaeological or a genealogical study, his description of what he means by these terms makes a choice impossible. It is clear to me that my study is of discourses of the land as they are today, and of the relevance of the past in the present: i.e., a synchronic, or archaeological study. However, this is presented by Marttila as involving a limited set of activities: identifying the discursive identities and their relations around the nodal point, in a relatively stable discourse,

and then focusing on the discursive materiality of sedimented subject roles and institutions (2016, p. 141). While not exactly an inert model of discourse, his methodological assumptions suggest that the archaeologist is not interested in on-going change and present fluctuations, nor in situating the present within the broader ebbs and flows of history. He goes on to describe the work of genealogy, however, in just such terms: as focusing on hegemonic acts, dislocations, and contested and contesting discourses (2016, p. 143). I would argue that a stable discourse map with its materiality analysed cannot be the only analytical possibility in the present. Antagonistic forces are facing each other down right now: hegemonic reproduction is happening, counter-hegemonic acts are observable in the discourse-scape. A study of these does not require the kind of historical analysis that "genealogy" implies, however: it merely requires placing the synchronic in its diachronic context, i.e. historicizing it. So while my corpus of data is collected from the present moment, it needs to be analysed in the context of what has come before it, and I see no reason to exclude the analytical tools that Marttila suggests are best reserved for genealogical studies. In the steps that follow, I have thus combined his guidance for diachronic and synchronic analysis with my own descriptions of the decisions I have made in these steps.

4.2.2.1. STEP 1: Building corpora

Choosing which data to collect is just as tricky an undertaking as deciding on a research question. Marttila points out that "the analytical validity of the empirical data depends on their capacity to lend visibility to the discourse, which we conceive to have been responsible for the formation of our research object" (2016, p. 147). Although postfoundationalism is in many respects the antithesis of positivism, the notion that patterns in the on-going meaningful actions of billions of social actors can indicate emergence or decline of a discursive

formation suggests that our first problem should be the problem of *sampling*. At the same time, I think Marttila strays too far into scientism when he insists that

> [the] sample must […] cover a considerable part of the population, which we have reason to assume adhere to the same discourse, or a representative sample of the totality of articulations conducted by this population. This means that gathering data is necessarily preceded by an initial conceptualization of spatiotemporal coordinates of the discourse under review and its (re-) producing population of subjects. (2016, p. 147)

The reason I disagree with him is that certain articulations, and certain social actors, have a privileged position in discourse: among only the Essex School adherents, for example, Norval (1996), analyses specific National Party speeches or essays that influenced the evolution of apartheid, without "sampling" the opinions of all white South Africans; Smith (1994) examines political slogans and the language of election campaigns between the time of Enoch Powell and Margaret Thatcher, giving both actors a privileged position in the evolution of racist discourse in the U.K.; and Howarth (2000) cites the writings of Steve Biko as well as his political adherents and opponents to speculate on why Black Consciousness did not achieve hegemony in South Africa. To be clear, I do not think that Marttila is opposed to these approaches, only that his own definitions don't really engage with them. It is hard to imagine Howarth, for example, arriving at the conclusion that the intellectuals he cites are a "representative sample of the totality of articulations" conducted by the South Africans hailed by the Black Consciousness Movement.

A "fragment" of discourse (Marttila, 2016, p. 147) is not necessarily irrelevant to analysis if it is a *privileged* fragment: a slogan, a campaign, a State of the Nation address, or uttered by

an influential person. At the same time, the daily discourse of most of us is only interesting at the level of the patterns we might discern in it. The notion of 'sampling' must take both of these possibilities into account.

In order to answer my research question, I decided to look at two dimensions of "land" discourse in South Africa. The first dimension is the highly politicised and racialized space of accusations and counter-accusations of colonial land theft. The second dimension is the (deceptively) less obviously racialized space of the environmental movement. In both dimensions, specific formations suggested themselves as good entry-points into the discourse during the course of my research:

a) The cluster of radical Black (humorous) articulations around #GiveBackTheLand
b) Persistent (serious) assertions of white landlessness, poverty, and victimhood
c) Environmentalist campaign communication targeting the public (rhino poaching)
d) Environmentalist campaign communication between activists (anti-fracking)

Sampling in (a), (b), and (c) is all about selecting for analysis only the most influential texts; only (d) really presents the challenge identifying the pattern in a wide ocean of data.

To get a picture of what South Africans are saying about something, a good place to start looking is social media. Modern social life plays out to a large extent on social media, which have the great virtue of constituting massive publicly available archives of date-and-time-stamped articulatory acts connected with specific social actors. There is massive potential in the sheer availability of discursive data; political scientists can for example conduct statistical analysis of social interactions on political party websites and compare these to political performance (Larsson, 2017); the Cape Town-based company BrandsEye made international headlines recently for successfully predicting the outcomes of both the Brexit referendum and

the U.S. presidential election based on analysis of voter sentiment on social media, where traditional polling companies had failed (David & Swails, 2016). That being said, the availability of Big Data and the temptation to focus exclusively on quantitative methodologies leads many researchers to chase the impossible mirage of data that "speaks for itself" (González-Bailón, 2013, p. 148). Without theory, data, even patterned data, can be more noise than signal. A theory-driven approach would need to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to social media analysis to build a compelling reconstruction of such complex discourses.

'Big Data' as a research aspiration, furthermore, presents a number of challenges to researchers. The "Application Programming Interfaces" (APIs) of social media platforms, through which all data are accessed, are entirely outside the control of the researcher, and replying on their stability can be very problematic (Alfantoukh & Durresi, 2014). API instability and platform opacity means that data is accessed through a "black box". Platforms commercialize their data, introduce new features, change legal requirements, and generally shift the targets of the research even as it is rolling out (Bechmann & Vahlstrup, 2015). In addition, funding, knowhow, and institutional connections are not equally available to all social scientists, which presents the problem of a type of digital divide built on "unattainable scholarship" (Zelenkauskaite & Bucy, 2016).

If what social media data we have access to is one axis of the problem, the other is the interaction between medium and data. Social media is as much the object of research as it is a resource for data collection (Marres & Moats, 2015). Theoretical and methodological rigour in approaching social media is thus indispensable (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, p. 230). To take two of the most popular platforms, what social actors articulate on Twitter will not be identical to what they articulate on Facebook. The latter site has specific affordances for self-

presentation that are regulated through selective revelation, including through privacy, deciding who can and cannot see my posts, deciding what to say publicly and what not, censoring or removing wall posts, deleting activity, untagging, etc. (Georgalou, 2016, p. 59). Even within the Facebook environment, Groups are different from Pages, which are different from Events or other listings; between Pages, who is moderating discussion, the rules they set, and the level of active moderation result in markedly different discursive performances and effects (van Es, van Geenen, & Boeschoten, 2014). In short, these spaces are just as complex as other social spaces, and research objects should be tailored to this complexity. Social media do not necessarily present new potentials for radical discourses, as they are as riven with existing hegemonies and power structures as is the rest of the social sphere (Fuchs, 2017, pp. 179–209).

Social media sampling thus presents many challenges (see also Bryman, 2016, pp. 558–560). Twitter offers users the option to access data through its API in two strengths: the so-called garden-hose, which is free but has a very limited amount of data, and the firehose, which has all data, but is very expensive (Larsson, 2015, p. 150). Facebook on the other hand supposedly grants access to all public data through its API, though the idiosyncracies and daily updates to it affect data detail, completeness, and consistency, requiring some "technological fieldwork" to understand what it is you are getting (Rieder, Abdulla, Poell, Woltering, & Zack, 2015).

My approach to the four areas of the discourse I am interested in depended to a certain extent on my own chance experiences of social media. Area (a) – the #GiveBackTheLand joke genre – took shape in the articulations of people I follow on Twitter. As part of what I am interested in as a person engaged in issues of social and racial justice in South Africa, I follow many members of so-called "Black Twitter" in South Africa, a group of people with

large followings who significantly influence public debates over race, sexuality, and other social divisions in the country (see Gouws, 2018).

I uncovered area (b) – the 'Poor White' videos – during a purposive search for conservative white discourses on Twitter, where I noticed that white poverty was a frequent theme, very often combined with sharing film clips from YouTube, dailymotion, or other content providers. Area (c) – the anti-rhino-poaching campaign data – arose not in the social media space, but from driving in Johannesburg, where I saw the bumper sticker that is analysed there on the car in front of me, and started digging deeper into anti-poaching discourses, which eventually led me to the Kruger National Park honourary rangers programme's Facebook page, which serves as only one of the data points in the analysis of that campaign. The only data set that was specifically constructed as a representative sample of a particular discourse was the anti-fracking Facebook groups studied in area (d).

My approach in all four areas, according to Alan Bryman, is a social media research method known by the rather unattractive moniker of "lurking" (2016, p. 450). It is not an online ethnography, as I do not immerse myself in the groups, nor become interested in people's "life-worlds" (2016, p. 461). Though in many cases I get to 'know' the social actors and even anticipate their responses to each other and to the news, this is not what I analyse. My approach in area (d) was to identify the largest anti-fracking Facebook groups and to "scrape" (Rieder, 2013) vast amounts of data from them. I was therefore not strictly "lurking" any longer, as I collected data over a four-year period which I analysed off-line. I will now introduce each of the corpora individually.

Corpus 1: Jokes about "the land"

In my analysis, I trace the origin of the joke cycle to the furore in the press set off by the actions of #RhodesMustFall activists Wandile Dlamini and Ntokozo Qwabe in the Obz Café in Cape Town on 27 April 2016 and Qwabe's subsequent Facebook post describing the incident. Included in my analysis are numerous media reports, as well as responses by Qwabe himself on Facebook and elsewhere. The core part of the corpus however is the cycle of 24 tweets or status updates which each contained a unique "joke" on the theme of taking back the land. These jokes were collected over the period between Qwabe's action and the time I wrote the chapter in November 2017; in total, I noticed 28 unique jokes on my timeline in this period, most of which are reproduced in Chapter 5:

Table 4-2: Jokes about "the land" on South African Black Twitter

Year	Month	Tweets
2016	August	1
	September	1
	October	-
	November	3
	December	-
2017	January	-
	February	2
	March	5
	April	2
	May	2
	June	1
	July	3
	August	4

Year	Month	Tweets
	September	1
	October	3
TOTAL:		**28**

On the one hand, this method of collection is clearly highly imprecise: there may have been many other jokes in this period that I simply missed. On the other, as a frequent user of Twitter, I was more likely to see jokes that were in higher circulation.

Corpus 2: 'Poor Whites' on film

This corpus was built by tracing the discursive environment around 'mainstream' media texts in the 18 months to 1 November 2017, in order to establish what the *current* discourse is on white poverty in South Africa. A Twitter search for "white AND (poor OR poverty) AND south AND africa"[7] yielded 90 tweets over a period of 18 months that contained links to 25 different websites, and 10 different news or documentary film clips. These 10 clips in the YouTube environment were linked to 16 additional videos that had views and comments within the collection period, amounting to just under 3 hours of video footage. The "black box" status of the Twitter search algorithm means that it is not possible to draw any conclusions from this about the extent of actual conversation about white poverty in South Africa on Twitter. The decision to look at "mainstream" news and documentary film footage resulted in the exclusion of six videos from the corpus of homemade amateur footage.

[7] I was interested in the global circulation of discourses, and only searched for the English words as search terms. If I had searched in Afrikaans, or isiZulu, or Spanish, my results may have been more inflected with the local dynamics that are 'washed out' by English as a lingua franca.

Many of the inserts were shot and aired before they were posted to YouTube or elsewhere (see Table 4-3). Clips N and O, for example, are Associated Press stories from the Mandela years (1994-1999) which were only posted to YouTube in 2015. Although it is interesting that seven of the clips received close to one hundred thousand or more views, up to just under one and a half million in the case of Clip A, the fact that clips might have been viewed by many millions using traditional media, and that not all clips track views, suggest that texts should not be discounted or excluded based on low view numbers. Clips G and J (both British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) productions) were not posted to YouTube, but are available on the BBC website, which unfortunately does not track views or allow comments, although Clip J was extensively discussed on Twitter. Clip R is embedded in two news stories in the Daily Mail and also does not have any metadata on views or comments. These three clips are likely to have been seen by millions of people, given the influence and reach of these media outlets. Clip D, on the other hand, is an advocacy video designed to elicit donations and support, and is not technically news or documentary footage. It is however useful to consider it as part of the corpus given that it was produced by an organisation (AfriForum) that, as we shall see, has a considerable influence on the narratives in the news and documentary texts.

Table 4-3: Twenty video clips shared to drawn attention to White Poverty

Code	Title	Published Online	Produced	Producer	Views
A	"Are Poor White South Africans Being Left Behind?"	2007	~2007	Journeyman Pictures for ABC Australia	1,471,790
B	“Poor white South Africans blame reverse discrimination”	2009	~2009	World Focus (Canada)	520,970
C	"South Africa - Poor Whites/Rich Blacks"	2009	~2009	Journeyman Pictures for Vlaamse Radio -en Televisieomroeporganisatie	985,055
D	"White Poverty in SA"	2010	2010	Solidariteit Helpende Hand	2,354
E	"Gebroke land"	2010	~2010	SABC Fokus	2,949
F	"Kroningspark: "Dis maar oraait hierso.""	2013	2013	Beeld	6,076
G	"Do white people have a future in South Africa?"	2013	2013	BBC	n/a

Code	Title	Published Online	Produced	Producer	Views
H	"White Poverty (in the New South Africa)"	2013	2013	Saskia Vredenveld	95,552
I	"'Reverse apartheid': South Africa's white slums"	2013	2013	euronews	193,790
J	Extreme South Africa s01e01 "The White Slums"	2014	2014	BBC	n/a
K	"Dis te gevaarlik in Munsieville" / "It's too dangerous in Munsieville"	2014	2014	eNews Channel Africa (ENCA)	4,967
L	"Krugersdorp se wit plakkers moet hervestig"	2014	2014	Krugersdorp News	1,448
M	"Verskuiwing voortydig" / "We can't live like this"	2014	2014	eNews Channel Africa (ENCA)	677
N	"SOUTH AFRICA: UNEMPLOYED & HOMELESS PROBLEMS"	2015	1999	Associated Press	2,032
O	"SOUTH AFRICA: LOW COST HOUSING FOR WHITE FAMILY"	2015	~ 1994 to 1999	Associated Press	1,591
P	"Coronation Park"	2015	2014	Mirror Mountain Media	5,668
Q	SOUTH AFRICAN White Squatter Camps	2016	2016	UnionMag.co.uk	113,693
R	[Daily Mail stories x 2]	2016	before 2016	Reuters	-
S	"25% Of White South Africans Are Now Living In Poverty"	2016	March 2006	SABC	224,747
T	"White Poverty in South Africa (trailer)"	2017	2013	Saskia Vredenveld	3,215

Corpus 3: The campaign against rhino poaching

This corpus is described in some detail in Chapter 7. It consists of a bumper sticker, an electronic meme (shared on social media and e-mail, analysed here outside of these contexts), a billboard campaign, a printed poster campaign, and a Facebook post. The motivations for this particular sampling arose organically from a thematic approach, which started with the genital fixation of the bumper sticker in particular. The central theme – bodily mutilation, including special attention to the penises of poachers – was later shown to have been noted by other researchers (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2016; Lunstrum, 2017).

Corpus 4: Anti-fracking Facebook Groups

To identify patterns in the in-campaign conversations of conservationists I engaged in a process of the purposive sampling (Bryman, 2016, p. 408) of the Facebook presence of the movement to prevent hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") in the Karoo region of South Africa. Given that Facebook tracks the emotional responses of social actors – whether they love or like something, are enraged or saddened by it – and that affect plays a specific role in attempts to "fix" meaning within processes of discursive struggle, I opted to analyse only the posts from a very large available corpus of data that were 'supercharged' in terms of their emotional weight. In this case, the attention (Jones, 2010) of participants can be thought of as an "affective frame".

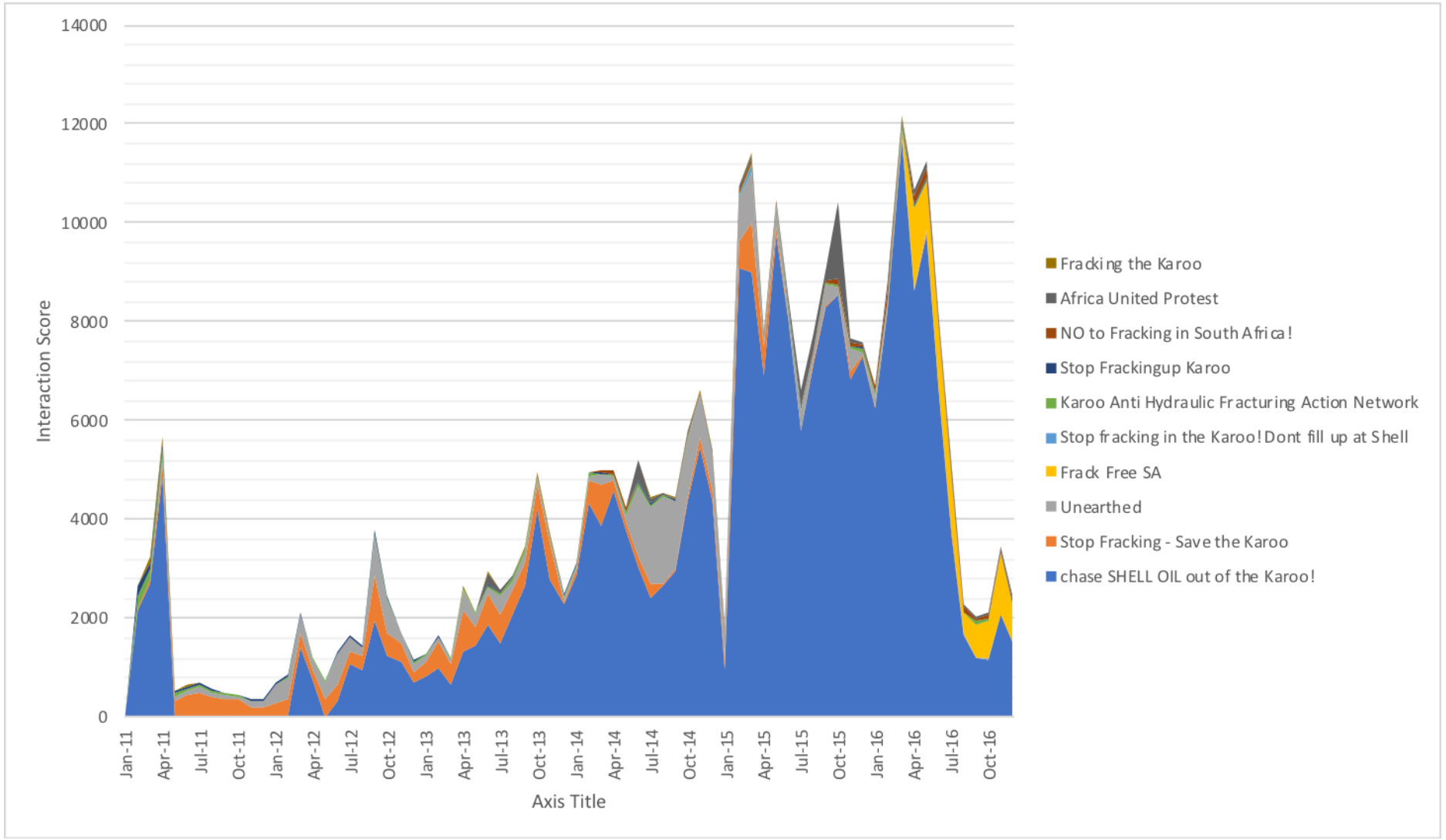
I started with the Facebook search function. I performed searches on the related terms, "frack", "hydraulic fracturing", "shale gas", "unconventional gas", "CSG", and "coal seam gas", and entered the links of all Pages and Groups into a spreadsheet. In the course of exploring these groups, I discovered two online catalogues that had been created by activists to link Facebook groups from around the world with each other, "FACEBOOKS AGAINST FRACKING !" (Hognerud, 2015) and "The World Directory of Anti-Fracking & Fracking Safety Organizations and Related Sites" (United States Environmental Directories, Inc., n.d.). I now had a list of thousands of potential groups and pages which dealt with fracking in a variety of contexts. I then narrowed down these groups to only those that dealt with the South African context: there were 38 devoted Groups and Pages in South Africa, with a combined following of 28,672 members (accurate on 1 June 2017).

In order to measure the interactions within these groups, I started by applying the freely available Facebook plugin app NetVizz (Rieder, 2013), which can scrape significant amounts of data from Groups and Pages (I used version 1.44). In manually spot-checking the results of

these scrapes, however, I found some disparities between the outputs of scrapes and the content of the Facebook sites. For this reason, I commissioned a qualified Python developer to build an application that would do exactly what I needed: scrape a Group or Page for all posts since its beginning, and output key details of these to a CSV (comma-separated values) file. These files contain the basic data about each of the posts on a page or in a group, date, time, the ID of the person who made the post, and the number of times the post was liked/loved/etc.

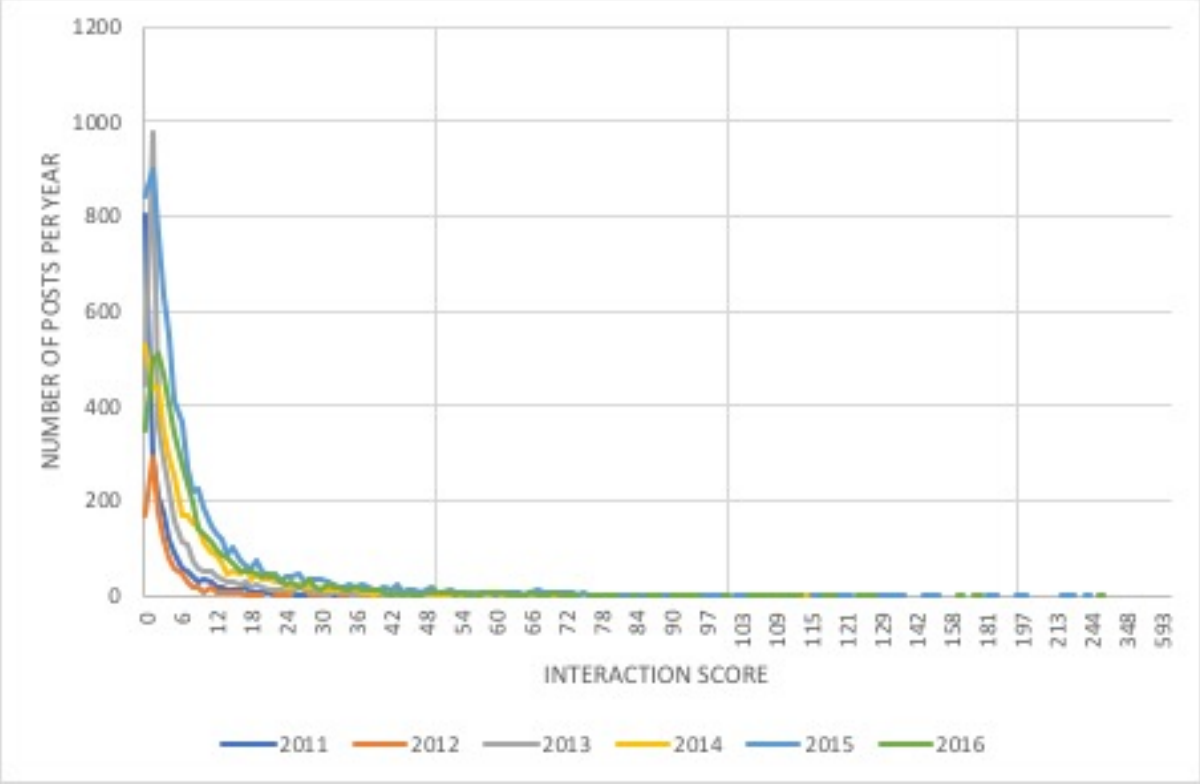
In order to determine where the most interactions were happening, I decided to compare the Top 10 sites (in terms of Followers/Members) in South Africa. I first had to define what exactly an 'interaction' was. Sometimes members will post something to a group, and nobody will react. At other times, hundreds of members will flock to a specific post to comment, share, or react to it. In order to determine a bird's eye view of where the discourse was hottest, I decided to sum together the number of posts, number of reactions, number of shares, and number of comments per month for each of the Top 10 using the Pivot Chart function in Microsoft Excel. Though I had the option of *weighting* one of these four variables higher than the others, I could not think of a justification for any weighting scheme: it seemed to me that it was not possible to analytically privilege any specific action such as posting, liking a post, sharing it, or commenting on it, as in different contexts these actions could be more, or less, or equally relevant to the flow of discourse The results of mapping the interactions in South Africa is represented pictorially in Figure 4-2 below.

Figure 4-2: Interactions on the Top 10 Facebook Anti-Fracking Groups/Pages in South Africa



The group “chase SHELL OIL out of the Karoo!” is clearly the dominant social formation in South Africa. The application for licences in areas other than the Karoo – specifically, in KwaZulu-Natal, the Northwest, Mpumalanga, and the Free State – fuelled the late spurt of the “Frack Free SA” Page, which was competing with “chase SHELL OIL” for share of the conversation by the end of 2016. In every year that “chase SHELL OIL” has been active, hundreds of posts received *no* comments, likes or shares; in certain years even more received only one interaction, but always fewer receive two, even fewer receive three, et cetera. There is thus a logarithmic relationship (see Figure 4-3) between the most engaging and the least engaging posts, suggesting that a sampling methodology that looks only at the most engaged posts will accurately give a good sense of where the attention of the group was focused.

Figure 4-3: Posts per year : Interaction Score per Post



Because it is the aim of this study to pay careful attention only to how anti-fracking discourse is taken up in the popular campaign, I therefore selected the Top 100 posts for the years 2013-2016. In order not to over-sample from later years as the conversation got more heated, and to get some sense of historical progression, I sampled the Top 25 from each year. Included in the sample were all images, emojis, videos, audio files, and text.

The text component was processed both as part of the multimodal discursive ensemble, and as a corpus on its own, using the corpus linguistic software AntConc (release version 8.5.15). There were 136,962 word tokens in the 100 top posts of the selected group.

4.2.2.2. STEP 2: Contents-related analysis

This step requires the specific contents-related analysis of each of the texts, the results of which are presented in chapters 5-8.

4.2.2.3. STEP 3: Reconstruction of materiality

Marttila (2016) suggests two approaches here: to reconstruct the discursive materiality that the analysis has uncovered, and the material conditions and results of discursive articulations as they are observable in processes of change. In each of the four analytical chapters, careful attention is paid to discursive materiality both in its synchronic and diachronic dimensions.

4.2.3. Collocation

The analysis and conclusions from each of these corpora is contained in the analytical chapters that follow on directly from this one. Marttila defines this "collocation" as "Identification of the phenomenal aspects of the research findings for the sake of enhancing their subsequent reception and paving the way for their comparisons with […] research conducted on similar phenomena" (Marttila, 2016, p. 145). The point he is making here is

that given the theoretical commitments of postfoundationalist discourse theory, research findings need to be understood very carefully as co-constructions within limited contexts. They cannot merely be generalised – and absolutely not universalised, as was noted above, in that ”characteristic gesture” of northern theory (Connell, 2007). Using the word “collocation” instead of “generalisation” suggests a guarded and careful comparison of results, a placing alongside what other researchers have found, rather than a bold and ringing conclusion. I will return to this idea in the final chapter of this thesis.

4.3. Research ethics

The research ethics process at Wits University does not require ethics clearance for projects that access online data clearly in the public domain. I did obtain research clearance for a protocol that included face-to-face interviews with leaders of the anti-fracking campaign combined with social media analysis; as I do not present that data or analysis here, and would not have had to obtain such clearance had it been clear I was only collecting public data, such research clearance would not have been necessary, and I will therefore not present the protocol here.

It is however worthwhile to pause for a second on this point to explain why I agree with the university protocol that accessing public data in the way I did does *not* raise ethical concerns. Research ethics have become something of a “moral panic” in the social sciences, and so clarifying one’s position is important (Bryman, 2016, p. 125). It is the grounding assumption of all of the content I reproduce here from social media that its producers were subject to a fair expectation of having their tweets or posts read and reproduced by the general public.

Bryman (2016, p. 125) offers a useful guidelines for thinking through these issues. He poses four questions. The first is “is there harm”? Quite clearly, it is the role of critical research to

get to the heart of harmful social divisions in society, and this does sometimes mean uncovering hurtful or harmful practices, which both reopens the chance of causing hurt, and opens up the social actors behind these practices to various forms of recrimination. As these statements are already in the public domain, however, this argument cannot be launched against my approach. It would be more harmful to allow these statements to go unchallenged.

Bryman's second question is whether there is informed consent. All of the social media platforms I sampled from have clear terms and conditions, as well as social norms of use, that make it very clear that statements made on the site are in the public domain. The fact that there is no explicit consent to my research is covered by, for example, Facebook's Data Use Policy. These specific agreements also cover Bryman's third question: "is there an invasion of privacy?". As will be shown in the analysis of much of the data, the participants in these platforms *know* they are being observed by others. They *know* there statements are public, and they occasionally go back to censor themselves, or moderators intervene to delete posts or discipline problematic users precisely because they are "representing" the discourse. There is considerable curation, editing, and internal censorship procedures are evident across all three country contexts.

Bryman's final question is "Is there deception involved?". I did not join any closed groups on Facebook; even on public groups I did not masquerade as a member of the community, did not post, did not like or comment, etc., and so I was not posing as a confidant to any user. There was no breaking of trust precisely because no trust was created. As Bryman observes, the "more the venue is acknowledged to be public, the less obligation there is on the researcher to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of individuals using the venue, or to seek their informed consent" (2016, p. 139). He bases some of his guidelines on previous guidelines that set four requirements: that information is publicly archived and readily

available; that no password is required to access the information; that the material is not sensitive in nature; and that no stated site policy prohibits the use of such material. My methodology meets all of these requirements.

Social media is after all *media*: it is not research on human subjects. There is the proposal that "the researcher does not record the identity of the communicators" (Bryman, 2016, p. 142) which I have observed in the Facebook analysis, but not in the Twitter analysis. As all of this data is in the public domain, all one has to do to identify who said what is to Google specific lines of text; conceivably, you will get back to the original poster anyway.

4.4. Researcher positionality

In the previous chapter I committed to *grounding* myself in the history and the spatiality of South Africa, by paying attention to where my "boots are planted". The six "puzzles" of whiteness studies that I presented in §3.1.1. suggest the relevance of more than just the physical location of my boots: my own social location, moral implication, and epistemological orientation within the world I am investigating have some bearing on the results I will present. A brief biographical note is thus appropriate.

All of the data that will be analysed in this dissertation is in some way close to me. The specific contours of the joke cycle I present in Chapter 5 is attributable to my own idiosyncratic preference for the sages of Black Twitter whose commentary I enjoy: if I had followed a different set of people, my data set would be different. It is possible that in choosing whom to follow I closed myself off from too robust a challenge to my sensibilities.

I spent the greater part of my adolescence in a boarding school a short walk from Coronation Park, the location of the white squatter camp that will be discussed in Chapter 6. My friends and I would walk through it to get to the centre of Krugersdorp, and I associate it with

teenage anxieties, illicit substances, and the pathos of what was already in the mid 1990s a seedy, liminal space. I remember feeling keenly the social distance between my middle-class English-speaking milieu and the poor Afrikaans-speaking whites of Luipaardsvlei who used the park.

I too profess a profound connection with the beautiful stark vistas of the Karoo, and must therefore recognise my full implication in a way of looking at the land that I critique in Chapter 8 as continuous with the colonial gaze. I wrote part of this dissertation in the hamlet of Nieu-Bethesda, a place I have come to love. But Nieu-Bethesda is also a microcosm of all that is wrong with South Africa. It is a village that claims to have a population of 68 (mostly white people) only because it excludes the 1,100-odd Black and Coloured people who technically live in a place called Pienaarsig, separated by some open fields from the main town. Many of the residents of Pienaarsig will spend their lives in servile relations to the white townsfolk of Nieu-Bethesda.

I have been a supporter and often an active contributor to the environmentalist and conservationist projects that I critique in Chapters 7 and 8. I am as much a lover of the wild spaces and natural beauty of the land as any of the white saviour figures I might try to distance myself from. Even the position of Cecil John Rhodes – standing astride a map, imposing social vision onto it – is one in which I recognise myself. In various programmatic and strategic roles over a period of nearly 15 years I helped steer the roll-out of a nationwide HIV-prevention and youth development campaign. I found the sheer geographical scope and social engineering ambition of what we were trying to do the most thrilling part of my job.

This is not a *mea culpa*; I am not flooded with shame or guilt when I think about this personal history. What I do have is an incrementally growing sense of the moral paradoxes and contradictions in my own position, many of which have been highlighted by the radical Black

critique of the South African status quo, as well as the international scholarship and activism that I have been exposed to. I feel in a privileged position to analyse the power structure in which I am implicated precisely because I inhabit it. I do not pretend to be able to speak with authority or precision on the lived experience of other people. What I can do is to appeal to the framework of my own socialization as a white man born at the height of apartheid in 1978: these are my people, this is my group, and I cannot deny them.

This privilege becomes a moral obligation. As Biko pointed out, the problem of white racism lies "squarely on the laps" of white people and yet instead of "involving themselves in an all-out attempt to stamp out racism from their white society […they] waste lots of time trying to prove to as many blacks as they can find that they are liberal" (Biko, 1978/2006, pp. 23–24). The implication is clear: anti-racism is not a virtue to be paraded, but a moral minimum that warrants no rewards.

Biko's advice should not initiate a retreat into narcissism (as discussed in §3.1.1.3. nor a closing off from an engagement with Black critique. The possessive investment in whiteness being 'our' problem can easily lead down this path. Sara Ahmed concludes her critique of whiteness studies with advice to would-be whiteness scholars:

> [Whiteness] studies should involve at least a double turn: to turn towards whiteness is to turn towards and away from those bodies who have been afforded agency and mobility by such privilege. In other words, the task for white subjects would be to stay implicated in what they critique, but in turning towards their role and responsibility in these histories of racism, as histories of this present, to turn away from themselves, and towards others (Ahmed, 2004b, n.p.).

It is clear that I remain implicated in whiteness in the present even as I expose it; what is less clear from Ahmed's advice is what turning towards others actually entails. We can already rule out "speaking for" them, inflecting radical critique in a white voice (see Alcoff, 1991). In repeating the radical Black and Indigenous critique of whiteness there is always the danger of restating an existing position without advancing the debate, perhaps even distorting it to become more palatable to oneself and an imagined (white) audience, while reaping the institutional status rewards of doctoral degrees and published research. In sharing the joke cycle in Chapter 5, for example, I am building on an intellectual endeavour that speaks to an experience that is not my own. I am obliged to contribute something above that, to build further anti-racist effects on top of what has already been done.

We can also rule out simply performing anti-racism, like Biko's white liberal. As was discussed in §3.1.1.1. recovering an anti-racist white subjectivity quickly reduces to turning whiteness into an object that can be loved.

Patricia Hill Collins (1986) famously showed how the positionality of Black women in academic feminist thought brought a unique perspective – that of the "outsider within" – to bear on sociological research. The positionality of a white man in an as-yet un-decolonised academy is in many ways the inverse of what she is describing: it is not oppression which interlocks here, but privilege. So while unable to transcend my privileged status as an "insider" I interpret the moral obligation gestured to by Biko and the second part of Ahmed's double turn as implying that I must make myself *accountable* for that privilege. As an "accountable insider" then I am called on to focus to stamping out white racism, while exposing myself always to correction and guidance from others. Ultimately, remaining implicated in the power structure while critiquing it requires an openness to getting things wrong. My sheer proximity to the data, to the power of the position, to hegemonic whiteness

itself, is therefore both my argument for a privileged analytical position, and my apologia for the mistakes I am certain to make.

Chapter 5: Laughing at White Tears

On 28 April 2016, #RhodesMustFall activist and University of Oxford postgraduate Ntokozo Sbonelo Qwabe's Facebook post[1] went "viral". Qwabe, "feeling elated," had prefaced his post with the statement: "LOL [laugh out loud] wow unable to stop smiling because something so black, wonderful & LIT just happened!" (Qwabe, 2016a). He went on to explain that, after a meal with the "radical non-binary trans black activist" Wandile Dlamini at the Obz Café in Observatory, Cape Town, instead of leaving a tip for their white waitress, Dlamini had written on the slip: "WE WILL GIVE TIP WHEN YOU RETURN THE LAND" (ibid.).

The waitress became upset, and enlisted the support of a colleague, who confronted them about what he perceived as "racism". The activists engaged briefly with the waitress and her colleague before returning to their own conversation, and then leaving the restaurant.

Qwabe's description of the action – which he explicitly framed as political – unleashed an international social and traditional media storm. The internet was suddenly full of both precipitous and more considered reactions. In the commentary on Qwabe and Dlamini's statement that ensued on my own Facebook wall, most of the (Black and white) middle-class professionals and academics who commented, with few exceptions, were swift to express

[1] The post was removed by Facebook, and Qwabe's account suspended, for "violating Facebook's community standards". It is therefore reproduced as screen grabs in the Appendix of this thesis. Increasingly, Facebook has been criticized for implementing censorial algorithms, which "flatten" the vast flows of data to make them visible to a "technological gaze" which in turn imposes the "morality and sensibilities" of Facebook's managers on the communication of users (Ibrahim, 2017, pp. 5–6)

various levels of discomfort with what had happened. A particular commenter, who is also a prominent Critical Discourse Analyst, however, against much opposition, insisted that the post was "hilarious" (Tommaso Milani, Friday, 29 April 2016 at 7.26pm). Three minutes later he commented again: "But it was tongue in cheek, it was like a candid camera and the waitress fell straight into the trap". The commenter was both confirming the textual markers of laughter that Qwabe had included in his post – such as "LOL" – and expanding on the setup of the scene as a kind of situational comedy. Importantly, for reasons I shall explain below, he was also the only participant in the thread not born and raised in southern Africa. Where was the comedy the rest of us were missing?

There is clearly *something* LOL-worthy about Dlamini's asking a white woman picked more or less at random to give them the land back. Significantly, an entire joke cycle about giving back the land was later spawned on social media, plausibly at least partly inspired by Dlamini and Qwabe. What exactly is humorous about this action, and the reactions to it, will be examined in this chapter. In the first section, I will lay out key discursive events starting in Obz Café and ricocheting outwards from South Africa to the United Kingdom, from (post)colonial periphery to imperial metropole. I will then lay out some methodological tools and theoretical issues taken from critical humour studies, adapted to link in with the "vicious triangle" Figure 4-1. In the following section, I will then apply these tools first to the joke cycle that the action spawned, and then to the event itself. In concluding, I will argue that Dlamini's action and Qwabe's narrative represent important counter-hegemonic discursive acts that arise from the specifics of the current South African disjuncture, in two key dimensions: (1) the inversion of the 'stiletto' – a concept related to the specific relations between individual responsibility and structural inequality that will be explored below; and (2) the singling out of the white relationship with land as being a key sedimented discourse in

need of further dislocation for the eventual routing of hegemonic whiteness. My second conclusion is that the joke genre spawned is more ambiguous in its discursive effects, which are both rebellious and disciplinary (Billig, 2005), working to repair and renew an existing hegemony, while also potentially working to dislodge it.

5.1. Action and Reaction

On Qwabe's account, after reading what Dlamini had written the waitress, Ashleigh Schultz, started shaking, before bursting "into typical white tears" (Qwabe, 2016a). He clarified later that "white tears" are not literal tears, but a term used to describe an emotional reaction by a white person when they are "challenged to think about a question and they start getting uncomfortable" (Qwabe, 2016b). The subsequent reaction, however, to a large extent revolved around these tears, whether real or not. Spokesperson for the centre-right Democratic Alliance controlled Western Cape government Sihle Ngobese returned the following day to give the "bullied" waitress a ZAR 50 (EUR 3.11) tip, as part of an attempt to "show what kindness is" (Ngobese, 2016). Ngobese subsequently promoted a national fundraising campaign to increase the tip, initiated by the hosts of the Renegade Report, a liberal online radio station. Combined with extensive promotion on Twitter and Facebook of this and other fundraising efforts, Schultz's tip was eventually increased to over ZAR 140,000 (EUR 8,707) (Davis, 2016). Evident in most of the media response to the action was a particular pattern: symbolic and material value was shifted away from Qwabe and towards Schultz, while Dlamini was typically ignored or erased. As the press uncovered Schultz's backstory – she was not from a wealthy family, and her mother was battling cancer – attention focused increasingly on the class dimensions of the incident. This was particularly evident in the U.K. press. Candice Holdsworth, writing for conservative journal *The Spectator*, asked

> Whatever happened to the old leftist notion of solidarity with the working class? That has clearly been abandoned in favour of fractious identity politics. Qwabe and his political ilk are so selfishly absorbed in their own self-declared 'pain' that they feel justified lashing out at an entirely innocent person whose own hurt they are incapable of registering (Holdsworth, 2016).

The affective theme of Holdsworth's assertion – where a supposedly shared class position serves as a natural cohesive force that is broken by Qwabe's adhesion to a "fractious identity [i.e. racial] politics" that both comes from and causes pain – is common throughout the reaction. Her explicit discounting (using scare quotes and dismissive language) of the notion of Black pain – a concept that is often mobilised in the decolonial and Black activist tradition to centre Black experience – attempts to close off the possibility of any historically inspired sympathy with Qwabe's own experience. Similar affective strategies are evident in other reportage. A headline in The Sowetan reported "Internet turns on activist who made waitress cry" (TMG Digital, 2016) and websites that focus on good news stories about South Africa eagerly tracked growing donations to Schultz, with one proclaiming that "Kindness Wins!" (SAPeople, 2016), echoing the motivation for Ngobese's tip campaign . Dlamini's note and Qwabe's post are seen as lacerating, hurtful actions against the waitress that need to be healed by on outpouring of goodwill aimed at her. The racial dimension of the action was the organising principle for the affective battlefield. Qwabe was thus called an "international figure of hate" by the British tabloid, the *Daily Mail* (Robinson & Greenhill, 2016), denounced for "borderline criminal behaviour" by the ANC's Western Cape spokesperson Yonela Diko (eNCA.com, 2016), and even reprimanded by his own father, who told a newspaper: "I want to sit down with him, tell him that he is young and he needs to follow

proper procedures when he is not happy about something" (Buthelezi, 2016). News reportage repeatedly tied this particular action to the Rhodes Must Fall movement at the Universities of Cape Town and Oxford. Viciously-worded petitions were launched to strip Qwabe of his Rhodes scholarship and expel him from Oxford; he was threatened with violence, and with death (Qwabe, 2016b).

The international and South African media, with the notable exception of the radical, youth-led online publication the *Daily Vox*, were uniformly hostile to Qwabe. Though some very supportive op-eds were published (e.g. Shandu, 2016; Xaba, 2016) the most sophisticated and subtly theorised interpretation of the action and the ensuing media fracas, dubbed #TipGate, was written by Qwabe himself for the *Daily Vox* (Qwabe, 2016b). In it, Qwabe addresses the erasure of Dlamini, defines what is meant by "white tears", and deconstructs the brazenly inaccurate and racist reporting of the Western and South African press. He lays out his response to people who considered Dlamini's action "racist" by observing that racism cannot be reduced to "exchanges of unkind words between people of varying melanin content" (ibid.), pointing to how racism includes a variety of vicious, insidious, and exploitative social conditions that were absent from Schultz's experience of #TipGate. In this vein, far from denying the need for class solidarity, he goes on to outline the reasons for the insufficiency of a class analysis in the South African context, and the ways in which #TipGate proves Schultz is not a "vulnerable working class person" (ibid.) at all – but a *white* working class person, which gives her completely different affordances and outcomes.

Qwabe's analysis is incisive and far-ranging, and there is no need to repeat it here. Instead, I want to explore one aspect of #TipGate that he does not mention, and analyse in a little more depth the links between two others that he touches on only briefly. Firstly: he does not discuss his thinking behind the "LOL" with which his post started. Much of Qwabe's writing

brims with humour and irony. For example, he starts his analysis of why there was nothing racist about #TipGate with the statement: "Firstly, there's no way that I can be 'racist' as some of my best friends are white" (ibid.). This deadpan imitation of a typical white response to being called racist – which he neither marks as funny nor explains to readers – predictably traps the first commenter on the article, a Cliff Smith, who attacks Qwabe for thinking this is a "get out jail free card" (ibid.). Qwabe's brand of humour seems to be especially effective at luring white fragility and hypocrisy from its foxholes. He clearly finds things funny that many people simply can't understand.

The second and third aspects I want to link together – which Qwabe does mention – are on the one hand, the perceived asymmetries of power, and, on the other, the way they play out in space. Qwabe articulates a distinction between the nastiness of the racialized structure of the social order, which is sedimented in powerful institutions, spaces, and processes, and the comparative niceness and powerlessness of Ashleigh Shultz working a shift in the Obz Café[2]. On this issue, he says:

> Often, we make ourselves "objects of political protest" because we wrongly personalise political acts that that are directed at making structural critiques of the society we exist in. […] Ashleigh was uncomfortable […] because she made the whole affair about her when it wasn't (ibid.).

[2] Observatory in Cape Town is a (relatively) socially mixed, gentrified, but still 'edgy' neighbourhood of Cape Town, and the Obz Café a favourite hangout for various Bohemians and students who can afford it.

Qwabe is here referring to what I shall call the "stiletto effect" below, which raises specific ethical issues for political action. On why the restaurant as a location was appropriate, after listing larger and more powerful institutions, including the South African government and the world's biggest university brands, that had been taken on, Qwabe relates:

> We just believe that while we are at it [i.e. engaging powerful large and powerful institutions] it is valuable to live our decolonial politics by taking the conversation to everyday public spaces – including our classrooms, communities, restaurants, shopping centres and all other sites of public presence. Tipgate therefore forms part of an ongoing deliberate attempt to *re-politicise the public space* and raise consciousness regarding how unjust the society we exist in is (ibid., emphasis added).

I shall argue that Dlamini and Qwabe were both successful in repoliticising particular public spaces, and in reforming spaces of belonging more broadly in South Africa.

These two dimensions – the humorous and the spatial – need some theoretical framing in order to be explored in depth, which is the purpose of the next section.

5.2. Humour and the social order

The postfoundational model of discourse theory makes clear the conditions and dynamics of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses. There remains however a lot of work to be done when it comes to specific types or genres of discourse. In what follows, I will attempt to lay out some of the theoretical meeting points between discourse theory, and a critical approach to humour.

5.2.1. Critical humour studies

Michael Billig's *Laughter and Ridicule* (2005) is a key text in the new and growing field of critical humour studies. It addresses a tendency in psychological and sociological research to approach humour with a mind-set he dubs "ideological positivism" (Billig, 2005, p. 5), where the supposedly positive and healthy aspects of having a laugh are stressed, while those aspects of humour that are perceived as cruel or motivated by a desire to ridicule are either repressed, or defined as unfunny. In so doing, humour studies has laboured – and in certain circles continues to labour – under outdated or naïve theories of discourse. For example, in Delia Chiaro's latest book on digital humour (2017), we hear that comedians may be smarter, more honest, and more analytical than most politicians, but that they cannot change the world, only "make us feel better" (Chiaro, 2017, p. 5). She asserts – on the authority of leading humour scholar Christie Davies – that humour "takes the temperature of a society at a given moment" (Chiaro, 2017, p. 3). Davies himself has on numerous occasions defended the position that jokes are "thermometers […] not thermostats"[3] (Davies, 2017, p. 241). For him, "jokes are an extremely weak force in a world dominated by very strong social and political forces" (Davies, 2017, p. 240). Strong forces are things such as the death penalty, religious laws, military invasions, etc.

For critical humour scholars such as Mostafa Abedinifard, on the other hand, who analyses the example of a homophobic joke cycle about men from a town in Iran called Qazvin, where religious laws and the death penalty are indeed no laughing matter, jokes play a very

[3] While this axiom might suggest he was, Davies was not in fact an historical materialist asserting the causal primacy of the economic base. Far from it: he was a lifelong campaigner against the prominence of Marxist theory in the social sciences (Leoussi & Clarke, 2017).

powerful “heteronormalizing and disciplinary functions” (Abedinifard, 2017, p. 248). Indeed, humour keeps the strong forces strong. To show how this works, Abedinifard builds on the insights of critical discourse analysis, that “the microstructures of language are linked with and help to shape the macrostructures of society” (Mayr, 2008, p. 9). In other work, Abedinifard engages with Raewyn Connell’s notion of gender hegemony (Connell, 1987) and hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), rooted in the Gramscian tradition. He theorises gender humour as a disciplinary technique employing ridicule to deepen and renew the hegemonic gender hierarchy, in part through producing “self-regulating social subjects” within the gender order (Abedinifard, 2016, p. 235).

What is found funny within a particular society is thus arguably in a very significant relationship with the prevailing hegemony. While humour theorists such as Davies and Chiaro see humour as hopelessly weak compared to the “strong” forces that change the world, the idea that humour plays a role in keeping a particular order in place, thereby supplementing brute force, turns this idea completely on its head: humour is as much part of what keeps an advancing army marching, or a homophobic cleric preaching, as are guns or money. Humour might therefore be understood alongside laws, religions, and barked military instructions as another force – potentially as strong as any other – that shapes the world.

While “ideological positivism” tends to cordon off the realm of the funny from the realm of “really” oppressive social forces, critical humour studies has often followed the opposite path: to show how oppression, discipline, and social control – usually implemented as ridicule – lie at the very heart of humour. Billig distinguishes two ways in which ridicule interacts with the social order: it can be “disciplinary” when it enforces that order, or “rebellious” to the extent that the order itself is challenged (Billig, 2005, p. 202). In other words, in a distinction he cites, it may be “contestive” or “repressive” (J. Holmes, 2000).

Two other distinctions that Billig draws are useful here for analysing this discourse. First, Billig points out that "if laughter is rhetorical, then so is the refusal of audiences to respond to laughter" (Billig, 2005, p. 179). This refusal – or "unlaughter" as he calls it – is the po-faced reaction of the social actor who is expected to find something funny and pointedly does not. Unlaughter can happen because a joke "fails" to correspond "to the appropriateness of the social occasion and circumstance in which it occurs" (Lockyer & Pickering, 2008, p. 810). The example that Billig and a number of others pick up on is that of former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi's attempted silencing of a heckling German Member of the European Parliament (MEP) in 2003 with the "joke"/"gaffe" that he would be a good character to play a commandant in a film on Nazi concentration camps (Billig, 2005, p. 177; Lockyer & Pickering, 2008, p. 812). Of course Berlusconi was not expecting the MEP to laugh, but he was expecting other people to join him in laughing at the butt of his 'joke' – if this had happened, the joke would not have failed. His attempt to silence the MEP by ridiculing his supposed adherence to a shameful national stereotype is thus as socially meaningful as if it had succeeded: the whole of Europe (it became a large scandal) broke out in "unlaughter" that made Berlusconi, and not the MEP, the object of ridicule.

The second useful distinction is between the psychological motivation of the person who is attempting humour, and the sociological effects that humour has (Billig, 2005, p. 211). This distinction is introduced by Billig not in an attempt to link a critical theory of humour to intention, but rather to show how agents in "their meta-discourses of laughter […] might claim to occupy the position of rebelliousness" when in fact "the consequences of such humour might be conformist rather than radical, disciplinary not rebellious" (ibid.). In fact, Billig shows how examples of supposedly contestive humour typically collapse on analysis into the repressive. As his theory is grounded in a developmental understanding of ridicule,

the guiding image built of the social function of humour is the parental authority figure training the infant's sense of humour to find ridiculous that which subverts the social order. A key example for Billig is that of professionals who play a practical joke on an apprentice. The joke both "teaches the conventions and takes innocuous revenge against them" – a "momentary release […] from the enduring power of constraint" (ibid.). While they enjoy seeing their joke undermine the social order, this undermining is only momentary, and its real effect is to teach the apprentice what the rules really are. As Billlig gloomily observes, far from being a golden age of rebellious humour, "the world of late capitalism [promotes] the enjoyment of mass-marketed rebellious humour [that] directly aids the economic structures that have produced such enjoyment" (Billig, 2005, p. 212). Not only does it fail to undermine repressive power structures, such joking serves also to clear the individual conscience of a sense of responsibility for perpetuating them, while at the same time not recognizing "that rebellion has thus become a joke" (Billig, 2005, p. 213).

Thus in Billig's model, seriousness and humour are symbiotically intertwined in the perpetuation of the social order. Embarrassment – the fear of being laughed at – works as "an internalized force to protect codes and ensure routine social compliance" (Billig, 2005, p. 215). The fact that we enjoy laughing explains, in Billig's view, something that Freud explained only partially: why social life is able to continue despite the fact that it requires that we limit our own pleasure (Billig, 2005, pp. 216–217). Human beings can actually enjoy the process of constraining our own freedom; we take pleasure (even "malicious pleasure" (Billig, 2005, p. 228)) from the embarrassment of others, and even laugh at our previous embarrassment later (Billig, 2005, p. 233). This pleasure may of course also have the dimension of being an enjoyment of seeing the social order subverted – the "rebellious" aspect of humour – and this therefore places a paradox at the heart of social life, that "the

same mechanism that ensures social compliance also expresses pleasure at subversion" (Billig, 2005, p. 234).

Perhaps because Billig has developed his critical approach specifically to address the patent failings of ideological positivism, it can feel a bit stuck in a negative reading, where it becomes unclear whether any act of humorous "rebellion" against the social order has a chance of succeeding. Humour's "vital, disciplinary role in the maintenance of social life" (Billig, 2005, p. 238) seems to leave little room for social change. In his observation that while humour itself is universal, different "cultures" have different definitions of what is funny, and that these definitions also change over time (Billig, 2005, p. 239), he leaves unanswered the question as to how humour might be involved in such change. It is as if the critical and uncritical theories have converged on the conclusion that "jokes will never change the world" – while at least the critical theory has established that jokes are *impactful* in preventing the world from changing. There is, however, no reason to suppose that we need to leave Billig's theory of humour in this static quagmire. In outlining the rhetorical dimensions of humour, and the disciplinary functions at its core, we have good grounds to integrate it into broader approaches to discourse – such as post-foundational discourse theory.

Humour is clearly a socially meaningful articulatory practice that disciplines the formation of subject roles, and may renovate or erode existing hegemonic structures. Billig's use of the concept of "culture" to delimit the realm of what is found funny (i.e. this is funny in culture A but not in culture B because of the underlying social order that is being enforced) is thus perhaps not so useful for explaining how change happens, as it tends to confuse people with a shared national, linguistic, or ethnic background with people who share a particular social vision. The organic intellectuals of the South African student movement, for example, are boldly asserting a different way of looking at the South African conjuncture that could be

called a "culture" only in a very extended and awkward sense of the term. If counter-hegemonic discourse is even possible – i.e. if we reject economism, and accept that social life is overdetermined – then it must be possible that different senses of what is funny can compete with each other in the same social milieu, and attempt to hegemonise themselves through disciplining social actors into specific subject positions. As was explained in §3.3.2. affect plays a key role in fixing moments around a particular nodal point, and the mobilisation of affect must thus be very closely studied as it is an indicator of discursive struggle.

When in 2013 the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called protestors opposing his increasingly repressive regime "çapulcu" ["ruffians"], they responded by turning the word into a badge of pride, a revolutionary appellation that inverted the supposed meaning of the word, and united opposition to tyranny (Varol, 2014). Humour and satire have indeed become hallmarks of organised protest around the world, and in the context of both Turkey and the Arab Spring the term "revolutionary humour" has gained currency (Helmy & Frerichs, 2013; Mersal, 2013; Varol, 2014). Humour spreads very quickly on social media, affecting non-contiguous domestic and global discourses, influencing thinking and activism on specific reforms and demands, building solidarity around these demands, and "piercing the culture of fear prevalent in tyrannical regimes […while depicting] an alternate, and more appealing, reality" (Varol, 2014, p. 558). So, while always avoiding the almost universal tendency to focus on the positive effects of humour that Billig so carefully exposes, we should be clear that humour does not have a special place outside of discourse: it too is involved in processes of change. I would argue that in particular social orders that have achieved hegemony, what counts as funny in a particular society where a social imaginary is hegemonic is defined by the *horizon of intelligibility* (Laclau, 1990, p. 69) making a *sense of*

humour overlap strongly with *common sense*. As I noted earlier, the commenter who found the situation with Qwabe and Dlamini "hilarious" did so both from a critical vantage point, and from one not honed in the southern African context. There is something here in thinking through certain members of the Fallist movement – such as Dlamini and Qwabe – as the kind of "organic intellectuals" that Gramsci theorised were unattached to the established sedimented institutions of higher learning, and were therefore able to pierce through the kind of common sense that makes alternatives seem absurd, or impossible, i.e. through hegemonic discourses (Gramsci, 1971). Rebellion is not the same thing as revolution, nor is repression that same thing as conservatism. Even while disciplining actors into specific subject positions, these positions may be those of cadres in a revolutionary, counter-hegemonic struggle, seeking to fundamentally unseat the existing social order.

5.2.2. Laughing bodies in space

Before we move on to the analysis, let us consider the important issue of how humour works with bodies in space. A remarkable account laughter is provided by Frantz Fanon, who in his phenomenological analysis of being pointed at by the white child on the train, writes

> "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" Frightened! Frightened! Now they were beginning to be afraid of me. I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter had become impossible. I could no longer laugh, because I already knew that there were legends, stories, history, and above all historicity […] Then, assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema… (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 84).

The white child's gaze alienates Fanon from his humanity, pushing him into the "zone of non-being" created by the historical representation of Black people as non-people. If you are not a person, you cannot laugh. Laughter here is used to index the communion between humans in a particular social order. People may taunt and insult each other, and on that level laughter would be possible. But, as Fanon argues, the racial order does not operate on that level. White cultural production makes Black people into demonic and inhuman figures, discursive caricatures whose being is imposed from the outside.

Then, when a white woman says of him, "Look how handsome that Negro is!..." he responds: "Kiss the handsome Negro's ass, madame!" (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 86):

> Shame flooded her face. At last I was set free from my rumination. At the same time I accomplished two things: I identified my enemies and I made a scene. A grand slam. Now one would be able to laugh (ibid.).

As we have seen, for Billig, embarrassment – or at least the fear of being ridiculed – lies at the very heart of the disciplinary power of humour. This subversion of the racial order – where the discursive construction speaks back to the white woman – temporarily frees Fanon from the zone of non-being, allowing him to laugh at her shame. I say 'temporarily' in response to Fanon's own implied sense of a fleeting victory; he has "made a scene" now, but this is hardly a permanent reversal of fortunes. But it is important to note that, for however brief a moment, she is the one who is being disciplined, with a particularly sexual reversal. Whereas she could call the 'Negro' handsome with no sense of sexual impropriety as she regards him as a non-person, his ability to remind her of their shared human sexuality – that he has an ass that she should kiss – immediately floods her with recognition of a desire that is forbidden to her, one that subverts the social order: sexual intimacy between Black and white.

Her shame thus uncovers that fact of Fanon's humanity, which she must repress again in order to regain social composure.

Dodds and Kirby (2013) have argued that humour may even have a geopolitical dimension. Examining Stephen Colbert's highly ironic hosting of the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner in 2006, they observe that Colbert was a complete flop in the room where President George W. Bush was both the guest of honour and the butt of the humour, but a huge success on the internet (Dodds & Kirby, 2013, pp. 45–46). Colbert in Washington D.C. in 2006 and Dlamini/Qwabe in Cape Town in 2016 certainly prove this: that a joke *lands* differently in different spaces. The "geographical mechanics of humour" may extend into space in other ways: a joke has "boundary-marking" effects, for it includes some and excludes others, producing some people as being in place, and others as being out of place (Dodds & Kirby, 2013, p. 48). Laughter and unlaughter can heighten or lower the boundaries between people (M. Smith, 2009). Furthermore, humour is instrumental in producing what it means to be a 'citizen' of a particular nation – as became clear in the reaction of the Danish state, and to Muslims around the world, to the publication of the *Jyllands Posten* cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed (Dodds & Kirby, 2013, p. 50). Danes were constructed as the people who laugh at a particular brand of humour, and therefore value a particular approach to speech and to Islam. One could also point to the extensive French self-definition work done in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo massacre as evidence of this. Muslims, on the other hand – a religious or a racial identity – were constructed as those who meet satire with unlaughter.

Succumbing perhaps to a dash of ideological positivism in the end themselves, Dodds and Kirby go so far as to suggest that humour can be used productively to meet valuable geopolitical ends: when it "makes the familiar seem fantastical, especially through particular

spatial imaginations and representations" that would help in reimagining solutions to intractable crises such as Israel-Palestine (2013, p. 56); or when humour is used to satirise bad people in power, and is clearly "translated" into political action (2013, p. 57). There is of course no reason to believe that humour is the tool of the "good guys" (Billig, 2005, p. 220): it is available to everybody, there is nothing intrinsically progressive (nor necessarily conservative) about it. Nor is there a reason to fetishize humour, to make it seem a mysterious and independent force. It is merely playing its particular role in the broader discursive realm, which includes the role of 'making' space and of sorting which bodies do and do not belong in a particular space.

As specific articulations sediment or reactivate hegemonic discursive formations, we are hailed into the subject roles of people who have a common-sense sense of humour. Counter-hegemonic humour, on the other hand, may be met with blank unlaughter. That is, unless the pattern is repeated, and a greater number of articulations start to challenge the assumptions of the old formation, as happened on social media in the aftermath of #TipGate.

5.3. The evolution of a meme

Not only did Ntokozo Qwabe's post about Wandile Dlamini's action go viral, it also fed into a specific genre of jokes that centred around notions of "giving back the land". While Qwabe was hardly the first to gain traction online with hashtags like #IzweLethu ("#OurLand"[4]), the central role that the land plays as a humorous device seems not to predate the #TipGate saga[5].

[4] All translations from isiZulu into English by Nonhlanhla Ntuli

[5] This conclusion is based on a quick survey of Twitter posts using #IzweLethu before 30 April 2016. Before Dlamini/Qwabe, #IzweLethu seems to be associated with 'serious' posts only.

I do not claim that the jokes collected below are exhaustive of the genre; they are however representative of all the themes of those that came through my own social media accounts (on Twitter and Facebook) in the 18-month period over which I collected them. In the discussion that follows, I will discuss 20 jokes in total (three jokes from Facebook and 17 from Twitter) under five thematic headings.

5.3.1. "At least you still have the land!": Land as a nodal point

The idea that having land makes up or compensates for other problems or lacks, suggests that the land itself is playing in determining what is *valued*. In Figure 5-1 the official MTN account apparently[6] responds to a (white) customer who is complaining about disappearing airtime: she is advised to cheer up (to not be "sad") as she has land. The humour here works on along two intersecting discourse regimes: that of the consumer society, where a customer is deferred to in order to retain them; and that of the post-apartheid land détente, where the land question is a matter left to government to sort out between land-owning "willing seller" farmers and land claimant "willing buyer" communities. The humour does not require @leatitiajvr to actually *own* land – what is being ridiculed here is the norm that the legacy of colonialism should not structure everyday social relationships – least of all those relationships thought of as commercial. In one plane her whiteness is singled out, while in the other the familiar subject roles of consumer and customer support are gestured to. The idea that a brand such as MTN would publicly mock their own customer, in a gentle but highly

[6] This tweet and reply was shared as a screenshot on Twitter and Facebook. The tweet by @leatitiajvr is archived at Twitter at https://twitter.com/leatitiajvr/status/764731326259929088. The reply however is not, meaning either that it was tweeted and then deleted, or that the response itself was a fabrication created by somebody else as a joke.

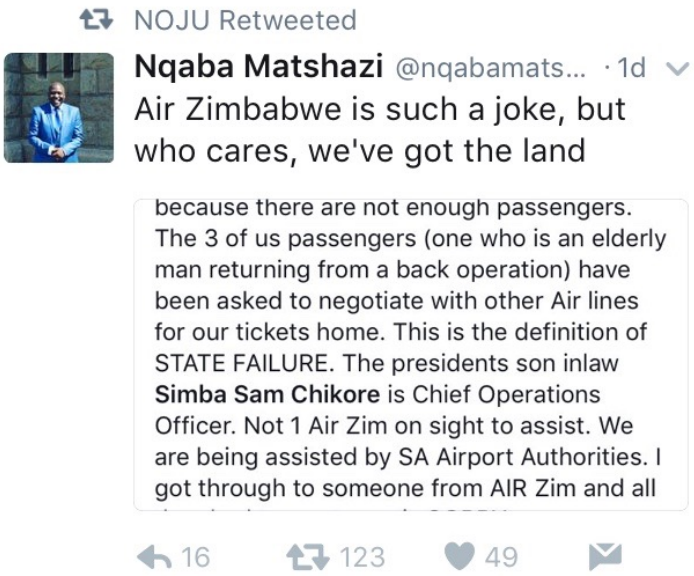
ironic tone, for belonging to a historically privileged group is at the core of the transgressive and thus "rebellious" nature of this joke.

Figure 5-1: Tweet reply by @MTNza_ to @leatitiajvr, 14 August 2016



"Having" land can also compensate for national failings, as in Figure 5-2. Here, tweeter @nqabamatshazi invokes pathos in the middle of a diatribe about being forced to wait for delayed Air Zimbabwe flights. In newly independent African countries the national airline often stood in for the possibilities and hope represented by the postcolonial period, for the "gleaming future" (Msimang, 2017, p. 31). That national pride is wound up in the national carrier – now, a "joke" – has to be compensated for by pride in something else, i.e. the precipitous land reform process in Zimbabwe.

Figure 5-2: Tweet by @nqabamatshazi, 15 March 2017



That the failure of the airline itself is not the important issue in the future of Zimbabwe, but that it is ownership of land that is, suggests that the land itself has become a nodal point for narratives of national or ethnic success. That this comparison is shot through with pathos, however, prevents too easy a categorisation of this humour as only rebellious. It can be read as suggesting that Zimbabwe-style land reform may represent something of a pyrrhic victory. This kind of pathos is also suggested in Figure 5-1 where, I would suggest, lost airtime is a consumer issue that is a popular point of complaint across racial and social divides in South Africa, and it is possible that MTN's customer service is also being poked fun at – at least, a little – and reimagined as an incompetent agent who, unable to offer the customer a complete answer, deflects the conversation to land. So, while these jokes may be enjoyed for violating the norms of consumerism or national identity, they may also have a disciplinary kickback in the construction of the hopeless customer service agent, clutching at straws to deal with an angry white woman, or the self-deluding Zimbabwean who will say anything to cling to some national pride.

5.3.2. Who deserves land? Motivating subject roles

The next theme deals with who *deserves* to have land. These jokes work by imagining a future where land is earned on the basis of what appear to be trivial behaviour. Ntokozo Qwabe himself participates in telling this brand of jokes, as in the examples in Figure 5-3 and Figure 5-4. Having good fashion sense – i.e. not wearing shades at night – and being able to do the *ivosho* dance[7] are playfully proposed as qualifying criteria.

Figure 5-3: Facebook post by Ntokozo Sbo Qwabe, 8 May 2017



[7] This is a "dance style where you bend your knees for the bum to move towards the ground, and return to your upright position swiftly and rhythmically without losing balance" (Nonhlanhla Ntuli).

Figure 5-4: Facebook post by Ntokozo Sbo Qwabe, 27 October 2017



The allocation of land is thus constructed in absurdist turns. While this may seem like a flippant idea, the history of South Africa is full of such absurdity: land was whipped out from under Black people's feet using all manner of trickery and deceit. Pointing to the absurdity of who gets the land thus at least partly constitutes the rebellious facet of the joke: the aspect of the social order rebelled against is the frequently articulated idea during the South African transition and since that property rights are "sacrosanct" (cf. Hart, 2014). Qwabe is playing the fool around a topic that for many people has an almost religious seriousness about it.

At the same time, it is also hard to escape the sense that there is a disciplinary undercurrent to the tomfoolery, driven perhaps by an anxiety over never seeing the day of true land transformation come, or of not seeing it properly managed: the spectre of a tribunal that repeats past mistakes, excluding people from land ownership for arbitrary reasons, surely reinforces the existing rather tighter and stricter rules of land title.

A variation on this logic is suggested by Sipho Hlongwane in Figure 5-5. Here he is dealing with linguistic authenticity. Balls of fried dough, which are eaten plain or with a sweet or savoury filling or sauce, are popular in many South African cuisines, where they are typically called *amagwinya* (isiZulu) or *vetkoek* (Afrikaans) even by people whose first language is English. People who employed the English expression "fat cakes" instead of the isiZulu word *amagwinya* are lampooned by Hlongwane for their supposed social pretention: in attempting to erase the traces of other languages from their linguistic performance, supposedly because they consider these languages to have a lower value than English, they go too far and erase words that have been borrowed into English[8]. Hlongwane encourages multilingual speakers to take pride in their native languages and cuisines, and to use home-grown terms, while at the same time making the less rebellious point that "fat cakes" is in fact not correct South African English usage at all. In this case at least, to be authentic is the same as being correct.

Figure 5-5: Facebook post by Sipho Hlongwane, 16 July 2017



[8] Similar verbal humour online involves imitating the accent of somebody trying to expunge their African-language accent from their English pronunciation. Because many African language speakers pronounce the middle sound of 'turn' to sound like 'ten', people trying to change their accents might occasionally over-correct and therefore pronounce 'turn' when they mean to say 'ten'. Hence, the playful Twitter compliment, "you're the burst" [i.e. "you're the best"] (from Tweet by @MotsoMatsu on 14 October 2014, archived by Twitter at https://twitter.com/MotsoMatsu/status/523243605490933760).

Another Janus-faced disciplinary/rebellious facet of this joke is the assumption that if Black people were more proud of their languages and ways of life, they would get the land back. This can go either way: while it is clearly Hlongwane's assumption that Black pride is a powerful force for change, and that Black people have the agency to get the land back, the contradictory reading is just as plausible: it is due to their lack of pride, and lack of agency, that Black people do not have the land; i.e. it is their own fault.

The final example in this theme is also about language, and is a joke with two layers. Popular South African author and personality Khaya Dlanga (@khayadlanga), who, with almost 400,000 followers on Twitter is one of the country's biggest social media influencers, joked that a white woman broadcast on SABC speaking African languages exceedingly well "can keep the land" (Figure 5-6). This equation – between linguistic/cultural authenticity and the right to land – retraces the same structure Hlongwane appealed to in Figure 5-5. Importantly, however, Dlanga's tweet received an immediate 'clapback' in the form of @NotYetUhuru_ quoting his tweet and asking her followers what "we" – i.e. Black people – "keep since we can speak English and Afrikaans?". There is a complex argument at work here. The clearest implication is that merely speaking a language is not sufficient to lay claim to land. @NotYetUhuru_ clearly undermines Dlanga's authority as an arbiter of who does and who does not deserve land by illustrating how his logic runs perpendicular to that of a properly historicised claim grounded in questions of justice. He has, she implies, missed the point: white people cannot erase historical injustices by learning a language any more than Black people were able to lay claim to South Africa by learning to speak Afrikaans, nor to England by learning to speak English. By changing the social actors in Dlanga's logic, she effectively rubbishes the logic of his assertion.

Figure 5-6: Tweet by @khayadlanga and Quoted Tweet by @NotYetUhuru_, 19 September 2017



The jokes in this theme produce a particular subject role of the "authentic" future land-owner in South Africa while at the same time poking fun at the institutions that would produce and police this "authenticity". The existing institution of an arbitrary and unjust end-state distribution protected by sacrosanct property rights is simultaneously undermined.

5.3.3. "Going undercover": Exploiting white vulnerability

The next popular theme can be read against the notion of "kindness" referred to by Sigle Ngobese at the start of #TipGate. In this theme, jokes are set in the context of intimate relationships between Black people and white people, where one might expect to be treated kindly: A man holding a vulnerable baby in Figure 5-7, inter-racial couples embracing in Figure 5-8 and Figure 5-9, collegial 'solidarity' in Figure 5-10, and sportsperson-like notions

of fair play in Figure 5-11. While the context of the first three jokes is fairly transparent, the last two require some explanation. Figure 5-10 refers to the call by a group of citizens of uncertain political allegiance, but largely perceived to be middle class and white, to wear black on Monday, 3 April 2017, in protest against President Jacob Zuma's cabinet reshuffle the previous week. In this tweet, @Motheo_ie aims to express solidarity as a cover for his real aim – which is supposedly to get the land back from the protesting whites. In Figure 5-11, champion runner Caster Semenya is pictured comforting Linsey Sharp, an athlete whom she had soundly beaten but who had been very negative about Semenya before the competition, at the IAAF World Athletics Championships, in August 2017.

Figure 5-7: Tweet by @A_Young_Padawan, 2 September 2016



Figure 5-8: Tweet by @axolasirayi, 28 March 2017



Figure 5-9: Tweet by @Leskorate, 15 November 2016



Figure 5-10: Tweet by @Motheo_ie, 3 April 2017



Figure 5-11: Tweet by @itsEsethu, 14 August 2017



Getting back the land is pictured being done up close and personal. What is remarkable here is the humorous play with everyday interpersonal relationships where people become vulnerable to each other – holding a baby, becoming romantically involved, or going on a protest march together. Vulnerability plays an important role in the rebellious dimension of these jokes. One aspect of the social order being rebelled against is the idea that the South

African national project – built on the supposed forgiveness and reconciliation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) [9] – is incompatible with an ambitious reclaiming of land. White people are supposed to be *forgiven* for apartheid and colonialism. The white people in these tweets are infants, lovers, or fellow activists – and yet they are also having the land extracted from them, or swallowed out of them. They are vulnerable to whether or not Black people treat them kindly. The joke in Figure 5-11 is the only one to explicitly reference the unkindness of whiteness as a racial power structure – the losing runner being comforted by Semenya is Lynsey Sharp, who had appealed to some shaky science in an attempt to see her opponent excluded from the Championship (Rupiah, 2016). In @itsEsethu's re-imagining of the moment, it is not Semenya's kindness that is pictured but her righteous response to the unkindness of Sharp, who represents the whole power structure of whiteness. Sharp, after all, is not South African and probably does not own land.

What is being rebelled against in these jokes is the way that a white power structure is able to remain obscured behind social norms that enforce the "kind" treatment of white people. Hegemonic whiteness can be thought of in Ahmed's terms, as a "collective without individuals" (2004b, n.p.) or what could be called a "structure without bodies". This theme in the joke cycle makes those bodies *visible* and licences unkindness to them.

The disciplinary dimension, on the other hand, emerges from within the rebellion: you can't actually swallow land out of a white person, and the baby won't be able to give you the land back. So in a subtle but very limited way, the catch-all intended audience of the call to "give

[9] The TRC famously encouraged perpetrators and victims of apartheid atrocities to put their stories on the record, with no guarantee of amnesty, so that forgiveness and reconciliation could be promoted in the newly minted democracy. Very few of the apartheid old guard admitted to serious infractions.

back the land" is being undermined, as landing in untargeted places at perhaps inopportune moments. Similarly, in Figure 5-10, the admonition to "keep your fingers crossed" has a self-defeating irony built in: he's only kidding, there is no real point in hoping.

5.3.4. Rejecting Locke

The debate over land restitution in South Africa is in dynamic tension with the debate over food security and rural livelihoods (see e.g. Kepe & Tessaro, 2014). The complexities of the agricultural sector of the economy are employed to counter militant calls for land transfer made in the public sphere. It is asserted that there are bigger issues than the distribution of land: people must eat, the highly capitalised and efficient South African agricultural economy cannot be allowed to founder due to imprudent, populist policies. A theme in the land joke cycle developed in response to this tactic is thus the assertion that "taking the land back" is not merely an agricultural issue. In Figure 5-12, @rashid_kay shares an image of a Black landowner in suit and tie seated on a carved wooden chair placed in a maize field, with the text "WHEN WE GET OUR LAND BACK". The image concisely articulates the overlapping space of land ownership, agriculture, and dignity. The image is posed in a genre reminiscent of the official photograph – a C.E.O. seated at a boardroom table, or a president seated in front of their cabinet – but also of the portrait in the early days of photography, where families would get dressed up in their Sunday best to go into town to have an official portrait taken, to be handed down across the generations. The photograph is thus an affecting statement of legacy and pride.

Figure 5-12: Tweet by @rashid_kay, 10 June 2017



What makes the tweet humorous is the incongruity between the business suit and ornate chair – associated with inside activities – and earthiness of the maize field. A business suit is not appropriate attire for agricultural work; the chair will get damaged and his shoes will get muddy. So while there is a quiet dignity in the man's posture and gaze, there is also an undercurrent of pathos, and even a slight element of the ridiculous. In this particular instance it is the ridiculous that rebels against the social order. Dignity can be grounded in apparently incongruous elements that supersede purely agricultural use of land: land is also linked to legacy, pride, and agency.

The tweet by @sboshmafu in Figure 5-13 expands on the theme by showing Oprah Winfrey on the cover of O Magazine in various relationships to the land: reading books on it with a

cocker spaniel against her breast, walking over it in a floral dress, feeding horses green apples, and contemplating what to "let go" of, while holding a maize cob. The tweet clearly rebels against the idea that any future land owner would have to justify to anybody what they are using the land for. The deployment of Oprah Winfrey – the doyenne of the idea of "living your best life" that Ntokozo Qwabe also referenced in his Facebook statement (see Appendix) – is significant. Winfrey grew up poor, and is now worth USD 2,8-billion (EUR 2,37-billion) (Forbes.com, 2017). Her particular lifestyle brand promotes a mix of social consciousness and self-actualisation, enabling consumption without guilt. The tweet projects the carefree wealth of Oprah Winfrey onto future Black land ownership in South Africa.

Figure 5-13: Tweet by @sboshmafu, 25 July 2017



This idea is articulated very clearly by @thentshingila, who quotes @DitaruMusic's critical tweet in Figure 5-14: "Many people can't take care of a pot plant but they want 8 ha land… bazawenzantoni?". "Bazawenzantoni" translates as "What are they going to do with it?". Ntshingila's response is to say "Sizowubuka sibe siphulula imikhaba" which means "We will look at it while rubbing our tummies" – idiomatically: "We will look at it with admiration".

The land may thus be enjoyed for the purposes only of admiring it – it does not even need to be used. The claim to the land – that it must be given back by the legatees of colonial dispossession – is thus asserted as being in no way based on plans for its future use. Issues of justice and restitution are thus valued above instrumental concerns about farming; to a certain extent this theme completes the loop of establishing the land as a nodal point that was initiated in §5.3.1. In this articulation there is rebellion against the perceived permanence of large-scale commercial agriculture as the only way to secure prosperity for poor people. Ultimately the target of this humour is the idea of the dependence of land justice on plans for the productive use of land. This is a clear response to the lineage of argument in the liberal tradition that comes down from John Locke that says that people come to own land only by virtue of mixing their labour with it – an argument that, as has been shown, was used to justify colonial dispossession of local people. This lineage is incredibly influential in thinking about land and land ownership, and in this sense this tweet can be read as encapsulating an anti-Lockean position.

Figure 5-14: Tweet by @thentshingila, 5 October 2017



5.3.5. "Yt msunery" and the horizon of intelligibility

White people, a.k.a. 'yts', feature strongly in the next theme – but this time not as friends, children, or intimate partners, but as deceivers, thieves, and aggressors. An editorial supportive of Dlamini and Qwabe written by Wanelisa Xaba, referenced above, ends with the following statement: "Lastly, imisunu yenu yazi 1652's. The white liberals. The white feminists. The white leftists. *NONKE*" (Xaba, 2016). "*Imisunu yenu yazi"* translates literally as "your assholes you know" – but can be understood idiomatically as "look here, screw you". "1652" is an appellation for a white person that reminds them of their shallow historical roots in South Africa[10]. Xaba's statement can thus be translated as "Lastly: screw you 1652s, you know. The white liberals. The white feminists. ALL OF YOU". The isiZulu insult *imisunu yenu* has become widely used to name a category of behaviour that would be called "fuckery" in standard social media English: *msunery*. I am borrowing the term here to describe the critique of white peoples' role in sustaining their current hegemonic control over land, through the maintenance of a particular land ideology.

[10] Jan van Riebeeck, colonial governor at the Cape of Good Hope, was the first European to establish a colonial foothold in what is now South Africa, in 1652. White people are thus associated with the settler, colonial, and apartheid culture that grew out of this moment when they are referred to as 1652s.

Figure 5-15: Tweet by @Khanyi_T, 11 November 2016



The tweet in Figure 5-15 parodies yt msunery in sustaining hegemony: Black claims for land are not intelligible to white people, who can only listen to Black people through the filters of their own prejudices: Black people are in need of education, and they vote for a corrupt government. The orthography of the tweet is also interesting in that the first two Yts' questions have question marks, whereas the final doesn't: it becomes clear that either in exasperation because they are not getting the answer they want, or because any pretence of listening has now been abandoned, that the final sentence is in fact a statement of the inscrutability of Black people's desires, rather than an actual question. Black calls for land are thus constructed as outside of the realm of common sense, and as not intelligible in the rational public sphere. The impossibility of rational debate with white people on the land question – where interracial deliberation, debate, and compromise is seen as a foundation stone of the 'Rainbow Nation' – is thus being undermined in this humorous tweet.

That South African institutions are complicit in the production of a particular ideology about land is satirised by @_MaZulu in Figure 5-16. A variation on the "Confused Lady / Math

Lady"[11] meme, which usually features a blonde Brazilian telenovela actress, is presented here with images of the Barbadian singer Rihanna. The meme is usually used to signify a slow and difficult process of working something out; in this case however the final frame with Rihanna covering her mouth indicates that she has arrived at a shocking realisation, which is articulated in the text of the tweet. This moment of clarity is clearly the source of the humour, however: @_MaZulu is playing the 'fool' in her conclusion that growing beans in cotton wool is part of an elaborate conspiracy to alienate Black children from the land. While the critique of institutional ideology inherent in this meme is clearly rebellious, there is a disciplinary element in the silliness of the conclusion, as if it was meant to say: "let's not get too carried away with conspiracy theories here".

Figure 5-16: Tweet by @_MaZulu, 31 March 2017



[11] http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/math-lady-confused-lady

The theme of yt msunery is also deepened with a tweet in response to one of its most frequently derided mascots. In March 2017 Western Cape premier and former Democratic Alliance leader Helen Zille unleashed a massive controversy by tweeting that colonialism was not all bad. This was not the first time that Zille had been publicly exposed for historical insensitivity, but it was arguably on many people's minds when she tweeted a picture of Table Mountain in May 2017. The Cape Town City Bowl, Atlantic Sea Board and Southern Suburbs are among some of the most racially segregated areas of South Africa, and to a large extent the heart of the city has become synonymous with white property interests. Tweeter @Zee_Mbana's deadpan question in response to Zille's tweet in Figure 5-17 is made funnier by shared knowledge of this history. She uses a familiar form of address: "mntase" – short for "mntasekhaya" – usually used when speaking to a sibling or a family member. "Lanto" means "that thing" – i.e. Table Mountain – a natural feature that has become iconic both of the nation, and, through its colonial history, of the process of land dispossession. She thus "politely" requests it back (again, an echo of the "politeness" Qwabe referred to in his Facebook post). There is also situational comedy in the direct question on Twitter, which acts as a kind of public and a publicising forum, in addressing the premier of the province who had been enjoying the view with request for a timeline on giving back the land.

Figure 5-17: Tweet by @Zee_Mbana, 29 May 2017

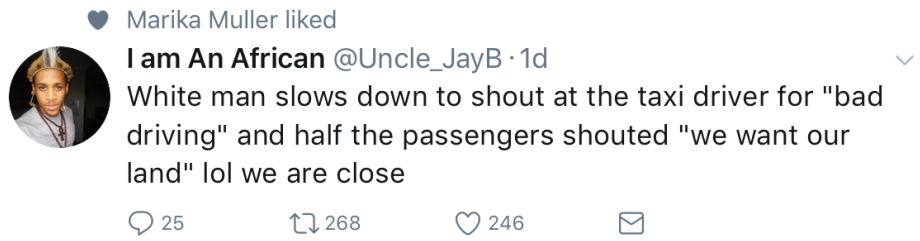


This tweet can also be fruitfully contrasted to the Oprah tweet discussed above (Figure 5-13): while enjoying the land merely for the land's sake, and living your best life on the land are asserted as the entitlement of Black South Africans, Zille's guilt-free enjoyment of the scenery must be interrupted by this tweet: she cannot be allowed to "live her best life" in Cape Town while making light of, or ignoring, colonial dispossession.

Another species of yt msunery is met with demands for land in the tweet by @Uncle_JayB (Figure 5-18). South Africa's particularly racialized "automobility" culture (Urry, 2004) sees white motorists, who often consider themselves as upholders of decent driving and the rules of the road, square off against Black taxi drivers, who are perceived as being bad and dangerous drivers. White people have tended to associate themselves with rules and public

order, and Black people with the breakdown of such rules: the idea that Black people are "unruly" is used to justify a discourse of spatial "neo-separatism" (Durrheim & Dixon, 2001).

Figure 5-18: Tweet by @Uncle_JayB, 3 August 2017



The inverted commas around "bad driving" indicates that the tweeter does not accept the rules or interpretation of the driving appealed to by the white driver, but that a growing number of people have seen through the equivalence drawn between whiteness and adherence to the rules, and that the primordial rule that was broken – the theft of the land – is now being asserted against the claims of white people to be "ruly" citizens. It is interesting that the tweeter both augments the amusing anecdote with a "lol", and makes the observation that "we are close", explicitly linking the growing sense of disjuncture, and the dislocation of sedimented social practices and discourses, with laughter. It is as if the old order is being ridiculed out of existence.

Another aspect of the white response to calls to give back the land is parodied in the tweet of actress Meryl Streep, supposedly singing the final line of the South African national anthem (Figure 5-19). White South Africans are often ridiculed for only knowing the Afrikaans and English verses of the national anthem, *Nkosi Sikel' iAfrika*, and in this tweet this selective ability, and indeed the Rainbow Nation assumptions of the structure of the hymn itself, is critiqued as continuous with the tendency to drown out other voices in the national conversation, while others still "live and strive for freedom".

Figure 5-19: Tweet by @boohley, 26 February 2017



The final joke I want to discuss here is contained in Figure 5-20. In it, mock shock at a radical discourse – the sacrilegious idea that heaven does not exist – is expressed, clearly assuming opposition to the social mores of an overwhelmingly religious country. The tweeter @MacfiriOD distances themselves from the statement by prefacing it with "Bathi" – i.e. "*They* say" – "that if heaven was real white people would've kept the bible to themselves like they do with the land" and by using both a shock emoji, and a shock reaction meme of the comically expressive Nigerian actor Odunlade Adekola. This triple distancing is of course part of the joke, as @McfiriOD is putting this statement out onto Twitter in tacit agreement with it. The tweet is actually a novel phrasing of an old anecdote by Jomo Kenyatta, often (mis)attributed online to Desmond Tutu:

> When the missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the missionaries had the Bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes

> closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the Bible
>
> (Kenyatta, no date)

The anecdote and the tweet make a point about yt msunery (although Kenyatta refers to missionaries and not whites); they also allude to Marx's critique of the way that religion functions to make unjust social relations seem alien to the realm of human action, and therefore beyond human agency to rectify (Marx & Engels, 1846/1970). It is not just that there was a shady exchange of religion for land, it is also implied that religion serves a masking role that prevents the redressing of the situation.

Figure 5-20: Tweet by @McfiriOD, 22 August 2017



The joke's mock shock thus softens the blow of the claim that "heaven is not real" – while still offering the social critique of religion as an ideology, a false consciousness that consists in masking relations of domination, making them appear outside of our control to deal with. At the level of yt msunery, they are not only deceiving us about heaven: they are also deceiving us that the land is theirs.

5.4. The contours of hegemony

These five themes work together to trace the contours of white land hegemony in South Africa. The notion of "at least you still have the land" anchors the counter-hegemonic discourse around "land" as a nodal point, an aspect of the discursive formation that is leveraged to critique and ultimately reject the Lockean notion of land ownership relying on "efficient" use. Specific subject roles and institutions are proposed (and simultaneously critiqued) in the playful imagination of who deserves the land, and social norms that would generally favour kindness to (white) people who are vulnerable to you are eroded as they are shown to support the perpetuation of an unkind structure. The reference in the theme of yt msunery to an horizon of intelligibility that separates the Black call for land from a white "common-sense" approach to what they consider to be theirs is perhaps the clearest indicator of the existence of a hegemonic land discourse that is imbricated with the racial order, as the borders of intelligibility double as the borders of hegemony. That these jokes all subtly undermine themselves, having both rebellious and disciplinary aspects, is more an indicator of the reality of discursive struggle than it is of an unclear purpose. After all, the dislocation of sedimented identities happens under conditions of affective activation, and the pleasure of a wryly subversive and joke is heightened by some ironic distance from more straightforward revolutionary readings.

5.5. Telling #TipGate as a joke

We will now return to the Obz Café on 28 April, 2016. The Dlamini/Qwabe joke is executed in three stages. The first stage is the initial provocation itself: Wandile Dlamini wrote "WE WILL GIVE TIP WHEN YOU RETURN THE LAND" where they were asked to write a gratuity amount. The action itself fits Billig's definition of rebellious humour in that it takes

pleasure in seeing the social order subverted. What do I mean by the social order? As argued above, the norm that individual white people are not asked by individual Black people to account for historically produced inequalities, and that the unequal structure of society should not itself structure everyday social interactions, is a powerful pillar of the Rainbow Nation détente. Dlamini's action is bold and interesting in that they did not send their message out into the Twitter ether, but directly to a particular white person, in a particular space. Dlamini is playing around with an ethical conundrum that may be called the stiletto effect[12]. The stiletto effect can be described as follows: in an unequal social order, responsibility for the perpetuation of that order (i.e. causal power) is distributed across many agents, with little concentration of responsibility in any particular agent, while the bad effects of that order – poverty, death, disease, etc. – are in fact concentrated in the individual people on the losing side of the unequal social relation. Reversing the stiletto to a particular beneficiary of inequality – Schultz in this case – feels arbitrary: how can she be expected to bear the weight of the entire unfairness of colonialism and white supremacy? This quite arbitrary reversal is what makes Dlamini's action subversive – what makes it a joke, in fact – though it does not necessarily assert that it is fair. Rather, it seeks to imagine for a moment a social order where this dissipated responsibility for perpetual inequality could indeed be concentrated in everyday social interactions, where every person with any access to some kind of social power was held responsible for working together to "give back the land".

The second stage of the joke turns from Dlamini's wit, which is "created", to the realm of the "comic", which is found (Freud's distinction quoted in Billig, 2005, p. 232). In fact, Qwabe's Facebook post really just describes events as they unfold: the LOL is to draw our attention to

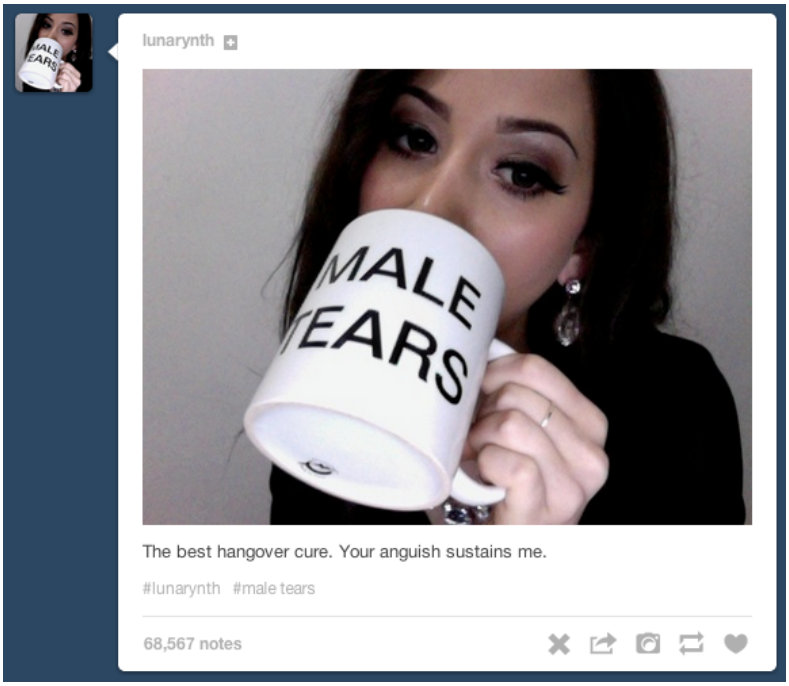
[12] Thank you to Jason van Niekerk for introducing this term into our discussion of #TipGate.

the comedy of the situation. The fact that the waitress and her colleague do not find Dlamini's joke funny – that they in fact get upset by it and think it is racist – introduces a disciplinary dimension into the situation as Schultz and the manager now turn themselves into ridiculous figures. What is ridiculous about them is their "white tears". This concept is interesting to trace in its global development which started, like many internet jokes, with a joke in the United States (Shifman, Levy, & Thelwall, 2014). In a 2001 episode of the highly subversive animated comedy South Park, the comically mean Cartman is shown licking the tears off an enemy's face, saying "Oh the tears of unfathomable sadness, mmm yummy, yummy!"[13]. The idea that the tears of your enemy are delicious was politicised in at least 2008, when feminist bloggers started to refer to "male tears" as delicious[14]. Male tears are not just any tears, of course: they are tears cried by men when they are challenged for sexist or otherwise patriarchal behaviour. The meme thus evolved to refer to a specific defence mechanism: claiming to be hurt, attacked, offended, under siege, etc., in defence of a system that is itself more hurtful, attacking, and offensive. Because the mantle of their masculinity benefits all men, their investment in protecting patriarchal arrangements may not always be clear to them, and this meme is intended to disrupt that specific cultural script. What makes male tears so funny is precisely this insistence on valuing the comfort of men in a system that serves them, over the liberation of women. Rather than being tears that deserve sympathy, they are tears that deserve ridicule (Figure 5-21).

[13] http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/your-tears-are-delicious

[14] http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/male-tears

Figure 5-21: Tumblr post by lunarynth, 24 July 2013[15]



Memes related to "white tears" really took off with the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the United States in 2013. Similarly to male tears, what makes white tears ridiculous is that they are shed as a defence mechanism to induce sympathy for an affective attachment to a particular harmful power structure over liberation for the people harmed by that structure. Though the whites who cry, and the people who are not white who rush to console them, may not realise *why* they are crying, their tears betray their affiliation to the power structure of whiteness. Instead of responding to these tears with sympathy, we are justified in responding to them instead with relish.

In the analogy of the stiletto effect: Dlamini's wit in the first step is to reverse the stiletto by holding Schultz accountable for colonial land theft; the comic situation in the second step

[15] Date extracted from metadata on page http://male-tears.tumblr.com/post/56283640978/lunarynth-the-best-hangover-cure-your-anguish. Original post link broken.

evolves because of her and her colleague's ridiculous "white tears" in response to the wit. Qwabe's role becomes important now as his Facebook post seeks to discipline social actors into this new social order – one that runs perpendicular to the existing order – in which racial power structures were happily dismantled, instead of tearfully defended. The affective economy (Ahmed, 2004c) – i.e. will her tears be traded for sympathy? – operative in this moment of disjuncture is that Schultz meets Dlamini's wit with unlaughter, and Qwabe and Dlamini in turn meet her "tears" with an assertion that they have no currency – we might even take the liberty of claiming that her tears are met with "untears". Empathy and ridicule are after all in competition with each other (Billig, 2005, p. 225): one cannot attach value to her tears and discipline her into a new social order at the same time. Instead, Qwabe attempts to get the online space to laugh with him at the comedy of the ridiculous white tears.

The third step sees hegemony laid bare, as a particular kind of unlaughter breaks out across the world. *The Spectator* attacks Qwabe for being incapable of registering the pain of the waitress*; The Daily Mail* calls him an international figure of hate; etc. Refusal to exchange her white tears (the most valuable currency, as Davis, 2016 points out) for his empathy place Qwabe outside of the realm of the 'normal' social human being. He is like Fanon stuck in two dimensions by the white gaze: he cannot laugh until he is able to insult. The hundreds of thousands of rands raised for Schultz, and the attempts to get Qwabe expelled from Oxford, only prove Dlamini and Qwabe's point about the order they are critiquing: that the weight of white supremacy is felt in all Black bodies, but that responsibility for it seems to exist in no particular white body; in fact, trying to hold one white body to account results in a redoubling of the weight. Of course, the whitelash-promoters themselves thought it was very funny that so much money was raised for Schultz, as they understood their joke as disciplining Qwabe back into the social order. In terms of the ethics of humour, where if "there is a 'right to

offend', what remains crucial is whether the humour kicks socially up or down" (Lockyer & Pickering, 2008, p. 812), the whitelash offers proof, if any was needed, that Dlamini's joke was an ethical one. What becomes clear is that there is not one but two social orders at work here: the visionary social order of the activists – a counter-hegemonic articulation; and the existing hegemonic social order represented by the waitress, Ngobese, Zille, and all others trying to keep a lid on an engagement with historical land injustice that touches privileged social agents in everyday spaces.

5.6. The punchline!

In Qwabe's disciplinary ridicule of Ashleigh Schultz, we can see that she is being corralled into a new social order that many people have yet to wrap their heads around. How discourse theory might account for humour is however advanced slightly by the analysis of this data, as it appears that in the very typical tactic of ambiguity humour seems particularly well suited to loosening the 'fixed' meaning and relations of particular discursive identities through containing the struggle within them – as if they are transition articulations from one meaning to another. And so, for example, the ambiguities around whether or not having the land is fair trade for having a "joke" airline like Air Zimbabwe (Figure 5-2) or whether demanding land back from an infant is a revolutionary act or a fool's errand (Figure 5-7) do not entirely rearticulate a sedimented discourse, but they do direct affective energy at these particular nodes in the discourse, and create uncertainty and a sense of unfixedness around concepts like deserving the land, or land use. In so doing, jokes might arguably be a good grounds for discursive struggle, as they introduce ambiguity and affective heat around joints in the social imaginary that had seemed solid, cold, and immovable before.

It should therefore not surprise southern African readers that an analyst who was not raised here finds #TipGate "hilarious" before we do, as we have been inducted into a hegemonic social imaginary that is slowly being dislocated. Our "common sense" overlaps with our "sense of humour" and only in allowing ourselves to be hailed into new myths and social imaginaries can we learn to laugh again. The organic intellectuals of the student movement are constructing these new myths in ways that directly address the space-making, boundary-marking functions of colonial assumptions about where white people and Black people could feel as if they belonged in South Africa. Dlamini and Qwabe's prioritisation of taking the decolonial struggle to everyday spaces involved the staging of humour, which destabilises easy assumptions about what is acceptable in public; what is funny, and what is not. What is counter-hegemonic about the "giving back the land" discourse is its attempts to dislocate an easy white assumption of unbounded land control – where whites feel in place just about everywhere except for the small patches of poverty and want reserved for Black people – and that they can escape historical responsibility for these boundaries. The discourse breaks down boundaries for Black people, making them "in place" anywhere in South Africa.

Chapter 6: What About the Landless Whites? *Ontworteldheid* in the New South Africa

The theme of white vulnerability and the expectation of kindness in the context of national reconciliation is picked up in a very different kind of discursive formation: discourses about white people who neither own nor control land. A particular caricature of the white relationship with land relies on the representation of white South Africans as pipe-smoking, felt-hat-wearing farmers. Opponents of critical approaches to race, and whiteness studies in particular, seem to think that to provide examples of wealthy, confident, and powerful Black people, or of poor, marginalised, and suffering white people is to prove that white privilege, or hegemonic whiteness, is a risible fabrication. But this is quite clearly not the case, as has been shown before in other contexts (Hartigan, 2005; Wray, 2006). As I shall argue in the context of South Africa, the discursive construction of white people as poor, landless, and vulnerable plays an important role in various iterations of white supremacy.

This representational work is done every day on Twitter (see §4.2.2.1. where photoshoots, newsclips, and documentary videos of poor whites are regularly shared. The sheer visual abundance of this discursive phenomenon suggests that in a globalising world increasingly experiencing the world through mediation, white poverty is a "spectacle" (Debord, 2014) whose visual representation relies on the contrast between cultural tropes of "clean" white faces exuding angelic light, and the realities of white poverty (see Dyer, 1997). The 20 audio-visual texts that form the corpus for this analysis (see Table 4-3) all rely for their newsworthiness to a greater or lesser extent on the assumed incommensurability of whiteness and poverty in the South African context. Before analysing these 20 texts in some detail in §6.3. it is important to lay out some of the meanings that have become associated with so-

called “white trash” in American discourse (in §6.1. before moving on to how the “Poor White Problem” has historically been semantically enchained in South Africa (§6.2.

6.1. Poor whites at the boundaries of whiteness

Critical race scholarship on white poverty has been greatly influenced by the important work of Matthew Wray (2006) and John Hartigan, Jr (2005) in the United States. Both Wray and Hartigan point to the role played by the phenomenon of “low status, landless whites” (Wray, 2006, p. 135) as unsettling, or potentially destabilising, whiteness. Wray remarks that the “very existence [of ‘white trash’] seems to threaten the symbolic and social order” (2006, p. 2), while, for Hartigan, poor whites threaten to expose the ideological flimsiness of the notion of whiteness by transgressing the class norms “maintaining whiteness as an unmarked identity” (2005, p. 24). For whiteness to remain hegemonic, poor whites must be given meaning in a way that stabilises whiteness as a bounded cultural entity. Both scholars understand these whites as presenting a challenge not only to the social structure of whiteness, but to the work of deconstructing it. Wray writes that “[scholars] of whiteness have become extraordinarily sure-footed and nimble when the word that follows *white* is *supremacy*, *power*, *privilege*, or *pride*, but they tend to stumble badly when it is followed by *trash*” (2006, p. 3). Hartigan likewise observes that there is something “about poor whites that disturbs and confuses received notions about race and class” (2005, p. 25).

Both advocate theoretical approaches that are able to account for overlapping social differences – specifically, race and class. Wray focuses on “boundary theory” which requires close examination of the formation, maintenance, and transformation of various social boundaries (2006, p. 14); he quotes Pierre Bourdieu’s (1979) maxim in *Distinction* that “Social identity lies in difference, and the difference is asserted against what is closest, which

represents the greatest threat" (2006, p. 133). The production of the "white trash" "stigmatype" (Wray, 2006, p. 33) thus reproduces whiteness as a cultural entity by marking the "limits and edges of the category" (Wray, 2006, p. 143). Similarly, through adopting a cultural approach that pays close attention to bodily sensibilities, Hartigan argues that the cultural production of poor whites constitutes "intraracial contests over belonging and difference that are a crucial dimension of racial identification" (2005, p. 24) – and so poor whites may be used "to police color lines" (2005, p. 1).

Recent anthropological studies on poor whites in South Africa have theorised the racialized dimensions of white poverty along similar lines, citing the American literature. Poor whites are a "socially constructed category between the racial categories White and Coloured… [historically developed] with concerns regarding bodies symbolising and reflecting concerns regarding the margins of this category" (Teppo, 2004, p. 244)[1]. Poverty is examined as going hand in hand with "shame and social alienation" (Sibanda, 2014, p. 186) itself rooted in apartheid-era identity work. Sibanda asks: "If Whites had been allowed to fall into this abhorrent category of poor Whites, what then would have differentiated them from poor Blacks?" (2014, p. iii).

While these theoretical tools are evidently useful for examining the relationship between white poverty and the maintenance of white supremacy in country contexts such as South Africa, the emphasis on intraracial distinctions, and the creation of stigmatypes as boundary management strategies, have arguably arisen from the historical specificities and

[1] Teppo cites earlier versions of Wray's and Hartigan's arguments respectively: "Wray, M. and Newitz, A. (1997). "White Trash. Race and class in America". New York: Routledge" and "Hartigan, J. Jr. (1997). Establishing the fact of whiteness. American Anthropologist 99(3): 495-505."

contingencies of white supremacy built on what became the American white numerical majority, managing its boundaries against both the claims of Indigenous landholders and the claims of successive waves of immigrants, both enslaved and free, Black and white. The white *minority* in South Africa entrenching its supremacy over an Indigenous Black majority might be expected to place the emphasis elsewhere. Besides, the "Poor White Problem" in South Africa played a decisive role in intensifying white supremacy in the twentieth century. Far from beginning with an attempt to distance poor whites from the bosom of whiteness, South African apartheid kicked off with a long and heartfelt embrace. It is to the discursive dimensions of this embrace that I will now turn.

6.2. Poor whites at the wounded heart of whiteness

> In the life of our people, walls are torn apart and are in ruins; they call out to be rebuilt. Thousands live in poverty, in misery, in pitiful conditions, and there is degeneration in all areas of life, social, moral and spiritual (D.P. van Huyssteen, "Openingsrede", in P. du Toit (ed.), *Verslag van die Volkskongres oor die Armblankevraagstuk gehou ter Kimberley, 2 tot 5 Okt. 1934,* Cape Town, 1934, page 27 quoted in Norval (1996), page 12)

At least two decades of discursive struggle preceded the *Herstigde Nasionale Party's* (HNP) 1948 election victory, and the implementation of the juridical and social regime that came to be known as apartheid. Racist laws and practices in South Africa were of course precisely as old as white contact, but the specific form that apartheid took grew out of a myth formed and contested by the organic intellectuals of Afrikaner nationalism. It is important to understand that there was nothing necessary about the particular form that this myth, nor the imaginary

that evolved from it, took; it was shaped by discursive struggles that arose from historical contingencies such as the Great Depression, a devastating drought, and the Second World War (Norval, 1996, pp. 51, 106). Aletta Norval shows that even parliamentary liberals in the 1940s agreed that Black people had to be excluded from "centres of political power" (Norval, 1996, p. 29). This form of *segregationism* however moved into crisis as a result of its inability to address dislocations[2] in Afrikaner identity, dislocations that the coalition of Hertzog's HNP and Malan's Afrikaner Party (AP) understood and addressed. The poor white 'problem' – or *armblankevraagstuk* – was at the heart of this dislocation, as exemplified in the opening address to the 1934 *Volkskongres* by D.P. van Huyssteen, who unequivocally identified the "thousands" living in poverty with "our people". The notion that they would be part of "our people" should not be taken for granted, as Norval observes:

> It is important to emphasize that the point is not that Afrikaner nationalists found a community in place, a community that it could simply mould as it wished, but precisely that no such community ever existed, at least not in the sense in which it came to be understood after 1948, and that the task at hand was to construct the elements as if they were elements of a lost community (Norval, 1996, p. 13).

White Afrikaans poverty was strongly correlated with urbanisation. By the end of the Second World War, 65% of the white Afrikaner population was urbanised, a phenomenon whose consequences for a people who "traditionally regarded themselves as a *Boerevolk*[3], were far-

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[2] A 'dislocation' is an "'experience' which makes visible the ultimate contingency of all forms of identification" (Norval, 1996, p. 13). See §4.1.3.

[3] Loosely, "A farming people"

reaching and […] potentially devastating" (Norval, 1996, p. 16). An identity rooted in farming the land was eroded over decades as farms divided between children became sub-economic, as drought struck, or as richer farmers accessed capital to buy out their neighbours. This does not mean, however, that ethnic nationalism was rooted in rural nostalgia: on the contrary, Afrikaner adaptation to urban life was articulated by political ideologues such as D.F. Malan as a "new Blood River[4]" (Norval, 1996, p. 20). Like the famous battle – where thousands of amaZulu *impi*[5] were massacred, staining the river red with their blood, while the Boers sustained almost no casualties and interpreted their victory as the foundation of a lasting pact with God – Black people were to be on the losing side. As Norval argues, resolving the "Native Question" (i.e. how to exploit Black people as labour without granting them political rights) was an integral part of solving the "Poor White Problem" – and the system of job reservation, the control of unions, and other artefacts of apartheid were developed to achieve this end (Norval, 1996, pp. 20–24). Along with the processes of urbanisation, and the increasing visibility of white Afrikaans poverty in cities, the parliamentary decision to bring South Africa into the war in 1939 on the side of the Allies deepened the dislocation of a *volk* still smarting from the loss of the South African War to Britain in 1902. Some groupings among white Afrikaners were in fact sympathetic to Nazism, and opposed to fighting Germany. The attempt constitutive of the segregationist project to suture social space with the creation of a homogenous white "European" community opposed to a similarly undifferentiated "Native" population was fatally undermined by entry into the war (Norval, 1996, p. 47).

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[4] A battle on 16 December 1838 between Boers led by Andries Pretorius, and the amaZulu of King Dingane.

[5] The highly successful soldiers of the Zulu army

To win "the battle for civil society" (p. 28) Afrikaner intellectuals struggled over the definition of a myth that diagnosed the problem with the *volk*. One theme was that of '*ontworteldheid*' – 'uprootedness' – the idea that urbanisation and participation in an increasingly cosmopolitan capitalist economy promoted "worldliness, immorality, sensual enjoyment and loss of religious bonds" (H.S. Brink quoted in Norval, 1996, p. 75). Capitalism itself was represented in satirical cartoons as a Jewish and/or English caricature of a cigar-smoking, anti-Semitic man called "Hoggenheimer"[6] (Norval, 1996, p. 38). While English liberalism was a foolish integrationist project that would cause the extinction of Afrikanerdom, Communism was an attack both on God and on god-ordained differences between peoples. The remedy was for Afrikaners to stand together both economically and socially (p. 23). This remedy crystallised around the myth of the *"volkseie"*[7] which developed as "a discourse on the exclusivity and specificity of Afrikaner values and way of life" (Norval, 1996, p. 24). The *volkseie* "is that which is 'ours and ours alone', inaccessible to the 'other', and that which is threatened by 'others'" (Norval, 1996, p. 96). It is thus an impossible object, the obsessional search for which becomes the driving force of discursive struggle in the evolution of the apartheid imaginary. Thus was dissent even by Afrikaners themselves – such as the women of the Garment Workers Union – dealt with through an othering strategy: they were understood as suffering from an "*ontwortelde menslike natuur*, an uprooted human nature" (Norval, 1996, p. 42). To be rooted in the *volk* was to be committed to the *volkseie*. Poor whites became a central project of Afrikaner nationalism precisely because of the diagnosis of their *ontworteldheid* as resulting from encroaching

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[6] A play on "hog" i.e. "pig" and the name of Ernest Oppenheimer (1880-1957), a diamond and gold mining entrepreneur and financier who was born Jewish but converted to Anglicanism.

[7] Loosely, the "people's own"

others: English/Jewish capitalism, and 'Native' labour. Against materialist reductionism, Norval notes on a number of occasions that the discursive horizons set by the imaginary that evolved from the myth determined what form the economy would take. One remedy to the Poor White Problem was thus volkskapitalisme – an ethnic compromise between capitalism and socialism (Norval, 1996, pp. 71–72) which asserted the central role of the Afrikaner community in directing the economy to the benefit of the *volk*; it "was hailed to be an indigenous product of Afrikanerdom: it arose out if the traditions and *Weltanschauung* of the *volk*; it was anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and did away with the negative freedoms of the democratic state" (Norval, 1996, p. 86).

The myth of the *volkseie* would not have become hegemonic unless it could articulate the social demands of other groups in society in the form of an *imaginary*. Hegemony, by definition, supplements domination by force with domination by consent. Building on the biblical myth of Babel, which the neo-Calvinists read as proof that God had ordained the "division of humanity into peoples, nations, and states" (Norval, 1996, pp. 68–69), the *volkseie* myth grew into the apartheid imaginary by finding other 'nations' and similarly linking them to territory: "each racial group had to have its own territory in which it would be able to develop its inalienable right to self-maintenance and self-determination" (p. 118). One tension that remained unresolved in the imaginary was between one set of intellectuals that asserted the "*volk*'s rootedness in the fatherland's soil" (Norval, 1996, p. 79) from those that stressed instead the *ethos* and values of a *volk*, considering *Blut und Boden* too concerned with the "merely material, vital-biological terrain of animality" (Norval, 1996, p. 80). It is not that territory did not matter to this latter group (associated with Nico Diederichs) – but rather that it was not seen to form an essential part of the definition of a *volk*. The land on which

volkere could thrive could thus be articulated in different ways without threatening the internal 'logic' of the imaginary.

So as a remedy to *ontworteldheid,* white Afrikaners were now to root themselves in the *volkseie*, which became after 1948 co-extensive with 87% of the landmass of South Africa, a symbolic equivalence that had been drawn ten years earlier in the symbolic *Ossewatrek*[8] that glorified and popularised *Voortrekker*[9] history throughout the country. As spatial relations were increasingly made to coincide with race relations (p. 103), "reserves" for Black people started to be spoken of as "cradles of nations" that deserved "national pride" – guided, of course, by the "Christian national trusteeship" of the Afrikaner *volk* (Norval, 1996, p. 118). These powerful bonds between language, territory, and nation, and the guarantees of *volkskapitalisme* to working people, would not be seriously challenged until the end of apartheid some 46 years later.

In the section that follows, we will play close attention to how some of these elements have included in modern-day chains of signification, in the latest white poverty "crisis".

6.3. *Gebroke land*: Video representations of white poverty

The analysis that follows focuses on the dominant articulations of six discursive identities (or related sets of identities) in the texts, before briefly contrasting them to an alternative articulation. I will argue that a particular myth is being formed from the elements of white

[8] Oxwagon trek

[9] Those who trekked at the front, i.e., pioneers, of the Great Trek (1836-c.1840).

pain, estrangement, crisis, reversal, concealment, and dependence, that contrasts to the 'official' myth of a non-racial South Africa latent in the texts.

6.3.1. Articulating white pain

Since very soon after the end of apartheid[10], a standard part of the repertoire of white South African talk has been a narrative of victimization, injury, and disability that Melissa Steyn (2001b) has dubbed "This Shouldn't Happen to A White" (2001b, p. 78). She observes that whereas English-speaking white South Africans draw on a shared colonial and imperial mythology less clearly connected to a particular territory, Afrikaans-speaking whites "came to regard themselves as a perpetually persecuted ethnic group in a land that was promised to them" (Steyn, 2001b, p. 80). Almost all of the poor whites included in the videos are from this latter group, and a sense of victimisation comes across very clearly both in the way that they articulate their experiences, and in the way that the video journalists and filmmakers have opted to represent them, down to the choice of soundtrack. The scene of suffering is often set using mournful music: a doleful tune on the mouth organ (G and T), slowly plucked guitar strings (Q), or Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata (E). Much of the footage can accurately be described as a multimodal performance of white pain.

In a representative scene, Marushka, a young girl who has been burned in a fire caused by a short circuit at the Coronation Park informal settlement, shows her scar marks to the camera (Figure 6-1; H, 03:30; T, 00:54). Other videos dwell on the shocking devastation of fires (J, 35:05), the struggles of disabled people, (A, 05:26; H, 01:36), and on funerals and graveyards

[10] Steyn's fieldwork was conducted in May 1996 when the democratic dispensation was barely two years old (Steyn, 2001b, p. 176).

(e.g. G, 04:30; H, 04:06; T, 01:15). We meet poor whites who drink because "it eases the pain" (J, 10:17), and share the "anguish" (O, 00:02:38) of a couple that loses their home. People frequently break down in tears (A, 01:45; D, 00:59; E, 08:57; J, 13:13; K, 00:16; T, 01:15).

Figure 6-1: Marushka's burn marks (H, 03:30)



Other types of harm are described, performed, or anticipated. A woman who sells the Rapport newspaper shows a journalist the marks on her legs where she was hit by a car, and narrowly missed being killed be a truck. She says she is sorry it didn't kill her: "I would have been released from this life, from this living hell"[11] (S, 08:24).

These are powerful and affecting scenes of human devastation that should spur fellow human beings to action. What is disturbing, however, is that this pain is presented as a unique or exceptional form of suffering. White poverty, according to SABC journalist Hanti Schrader, has "its own culture, its own dialect, its own norms, its own questions, and its own

[11] Afrikaans: *"Ek sou vry gewees het van hierdie lewe – hierdie helse lewe…"*

appearance" (E, 00:57). In another SABC production, we are told that the "face of poverty is different here" (S, 11:14). Charity worker Ann Eksteen refers to going to white homeless shelters as "a completely different [pause: 00:02.91] *different* situation"[12] (D, 01:57). When an unnamed Black woman is interviewed on the street about how she felt about the footage of poor whites, she says: "I felt *uncomfortable* because I couldn't believe it - you know it's OK with Blacks because we're used to it but with whites it's *unbelievable*" (B, 04:37). Reggie Yates, the Black British star of BBC's *Extreme South Africa*, says that "you get used to seeing young Black kids in poverty [so] I'm really thrown by that [seeing white people in poverty] … it's *blowing my mind*" (J, 04:25).

White poverty seems not only to be different, but "strange" and "discomforting": it has a haunting quality to it, something people can't quite put their finger on: even something *uncanny*. In the Freudian sense, the "uncanny" is the return of the all-too-familiar, that was unsuccessfully estranged or repressed (Freud, 1919/1957). In a white supremacist world, poor Blacks are normal but poor whites are "mind-blowing" – and everybody, Black and white, seems to agree. In discourse theoretical terms, a relation of *incommensurability* between white bodies and a life in poverty has become sedimented, whereas poverty and Blackness have come to *represent* each other (Marttila, 2016, p. 129). To make poverty commensurate with whiteness is to symbolically dislocate it as an identity that has become sedimented as a powerful position. Such a dislocation may be discerned when a young mother is interviewed,

[12] Afrikaans: *"Om na die skeilings te gaan is 'n ander… ander situasie".* In the almost three-second pause Eksteen appears to be searching for a better word, before deciding to repeat the same one again. The English translation for this offered in the subtitles is: "To go to these shelters is a strange experience".

saying she cannot raise her child in an environment that is making him sick, in the lingering shot of his curious, smiling face (Figure 6-2; T, 00:34).

Figure 6-2: "My little boy gets very sick here" (T, 00:34)



The image needs to be understood in its appropriate cultural context, against centuries of visual representation of white people. As Richard Dyer has observed, the belief that whiteness "shows the dirt with unique clarity and certainty" (Dyer, 1997, p. 76) has historically contributed to its status as a bulwark against filth and disease. In Western-influenced cultural production, a Black body is a dirty body, both morally and physically; Blackness is to whiteness as darkness and sin are to innocence and "magical, heavenly light" (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 146). This is not just a little white boy who has been playing in the mud: he is ingesting filth, he is getting infected, he is a vector of disease; but also, more importantly, dis-ease: to the extent that this representation of him dislocates a sedimented discursive relation.

Individual bodies are represented as representative of a larger social body – quite clearly that of the Afrikaner *volk*. While some of the clips make it clear that this suffering is only experienced by "some" whites and that "many" are still well off (e.g. N, no timestamp), many

of the most powerful articulations establish a relationship of synecdoche between individual vulnerable white bodies, and the Afrikaner *volk* as a whole. For example, in the assertion that current white poverty is the latest instalment in historical experiences of poverty that "forced the Afrikaner *volk* onto their knees"[13] (E, 00:57) there is no qualification that it affects only a few: the whole *volk* is referenced. In a revealing articulation, social worker Betsie Dreyer enchains poverty and dispossession explicitly to group rights and the Afrikaans language: "We are fighting for our language, we are fighting for jobs, so my feeling is that we are only fighting all the time, to survive" (A, 02:09).

The sense of a *volk* in pain is most acute in veteran BBC correspondent John Simpson's documentary for *The Editors*, "Do White People Have a Future in South Africa?" (G). Over the strains of a lonely harmonica, he opens his insert with footage from the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, "a very 1930s tribute to the Dutch-speaking pioneers who carved out the Boer Republics"[14] (G, 0:13). These plucky pioneers "suffered terribly" (G, 00:17) in British concentration camps during the "Boer War" but soon after that, "victims turned oppressors" (G, 00:23), implementing apartheid, before realising their mistake and "voluntarily… [giving] up political power altogether" (G, 00:30). The character of the *volk* is thus drawn very economically in the first 30 seconds of the clip: brave, noble, and open to admitting their mistakes. He goes on to link past suffering and the wisdom gained therefrom to present injustice: "At least 200,000 whites live in squatter camps like this today," he asserts (G, 02:19). But "there's worse… Here, outside Pretoria, the killing ground begins" (G,

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[13] Afrikaans: *"…het die Afrikanervolk op sy kniëe gedwing…"*

[14] He does not mention that these "pioneers" went in search of a territory to dominate because new British laws that sought to regulate the fair treatment of slaves (see Keegan, 1997). He does not mention that they "carved out" their republics by force, from land that did not belong to them.

03:15). He interviews Belinda van Noord, who is utterly distraught after the vicious murder of her father and brother during a robbery at a farm stall in the small town of Geluk. Over images of her in the graveyard, Simpson adds a sinister detail: “two other white farmers recently murdered are buried here too” (G, 04:33). He ends his report with a warning, again over images of the Voortrekker Monument, and a harmonica soundtrack.

The poverty of individual Afrikaans-speaking whites is taken as representative of all Afrikaans-speaking whites, who once saw themselves as the “chosen people” that made a covenant with God on the 16th of December 1838 after the Battle of Blood River. As ‘JD’ says to Reggie Yates: “we're not the chosen people anymore – and it's the truth” (J, 06:45). Certain characters enchain not only *Afrikanervolk*, but all white people, into this harmed white body, when speaking about affirmative action, which is described as entailing “[first] the Black and then the white and that is the truth” (B, 02:12); another middle-aged white woman says “I’m sorry it’s racist I’m not a racist but the Blacks comes first and then the whites. And even highly qualified whites don’t even get a position in South Africa” (I, 00:36).

Thus is the suffering of individual white bodies surfaced, and dis-ease made visible on their skins, bringing into being the borders of a suffering *volk* and a vulnerable race. Attention is drawn to the suffering white bodies to distract from their non-suffering, in fact thriving, peers. As Sara Ahmed has pointed out, the performance of harm to the “vulnerable and damaged bodies” of white women and children has historically been constructed as a metonymy for the “invasion of the body of the [white] nation” (2004a, p. 119). The notion of a “border anxiety” (Ahmed, 2004a, p. 132) may be applied in this context. The circulation of Afrikaner pain and vulnerability as evidenced on white bodies in the twenty video clips buoys their affective value, and “shapes the surfaces of bodies and worlds” (Ahmed, 2004a,

p. 121). The focus on the suffering white body not only inevitably centres the white subject, it also brings that subject into being, through focusing the fear and anger at the *source* of the suffering, and attempting to bind the sympathies of a broader public to the suffering white body. Through synecdoche, the dirty and wounded skins of the *poor* whites become the vulnerable skin of *all* whites, offering camouflage and cover for a still very powerful social position.

Both fear and anger surface in the videos, in important ways. Reggie Yates sympathises with the unemployed Capetonian 'JD' who Yates perceives as struggling to get work because of affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment policies[15]. Yates says to JD that "there are so many hurdles for you to get back to where you were, there are things in the way that're not your fault […and] that just makes me angry" (J, 30:00). In an earlier part of the show, Yates celebrates the advancement of "Black Diamonds" (new Black entrants to the middle class) such as his friend "celebrity DJ" Sizwe Dhlomo, which he interprets as in part due to affirmative action – but he then observes that "if I were a white guy, that [AA] would piss me off" (J, 17:29).

The audience is thus asked to identify with the characters in the videos, and pulled into *fellow-feeling* with those who are "frustrated and isolated" and "complain they've been marginalised by the government's AA and BEE policies, which they say have left them poor and unemployed" (R, 00:40). Poor whites in the clips remind the prosperous whites watching TV at home that "you are one paycheque away from this place" (J, 04:42). Through the uncritical representation of these policies as the cause of poverty, our sympathies are also

[15] JD corrects him: "I wouldn't say it's not my fault…". This response is discussed below.

drawn to these and other suffering whites through the reactions of people who work with them: "It's just terrible here, seeing how people can live"[16] (H, 01:24); "I'm sorry [for crying] but I just feel so terribly sorry for them"[17] (S, 02:33).

Sara Ahmed argues that fear works "to restrict some bodies through the movement or expansion of others" (2004a, p. 127). In a majority white state like Sweden for example, this aptly describes the hemming in and slowing down of people such as migrants who "don't fit" in the national body. In this context, however, we can see fear at work in a related way, where it is fear of Black violation that attempts to prevent the movement of *white* bodies. Irene van Niekerk, the charismatic leader of the Coronation Park informal settlement, breaks down in tears as she appeals directly to the camera to stop the local municipality from moving them from the park to Munsieville, a large Black township:

> It's dangerous! The people don't understand how dangerous it is over there for our people! *They* won't get sworn at, *they* won't get insulted there, *they* won't… [be called] "white trash"… They are going to burn us out – they're waiting for us to come – they're going to kill us…[18] (K, 00:00:16).

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[16] Afrikaans: *"Dit is vreeslik erg hierso, om te sien hoe mense kan lewe"*

[17] Afrikaans: *"Skies, ek kry hulle net so vreeslik jammer"*

[18] Afrikaans: *"Dis gevaarlik! Die mense verstaan nie hoe gevaarlik is dit daar vir ons mense nie! Hulle word nie gevloek nie, hulle word nie sleggessê hierso nie, hulle word nie uitgeskel nie – […] "white trash"… Hulle sal ons uitbrand – hulle wag vir ons om daar te kom – hulle gaan ons doodmaak"*

Another resident refuses to go "live with Blacks, I'm not going to go and get raped there" [19] (L, 00:05). The threat of Black violence is investigated by Reggie Yates, who goes to an Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) rally. Julius Malema is pictured singing "*Kiss* the Boer, the farmer" (Figure 6-3) followed by "brrrrrrrrrr-PAH!" (J, 47:40) Yates comments:

> The whole time I've been here I've heard about this "Kill the Boer" song… clearly Malema has become hip to that because you know it's something that's really sensitive to the Boer, Afrikaans population out here. He's changed the words of the song to Kiss the Boer. The funny thing is that's followed by people going "pow pow". Different words, pretty much same meaning (J, 48:10).

Figure 6-3: Julius Malema singing "Kiss the Boer, the farmer" (J, 47:40)



[19] Afrikaans: *"Ek weier om te gaan want ek gaan […nie] by swartes bly nie, en ek gaan nie geryp word daar nie"*

While Yates's is the only clip that gives Black pain a voice, in the form of an EFF supporter he interviews who describes his own frustration and disillusionment with the lack of economic advancement for *Black* people in South Africa, Yates goes on to articulate this pain as motivating a narrative of revenge: "I don't want to believe that everyone here wants to take violent revenge on white people," he says: "But chanting a hate song isn't building any bridges. (J, 48:57)

Yates thus leaves it up to the viewer to give credence to the white fear of impending Black violence. The job of "building bridges" is presented as something Black people ought to do. We are therefore left with a strong sense that the balance of power has shifted from white to Black people – and that it is now up to them to take revenge or build bridges. The white subject is thus produced with less than full agency: the current victim of Black domination, and the potential future victim of Black violence. This is in stark contrast to the notion of forgiving Blacks and comfortable whites produced under the hegemony of Rainbowism.

6.3.2. Articulating dis-location

Dislocations in white Afrikaans identity become apparent in the way poor white Afrikaners are represented as being at odds with their evolving social environment. As discussed above, poverty *itself* is a certain kind of dislocation. It is however not the only dimension of this dislocation, which is also represented as socio-spatial. To reflect this spatial dimension, I will refer to *dis-location*. In the metaphorical language of discourse theory, an identity usually becomes dislocated much like a shoulder. Bones, tendons, and muscles are elements that can be fixed into an infinite number of relations. They become fixed into the moments of a particular discourse when they are articulated as an arm, a forearm, and shoulder, with a particular range of motion. When they cease to have this relation – i.e. when the shoulder is dislocated – the parts become mere elements again in need of articulation.

The idea of dis-location alters the metaphor slightly to consider how space and spatiality are semantically enchained as moments in different discourses. As I presented above, Norval has argued that an organic Afrikaner community was not *found* by ethno-nationalism, but rather that disparate elements had to be constructed *as if* they were elements of a lost community. One of these articulations relates to Malan's "new Blood River," the idea that the urbanisation of the majority of *Boerevolk* had resulted in *ontworteldheid,* uprootedness – the exemplars of which were the poor whites – and that the new 'battle' for Afrikaners was to become 'rooted' in this new and changing spatial and social environment. As we saw above, the extent to which the cultural notion of the *Afrikanervolk* was actually rooted in a *Blut und Boden*-style mythology was a matter of some debate between Afrikaner Nationalists themselves. What is undeniable however is the extent to which the apartheid system asserted the necessity of territory to nationhood, observed on the one side through the homeland system, and on the other through cultural artefacts such the national anthem *Die Stem*[20], which both asserted the ownership of the land – from the depths of *our* seas to *our* eternal mountain ranges – and personified the land as calling on the *Afrikanervolk* to lead and develop it. The *volk* might not therefore actually be a *Boerevolk* in terms of their daily material reality, but they could stay a *Boerevolk* in spirit, articulated through cultural practices that asserted the centrality of *Voortrekker* identity such as the *Eeufeestrek*[21], and membership of organisations such as the *Voortrekkers* for youth, or the *Ossewa Brandwag*[22].

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[20] Lit. "The Voice" – translated in English as "The Call". It is the voice of the land that is calling the people of South Africa to "come together, for united we shall stand / Let us live and strive for freedom, In South Africa our land". The white emphasis on "our" land has been mentioned in §5.3.5.

[21] The Centennial of the Great Trek, where saw the trek restaged in 1938

[22] Loosely, "Oxwagon Sentinel". A far-right wing Afrikaner formation sympathetic to German Nazism.

It was this sense of a *Boerevolk* identity *rooted* in the 87% of the landmass of South Africa that was *dis-located* with the advent of a democratic system of governance in 1994. The centrality of the *Voortrekker* Monument to this identity has made its place in Pretoria, and the symbolism of Pretoria as the administrative hub of white ethno-nationalism, of particular relevance in an evolving South Africa. We thus find white Afrikaners described in the video corpus as dis-oriented and dis-located in their old capital:

> [Images of Black people walking past statues of Boer politicians and soldiers from the Boer Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek[23]]
> Voice-over by John Simpson: Many whites feel like strangers in their own country, precisely as Blacks did under apartheid. This is Church Square, the heart of Pretoria and of Afrikanerdom. Yet there's not a white face here – a living one, at any rate (G, 00:04:58)

Simpson's assertion that people feel like strangers in their own country strongly echoes Sol Plaatje's statement about Black pariahs almost exactly 100 years earlier. But whereas Plaatje was denouncing the social devastation caused by the erasure by fiat of Black land rights, Simpson suggests that for "many whites" it is no longer seeing themselves reflected back in the semiotic landscape of the capital that has turned them into strangers. For the *volk* to feel at home, it is implied, they must be represented in this landscape – a combination of the architecture, the place names, and the bodies of the people on Church Square, the landscape and what we might call the *skinscape*. A Black skinscape cannot predominate if whites are to feel at home. Indeed, for the social imaginary of white hegemony to be reinscribed, so too

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[23] The Boer South African Republic (1902) with its capital at Pretoria. Its most famous president was 'Oom' [Uncle] Paul Kruger

must the daily recognition of being white among other white people. Social and spatial alienation coincide in "over 80 [squatter] camps dotted around Pretoria, once the spiritual homeland of the Afrikaner" (J, 00:31:44). It is alienation from this spiritual homeland that is being represented as worthy of sympathy in this context.

The spatial logics of the apartheid system are clearly still in play for many of the people who live in these camps. In the next part of her plea to not get moved from Coronation Park to Munsieville, Irene van Niekerk sobs: "Don't treat these people like a bunch of dogs and throw them in a cage where they don't belong"[24] (K, 01:04). While railing against what she considers unfair treatment of white squatters by the state, she also reveals what she understands the role of Black townships to be: cages for dogs, where white people don't belong. Humanity, freedom, space/place, and race are thus tightly wound up in Irene's vision of the world.

The correct Afrikaans translation of "country" is "*land*"; the Afrikaans word for "land" is "*grond*"[25]. These concepts are however very much semantically tangled up in each other in both languages: in English one can travel to a faraway land, and enjoy yourself out in the countryside; in Afrikaans, agriculture is *landbou*[26] and *land* refers not only to a country but to 'that which is not sea' and also a 'field' (Bosman, van der Merwe, & Hiemstra, 1984)[27].

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[24] Afrikaans: *"Moenie hierdie mense wel behandel soos 'n klomp honde, en hul nou in in 'n hok gaan gooi waar hulle nie behoort te wees nie".*

[25] Thank you to Waldimar Pelser for reminding me of this important distinction.

[26] Literally: building/working the fields/lands

[27] *Grond* on the other hand has many of the same meanings as the English word 'ground'.

Johan Grobbelaar, who is filmed barely scraping by in a crowded and dilapidated house, claims that the democratically-elected government implements apartheid, but that this time it is against white people (C, 03:09), an idea we will explore in more detail below. He says that the only option to secure him and his children a future is to emigrate to another country. His final words to the camera are: "If I get my way, I'd rather move somewhere else. This is no longer my country. It was my country, but it's not anymore, that's just how I feel" (C, 05:40)[28]. The English translation in the subtitles however renders '*land'* as 'land'[29] as can be seen in Figure 6-4. Though this can be seen merely as the incorrect translation of a so-called "false friend" it nicely reveals an emptiness, or at least an indeterminacy, at the heart of both the Afrikaans and English word "land": like territory, but not exactly territory – something intangible and politically defined, that could conceivably become a diasporic community, and yet also spatial, fixed, immovable, space that is needs to be moved through and lived in, something we either feel we belong in, or don't. Feeling that land/country does not belong to you (or that you do not belong to it) is a spur to seek out a new land. The desire to emigrate is expressed by other poor whites in the sample (e.g. J, 45:15).

[28] Afrikaans: *"Maar as ek my sin kan kry sal ek liewerste maar gaan. Dis nie meer my land nie. Dit was my land. Dis nie meer my land nie. Dis hoe ek nou voel."*

[29] It also inexplicably translates *"Dis hoe ek nou voel"* – i.e. "that's just how I feel" – as "Blacks come first". The land-country conflation is perhaps explained by the fact that this insert was produced by a Flemish-language Belgian company.

Figure 6-4: Conflating "land" and "country" (C, 05:40)



Hanti Schrader's documentary for the SABC2 actuality programme Fokus is called "*Gebroke land*" (E). *"Gebroke"* can be rendered in English as "broken (down) *(fig.);* ruined; broken-hearted; rent; humbled *or* crushed; dispersed, routed; shattered in health, spirit *or* position" (Bosman et al., 1984). In one possible sense of *"land"* it is poor whites who are "broken-hearted… humbled… shattered in health, spirit *or* position". They are the *volk* or nation that has been broken down: they *are* the country. In another sense, the *"land"* is the state, "ruined" by an incompetent government failing to meet the needs of its poor white underclass, a central focus of the documentary's critique. In a third possible sense, the *volk* has been "dispersed, routed" from the citadels of power. The suggestive image of a force that has been routed from the land is echoed in other military-territorial metaphors. In the context of farm murders, for example, John Simpson laments that: "this lovely terrain has turned into a battlefield" (G, 04:36).

Another articulation that is revealing of a particular dis-location is the semantic squeamishness around the word "plakker" (squatter) – people tend to avoid, it or mark it as problematic if they do use it. Dirk Hermann of the right-wing charity Solidariteit Helpende Hand says one can talk of "white squatter camps" although they don't use the term,

preferring "informal settlements"[30] (D, 01:37). This usage mirrors the official government terminology for all non-planned residential land use, but the squeamishness appears to be more about the enchainment of the signifier "white" to the notion of the "plakker". As Irene van Niekerk expresses it: "They may well be white squatters, but to me they're *white people*… who have fallen, have lost all they had, and have ended up here"[31] (H, 00:05:27). Van Niekerk's articulation is very revealing of a perceived social order that can be expressed as particular (weakened and weakening) discursive relations: "*witmense*" is incommensurate with "*plakkers*"; it is also a *representation* of a lofty social position with a variety of trappings, the failure to attain and hold onto which can be expressed by the metaphor of falling. Another poor white woman avoids the word "squatter" completely when she says she wants to speak directly to the president, who had promised them a solution during a previous visit: "I want Mr Zuma to come back […] to the first white camp – I don't want to say the word because I hate the word – at the camp […] at Bethlehem"[32] (E, 06:19).

Although the perceived loss in status of the Afrikaans language appears in a number of extracts, including in the insistence by AfriForum's Kallie Kriel that the lack of "mother tongue education and training [is one of the causes of white unemployment] exactly like it was in 1930"[33] (E, 08:24), I want to focus here on the spatial dimensions of language, or the

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[30] Afrikaans: *"...in die algemene terme kan 'n mens ook praat van witplakkerskampe, alhoewel ons nie die term gebruik nie. Daar is net in die Pretoria-omgeweing 38 witplakkerskampe, of informele nedersettings."*

[31] Afrikaans: *"Dit is wel witblanke plakkers maar vir my is dit nie plakkers nie, dit is witmense wat geval het in die lewe, en alles verloor het, en hier opgeland het"*

[32] Afrikaans: *"Ek will hê meneer Zuma moet weer terugkom […] waar hy was by die eerste wit kamp. Ek wil nie die woord sê nie want ek haat die woord, by die… by die kamp waar hy was op Bethlehem"*

[33] Afrikaans: *"...onderwys en opleiding in moedertaal - presies soos dit was in 1930"*

linguistic landscape. Not only is a white sense of belonging asserted to rely on a skinscape that is white enough, but – in the same scene on Church Square – it is also linked to the way that the land is named. The idea that whites are strangers, and that no living face is white, is asserted over the soundtrack of a song sung in isiZulu, and the narrator explains: "Now there's a move to change the names, like Pretoria itself: that'll be called Tshwane" (G, 05:07). In another documentary, the narrator repeatedly points out that the place names used by local white people no longer map onto the official ones: they live in a place she calls the west of Tshwane but that is "still known to the locals as Pretoria West" (S, 02:41) or "Wessies, as the community still calls it" (S, 09:08). She goes on to describe the white community here as "struggling to understand why it lost its privileges, trying to make sense of the political changes that have swept through the rest of the country" (S, 16:44).

Being a stranger in your own country and having "lost" privileges are thus both articulated as being to certain extent issues of intelligibility. The land becomes intelligible when a *volk* may read its history on it, where place names and public places reflect back to them their faces, and their mother tongue. Being alienated from the land – this longing for emigration, and the squeamishness about squatting – is simultaneous with no longer being able to see yourself in its landscape.

6.3.3. Articulating crisis

Most of the video clips are in agreement that *very many* white people are poor, that *many more* are becoming poor, that those already poor are *getting poorer*, and that the all-white informal settlements are increasing both in number and in size.

Unemployment among whites is said to have risen 150% in 10 years (D, 01:22), "200% in 5 years" (A, 07:07), or indeed by 300% over 16 years, a worse rate than any other population

group[34] (E, 00:00:19). The prevalence of white poverty is said to be "one in four" (S, 02:57) and to have grown 150% in seven years (S, 09:55) or that "over a million" out of "four million plus people" are poor and live in "these conditions" – meaning, in informal settlements (Q, 00:46). Other estimates are offered: "600,000 poor whites live in white squatter camps across South Africa"[35] (E, 00:01:16); "There's about 430,000 poor whites that […] are forced to stay in informal environments"[36] (D, 00:01:22). "Up to 400,000 people may have fallen below the poverty line, with many living in settlements just like this one" (J, 00:08:15); "at least 200,000 whites live in squatter camps like this today" (G, 00:02:19). Camps have mushroomed up "all across South Africa" (B, 00:03:32); there's a "real growth" on the West Rand of Johannesburg (S, 21:09); in Pretoria, the number of camps went from 38 to 80 in less than a year (E, 00:08:40); there are "over 80 camps dotted around Pretoria" (J, 00:31:44); there are "about 460 of these white squatter camps in South Africa" (Q, 00:40). Where numbers are not given, anecdotes feature powerfully; a priest asserts that "more and more of the white folk are experiencing hardship" (O, 02:10); the Salvation Army on Church Square in Pretoria observes that the "queue is getting longer by the day" (N, 02:22); a social worker says that "I realised that people have got even poorer in the past couple of years"[37] (S, 10:06).

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[34] Afrikaans: *"Hoewel werkloosheid onder alle bevolkingsgroepe tussen 1994 en 2010 toegeneem het, was die toename onder wittes die vinnigste, met 'n toename van ongeveer 300%"*

[35] Afrikaans: *"Ses-honderd-duisend armblankes woon in vier-honderd-en-dertig witplakkerskampe reg oor Suid-Afrika"*

[36] Afrikaans: *"Daar's ongeveer vier-honderd-en-dertig-duisend wit armes wat […] in informele omgewings moet bly"*

[37] Original Afrikaans: *"Ek het agtergekom dat die mense het al armer geword in die afgelope paar jare"*

Behind much of these claims are charities that focus exclusively on poor whites, most prominent among which is Solidarity Helping Hand[38] (D, E, G, I, J and S). This organisation is said to be "aware that this latest poverty crisis must be addressed quickly"[39] (E, 07:47) – and it is the "latest" after the crises brought on after the South African War, and the Great Depression and drought in the 1930s (E, 00:57). White poverty in the intervening period is typically erased; it was "something that was unheard of" (O, 02:10); homelessness "was confined to Black people only" (N, 00:05); it is asserted as newsworthy that "all rich people are no longer white, and all poor people are no longer Black"[40] (E, 00:15). The only glimpse we get of white poverty under apartheid is in the story of Koos, a now middle-aged man who remembers surviving on "mouldy bread" and "rotten meat they found in the rubbish bins" even at Christmas time[41] (S, 12:07). Even here it is not explicitly mentioned that the childhood he is speaking of must have taken place under the Nationalist government.

This near-erasure enables a very specific causal picture to emerge in the video texts by constructing a timeline. The regularity of the similarities between the videos is remarkable in this respect: "In the 19 years since the fall of apartheid more and more whites are coming face to face with poverty and social meltdown" (I, 00:00:21); "The impoverishment of whites is on the increase since the disappearance of apartheid laws that artificially held them in privileged positions" (O, 00:35); "For many whites, the 1994 elections changed their lives for

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[38] Original Afrikaans: *Solidariteit Helpende Hand*

[39] Original Afrikaans: *"[Solidariteit Helpende Hand] besef dat die nuutste armoede krisis vinning angespreek moet word"*

[40] Original Afrikaans: *"Alle rykes is nie meer wit nie, en alle armes is nie meer swart nie"*

[41] Original Afrikaans: *"Kerfeestye het ons op vermifte broot gelewe en vrot vleis wat ons uit die asblik gegrawe het"*

the worse" (N, 00:45); "White poverty in South Africa has doubled since the non-racial election in 1994" (B, 00:23); squatter camps "started popping up '96-'97" (Q, 00:02:10); "Johnny and James lost their jobs shortly after the 1994 elections" (N, 00:01:33). Whereas discussions about poverty and unemployment among other groups in South Africa would refer to the global financial crisis, privatisation, or deindustrialization, none of these are raised by way of background in the case of poor whites. The picture is thus very clear: the crisis is caused by the end of apartheid.

This fixing of the white poverty narrative onto a timeline – where apartheid "solved" white poverty, which then reached crisis proportions again only after apartheid – is more completely undermined by a challenge to the notion of a "crisis". After all, if white poverty is a "crisis" what is Black poverty, which is many orders of magnitudes worse? This latter challenge to the news value of white poverty is dealt with in various ways. One strategy is the timeline itself, which historicizes white poverty, making it appear to have been 'caused' by the end of apartheid. Black poverty is however left hanging, it is not fixed to a timeline; it is trending neither up nor down. It therefore comes across as timeless, even slightly mysterious: it has no beginning, and no end.

Other representation strategies are deployed. White poverty is foregrounded in the main clause of the sentence, while white wealth or Black poverty is shifted to a sub-clause in order to make it clear where the viewer's focus should be: e.g. "Although impoverished Blacks in the region far outnumber their white counterparts, this camp is one of a growing number of townships populated mostly by Afrikaners: white South Africans" (I, 00:00:11). The impression is that the poor Blacks are a given, a by-the-way, while the white townships are worth attention. A similarly manipulative strategy is to superimpose national statistics, which cover all population groups, over images of white poverty: the text "Over half of South

Africans live below the national poverty line, and more than 10% live in extreme poverty, on less than $1.25 a day" is scrolled over images (Figure 6-5) of poor white people queuing for food in an informal settlement (T, 00:17) and filthy white feet (T, 00:23), allowing the statistical signifiers to slip from the population at large to the people signified directly on screen.

Figure 6-5: Juxtaposing multiracial statistics on white bodies (T, 00:17 and T, 00:23)



While some of the inserts do point out that by and large whites are still an incredibly privileged group in South Africa (e.g. "Over 50% of privately held assets are still held by a white minority" [J, 08:15]) and that the face of poverty is mainly Black (e.g. "Millions of Black South Africans still live in squatter camps" [A, 04:41]) there is comparatively little visual representation of this reality.

In a remarkable reversal, a number of clips assert that the fact that the overwhelming majority of poor people in South Africa are Black is a problem *experienced by white people*. When a poor white woman complains of being denied social services because she is white, the journalist comments: "And that's the way it's going to be as long as the overwhelming majority of people are poor and Black" (A, 15:07). Reggie Yates also subtly reproduces this mode of thinking: "16 million Black people still live in poverty, so extra help for them makes sense. But I'm not sure where that leaves the squatters in Coronation Park" (J, 26:02). The

logic of this articulation is bluntly laid out by Dirk Hermann, who says the fact that the "poverty level amongst Blacks is much higher" makes it "very difficult to talk about white poverty" (S, 03:09). On the most charitable interpretation of this reversal, an insidious (and false) idea that there is an officially sanctioned racial basis to the provision of social welfare in South Africa is being uncritically reproduced by journalists and members of civil society. A less charitable interpretation is that poverty is naturalised as a property of Blackness, and that poverty-stricken Black people are in some way blameworthy in their sheer multitudes for distracting the attention of the government from a much more serious 'crisis' among white people.

6.3.4. Articulating reversal

The idea that white people have suffered a post-apartheid reversal has two major modalities: (1) that white prosperity has declined in absolute terms; (2) that white people and Black people have reversed their oppressor/oppressed roles. While the first modality allows for specific questions to be asked about *how many white people?* and *why?* the second asserts a historical continuity that sees both *apartheid* apartheid and post-apartheid *apartheid* as equally evil systems.

A common representation strategy in the corpus is to contrast past white leisure, to present white suffering. Videos B and J start on the beach. "Everything about this scene supports the notion that white South Africans have it pretty good," says Martin Seemungal, over footage of young white men surfing, but "there is another side to the story": white poverty (B, 00:23). As Teppo (2004) argues from her ethnography of poor whites in Cape Town, there is a lot of emphasis on "keeping up appearances" in poor communities, as the apartheid idea of being a "good" white "bred both competition and institutionalisation […] whites had to have a house in certain suburbs, and they had to live in a certain way" – a conception that "continues to

shape social life after apartheid" (Teppo, 2004, pp. 254, 257). This clearly also applies in informal settlements. The producers of the video clips play up the pathos of white informal settlements which, unlike the barren and far-flung peri-urban wastelands typically occupied by Black communities, are pictured in lush green parks and recreational areas that are even described as "idyllic" (S, 00:20). The visual representation of the camps shows caravans and tents; in Figure 6-6 (H, 02:31) we are introduced to the Coronation Park informal settlement with an establishing shot that includes the sign for the "Stadsraad Krugersdorp Woonwapark / Town Council Krugersdorp Caravan Park" – a leisure space once utilised by white holidaymakers.

Figure 6-6: Stadsraad Krugersdorp Woonwapark / Town Council Krugersdorp Caravan Park (H, 02:31)



Reggie Yates refers to it as "a picnic place during apartheid" that has now become a "rough trailer park" (J, 03:25). Later on, he meets a group of drunk young Black people from Soweto in the park, having fun in the section that is not occupied by the white squatters. They refuse to believe that poor white people are living in squalid conditions just a few metres away (J, 37:30). Their drunken frolicking on the bonnets of expensive cars is juxtaposed to the reaction of the dejected white man 'JD' who used to have his "own house, with a pool" (J,

31:23). Alcohol, conspicuous consumption, Soweto, and vibrant South African pop music feature prominently in representations of "Rich Blacks" (C, title). Compared to the mournful soundtracks of the poor white settlements, Soweto, where "some are getting rich" (A, 01:29) is introduced over a jaunty guitar riff. In another scene, shot on Vilakazi Street in Soweto, we see people drinking, talking on expensive cell-phones, and driving Porsches, while John Simpson states in a voice-over: "In many ways this is the dominant face of the new South Africa today" (G, 01:18). This assertion undercuts that of "Mandla Nyakela, a political activist" whom he is there to interview, who says: "White people they still have the old […] economical power they have possessed since they imposed brutalism against us and stole from us our land" (G, 01:40). Instead of focusing on Nyakela's face, however, the camera focuses on the tip of his beer bottle (Figure 6-7). Being the focus of a shot confers authority, as it draws the viewers attention inwards towards the face of the person interviewed. This shot clearly undermines that authority: not only by leaving his face out of focus, but by focusing instead on an intoxicant, calling into question Nyakela's interpretation of the existing South African reality. In this way, even as Simpson goes through the motions of presenting another view of the current reality of South Africa, he represents it as held by an inauthoritative, bitter, and perhaps drunk person.

Figure 6-7: A political statement, out of focus (G, 01:40)



While Simpson admits that there is evidence for Nyakela's view – the next scene is of wealthy Afrikaners at a braai being served by a uniformed Black chef – he then flips the narrative again: "Not much seems to have changed – and yet, *it has*" (G, 02:10) – and the next scene starts in a white squatter camp.

In another video, shots of shoe designers Phindi "K" and her husband Tshepo are interwoven with shots of the poor white Grobbelaar family. While Phindi talks about having been inspired by the style of "Louis the Fifteenth" and lights candles around a bubble bath to "relax after a long day's work" (C, 00:46), we see the dismally broken bathroom that Johan Grobbelaar is trying to fix. "One South Africa," intones the narrator, "two realities" (C, 01:05). Phindi's reference to the *ancien régime* invokes careless decadence: the Grobbelaars are clearly being set up as the starving peasants to Phindi's Marie Antoinette. Speaking of "two realities" suggests that this power relation might be representative of the "one South Africa".

Commentators in the videos ascribe a variety of attitudes to the (Black) government that explain either their indifference to, or ignorance of, white poverty. Dirk Hermann says that

former president Thabo Mbeki "created an intellectual space in South Africa that made no provision for something like white poverty" (D, 00:40) when he declared in his famous "Two Nations" speech that South Africa contained both a rich, white, and privileged nation, and a poor, Black, and underdeveloped nation[42]. Others just construct the state as incompetent or unwilling. We are told that "the police don't seem to do much about [farm murders]" (G, 03:24); that callous officials sent a sick old woman who eventually died to go and look for work (E, 00:40); that the government is trying to shut squatter camps down with no alternative accommodation (J, 05:40); that government housing is "a dream" with over 2-million people on the waiting list (J, 15:07). Municipal officials become "furious"[43] (E, 05:37) when asked for assistance with basic services by poor whites. A failure to address white poverty is linked to a more general failure: government "has not yet managed to tackle one of the biggest challenges facing South Africa, the empowerment of the poor, Black and white" (R, 00:01:41).

Articulations of the state's response to white poverty often ascribe a racial motive to officials. When the Coronation Park camp is refused assistance by the municipality, they say "[but] the Black children get… [government help]"[44] (H, 04:37). Frans de Jager claims that when he goes to the welfare office "99% they don't help you because you're talking to a Black person"

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[42] Afrikaans: *"Die rede daarvoor is eenvoudig omdat die president van die land, Thabo Mbeki, 'n intellektuele ruimte geskep het wat nie voorsiening maak vir iets soos wit armoede nie. Hy't gesê dat Suid-Afrika het twee nasies. Die een is arm en swart; die ander een is ryk en wit. So dit wil se hy't eintlik nie voorsiening gemaak vir iets soos wit armoede nie"*

[43] Afrikaans: *"Hulle het munsipaliteit toe gegaan - die vrou was woedend vir my […] ons sê julle moet julle krag betaal"*

[44] Afrikaans: *"Hulle wil nie die bins skoonmaak nie… Hulle se hoekom moet hulle dit vir ons doen, want julle betaal nie om hier te woon… Maar die swarte kinders kry…* [breaks off]*"*

(G, 02:54). The idea that the Black government is taking revenge on white people by denying them services is uncritically repeated by both civil society representatives interviewed, and the journalists themselves. Leigh Oxleigh of the South African Family Relief Project asserts that

> [the] government refuses to assist these people. They feel that because of the apartheid era they do not deserve any assistance […]. [But] most of these children in these camps were born post-1994 apartheid and I feel that the discrimination against these children are unfair. They were born in a supposedly free and fair South Africa, but yet they are denied assistance. It's reverse apartheid in my opinion. It's a direct reverse of apartheid. (Q, 03:22)

The sample is full of assertions of "reverse apartheid" (C, 02:51; I, 01:12); "reverse racism" (J, 20:09); anti-white "discrimination" (A, 02:55, D, 01:05). These are not just articulated with affirmative action and Black economic empowerment, which clearly introduce necessary "tensions" into non-racial discourse (Norval, 1996, p. 294), but also with the provision of *social services,* where poor whites perceive themselves as being at the back of the queue. After what some describe as a smooth and necessary transition to democracy, they now argue that "the thing is not in balance any more" (A, 02:55). What is significant about this shift is the extensive discursive work that is being done to present the ANC government as deliberately implementing a system – just like that famous crime against humanity – that is a "flip" of *apartheid*, making "white people second class citizens" (J, 02:23). Most of the journalists reproduce (1) the congruence between the logic of affirmative action, and the logic of apartheid; and (2) the extrapolation of the logic of affirmative action to other domains of social life, such as social services. In the main, they do this through not

questioning (1) or (2) but instead locating the 'debate' at the level of whether or not (1) and (2) are *justified*. Thus, in pursuing a conversation about the *morality* of the current system, these highly tendentious premises become sedimented parts of a new discourse of revenge and reversal.

A key representation in the morality debate is that of a Black government intent on making whites "pay back" for the sins of apartheid, an idea to which whites themselves are represented as more, or less, resigned. Johan Duvenhage, for example says that "a lot of people [are] struggling… […] but it's our, *dis ons beurt* ['it's our turn'] – the Blacks always had to struggle…" (A, 05:08). Petronella Grobbelaar uses similar language: "In the […] apartheid years the white people put them down and now… and now it's their time to put us down" (B, 01:30). 'JD' tells Reggie Yates that his "generation is paying a price for our forefathers… South Africa's past is still haunting it" (J, 54:25). Yates himself articulates the reality for whites in terms of an historical debt: "[if] getting a rough deal now [is the] price to pay for decades of oppression, perhaps this is the least worst option" (J, 52:02). John Simpson's morality play established Afrikaners as people who "voluntarily [gave] up political power altogether" (G, 00:30) but are now *denied social services* by government: because "after all, white people never provided Blacks with social security safety net when they ran the country"[45] (G, 02:44).

In Simpson's and other articulations, we can see that loss of *privileged* access to the post-apartheid social net, which includes access to public housing, free primary healthcare, and a number of other rights, is rhetorically equated with a loss *altogether* of that social net. Thus,

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[45] Both sides of the supposed equivalence – "No social security for blacks *under* apartheid"; "No social security for whites *after* apartheid" – are untrue and reflect Simpson's failure to apply basic journalistic standards.

it is asserted by Reuters that the end of apartheid saw "privileges" such as "jobs, benefits, and cheaper housing" taken away from white people (R, 00:01:17). Many clips allow the assertion that people get absolutely no support from government – e.g. "there's no water, no electricity, no government help" (G, 02:40); "the government is refusing to help these people" (Q, 00:00:54) – to go unchallenged, while at the same time mentioning that people receive state grants, the generosity of which is always minimised: "a tiny pension" (A, 05:33); "they are left with meagre pensions" (B, 01:59). When a journalist asks the entrepreneurial owner of a care home for (only) white senior citizens what support she gets from the state, she states categorically: "Nothing, nothing, nothing. What we get from the State is people's pensions"[46] (E, 04:54).

In Frantz Fanon's discussion of Master and Slave based on Hegel's *Phenomonology of Spirit* he observes the importance of the *reciprocity of recognition*: that it "is in the degree to which I go beyond my own immediate being that I apprehend the existence of the other as a natural and more than natural reality"[47] (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 169). Masters that can recognise the freedom of Slaves without conflict remain Masters; it is only when Masters allow themselves to desire the *recognition* of Slaves that they may be freed from their own closed circuit (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 171). Though Fanon is tracing the impact of the non-reciprocity of recognition on the "French Negro" it is possible to trace the logic also to the expectation of the Master. The Master cannot recognise the assistance of the Slave, he recognises only his anger. Poor white people get state support to exactly the same extent as poor Black people. But they cannot *recognise* the State *recognising* them, as they are still trapped in the closed

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[46] Afrikaans: *"Niks, niks, niks. Wat ons van die staat kry is die mense se pensioen"*

[47] He quotes the Hegelian maxim "they recognize themselves as mutually recognizing each other".

circuitry of the Master complex. Because the Master can only understand the anger of the Slave, even state assistance is interpreted by some of these poor whites (and their media and civil society enablers) as an act of aggression.

While the revenge trope in these post-apartheid morality plays is clear, I would argue that it is a distraction from a more insidious idea that is being subtly asserted in less dramatic terms. The *feeling* that rich Blacks are avenging themselves on poor whites can be brushed aside easily enough, as a fringe position. The ultimate 'takeaway' from this discourse is that the loss of white privilege is a *fait accompli* in the new South Africa. This idea is repeated in almost every single video. We are told that "everyone competes equally for the same jobs" (N, 00:42) and that whites have "lost their competitive edge" (N, 00:48); that "white Afrikaners lost their privileged position" (J, 07:30); that "Blacks and whites are now competing for jobs on equal terms" (B, 00:03:07); that preferential treatment for whites has "naturally all disappeared"[48] (E, 02:21). Sizwe Dhlomo tells Reggie Yates that "In S.A. if you are Black, you're better off, right now" (J, 17:12). It is asserted that "Blacks take precedence over whites on the job market" (I, 00:45); that government policies "give Black people priority in employment, set Black quotas, and favour Black-owned companies" (A, 03:30). The idea that white privilege has already been *lost* clearly undermines any moral argument for structural change to the South African economy. While some of the journalists pay lip service to the idea that structural change is still necessary, nearly all of them have been complicit in eroding one of its most fundamental premises: that white socioeconomic power in the new South Africa still actively shapes the life chances of *all* South Africans,

[48] Afrikaans: *"dit het natuurlik alles verdwyn"*

shifting material and symbolic resources disproportionately to white people. Without that premise, the edifice of affirmative action is made to appear shaky.

6.3.5. Articulating concealment

The idea that Black poverty makes white poverty hard to talk about is articulated repeatedly. Black people are presented either as choosing to ignore white poverty, and covering it up, or as policing speech about white poverty as "politically incorrect". According to John Simpson, white poverty is an "ugly secret in the 'new South Africa'" (G, 02:14). Foreign white journalists from the U.K., Australia, Canada, and Belgium can therefore be presented as unmasking official dissembling. The government itself is very rarely asked for comment. Not a single comment in 20 videos is presented from any provincial, or the national, department of Social Development, nor indeed from a single government-employed social worker. In one of the very few instances where a representative of the ANC government is interviewed, Essop Pahad, minister in the Presidency under the Mbeki administration (1999-2008), becomes frustrated by an Australian journalist's unwillingness to talk about the broader context of poverty, saying "[you] are sitting here and all your questions is about the whites – sorry […] I don't find it acceptable" (A, 00:13:56). The journalist then reflects on the interview in a voice-over:

> Being told that you ask politically incorrect questions goes with the territory here. The South African media rarely challenges the government. It's clear that a group of people who were protected by the system no longer are in the so-called Rainbow Nation (A, 14:44).

Pahad's refusal to allow poor whites to be centred in a conversation about poverty is taken as proof that the Rainbow Nation is a ruse, a cover for Black domination. There is an interesting

slippage in the journalist's distinction between the previous protection "by the system" and what is implied was promised by the Rainbow Nation. Her implication is that a bargain was struck in which no white person should suffer after the end of apartheid. By bravely drawing attention to the new government's patent failure to offer special protection to white people, she understands herself as being a truth-teller, while local media toadies merely follow the government line.

This fantastical picture of public debate in South Africa is also promoted by Dirk Hermann, who says

> White poverty in South Africa is a quiet poverty – nobody says anything about it. It's almost politically incorrect to say anything about it. It's actually ironic because I think it's the only type of poverty on earth it's not politically correct to talk about[49] (D, 00:22).

As we saw above, Hermann states in another clip that the difficulty of talking about white poverty stems from the fact that the majority of poor people are Black (S, 03:09). This difficulty is also articulated by poor white people themselves:

> [Voice-over by Canadian journalist Martin Seemungal]
> They [poor whites] don't talk openly, but ask a few questions and the bitterness rises.
> [Cut to interview with unnamed poor white woman]

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[49] Afrikaans: *"Wit armoede in Suid-Afrika is 'n stille armoede - niemand sê iets daaroor nie. Dis byna polities nie korrek om daaroor iets te sê nie. Dis eintlik ironies, want ek dink dis die enigste vorm van armoede in die wêreld wat nie polities korrek is om oor te praat nie."*

> I'm sorry but it's the truth – the Blacks – [softly] sorry, it's the truth – is getting the job – and the white people is staying behind (B, 00:02:10).

We can thus discern the structure of the difficulty for Hermann and others: they have to admit that poverty is overwhelmingly Black, and yet the underlying cause of white poverty is articulated as "the Blacks is getting the job". The "difficulty" they face is in articulating this without being accused of perpetuating the racist structure of apartheid, which is a quite clearly a "politically incorrect" thing to be doing. The woman interviewed by Seemungal quickly lowers her voice as if to repair the full volume with which she said "the Blacks" – as if even naming them could get her accused of racism.

Seemungal later reproduces this structure, commenting that erstwhile deputy president Jacob Zuma's 2008 visit to a white informal settlement "drew attention to an issue that wasn't comfortably discussed in South African society […] where the vast majority of poor people are Black it seemed wrong to talk about a few poor white people" (B, 00:04:05). The reasons why it "seemed wrong" or the source of the "discomfort" are not discussed.

The effect of these repeated assertions of concealment in the international media is of course to make certain poor whites more visible. The almost two decades of video reportage feature the same charities, the same poor white people, and the same squatter camps. The small group led by the charismatic Irene van Niekerk at Coronation Park in Mogale City on the West Rand of Johannesburg features in clips E, H, J, K, L, P and R. One member of van Niekerk's community is quite aware of the benefits that visibility has brought, seeing this as reason enough not to be moved to Munsieville: "I am also opposed to Munsieville because

here the sponsors cared about us, and Irene cared about us. What's going to happen to us on that side?"[50] (L, 01:01).

We can thus discern again elements of the Master-Slave relation, which appears here as a dilemma. If the State 'sees' the poor whites – and moves them to more formal housing – they also make them invisible by taking them out of their privileged position in the media spotlight. If they choose not to respond, then this is only further proof of their 'neglect' of the poor whites, and only underlines their ignorance, or lust for revenge.

6.3.6. Articulating (in)dependence

The final articulation is important in that it meets a variety of social demands effectively; indeed, it seems to be part of a new hegemony. The right-wing political analyst Harald Pakendorf is quoted as saying that the important thing to learn from the history of Afrikaner poverty in South Africa is that "it wasn't the Afrikaner government that elevated the Afrikaner [from poverty] – they did it themselves"[51] (E, 01:57). This historical lesson is applied to current white poverty by *Solidariteit Helpende Hand's* Dirk Hermann, who explains that

> the answer to poverty is not simply to make it easier for people to stay poor: you have to lead them out of there. You just have to begin leading young people out of the circle of poverty by training them […] the only

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[50] Afrikaans: *"Ek is ook gekant teen Munsievile, want hierso het die sponsers vir ons omgegee, en Irene het vir ons hier omgegee. Wat gaan van ons daai kant word?"*

[51] Afrikaans: *"Die belangrike ding is dat dit nie die regering was – die Afrikanerregering – wat die Afrikaner opgehef het: hulle het dit self gedoen"*

> complete answer to empowering people is to ensure that people in the shelters don't just stay there, but create a small economy that can help them become self-supporting[52]. (D, 03:58)

In another video, Hermann says the point of their programmes is to "help them to help themselves"[53] (E, 03:16), at another point, he says that "the problem with the apartheid system was that it created a community that is actually dependent on the specific government" (S, 9:29) which means that "when the government fell away[54], the whole support structure of the white community actually fell away" (S, 9:40). Social worker Betsie Dreyer explains that dependency is a big part of the problem:

> It is important to teach them to be able to help themselves. Because funding might not always be there, and it makes… it affects their self-esteem, that you always have to go to somebody for help. And it's also not good for their children in the house, to know 'gosh my mom is

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[52] Afrikaans: *"…die antwoord vir armoede lê nie daarin om dit bloot makliker vir mense te maak om in armoede to bly nie: ons moet hulle daar uitlei. Jy begin eenvoudig deur die jongmense uit daai armoede sirkel uit te haal deur hulle op tel lei sodat hulle uit die armoededsirkel kan breek. En daarom het ons besluit om met 'n reuse opleidingsprogram to begin. […] Dis aan die einde van die dag die eingste volledige antwoord om die mense te bemagtig, deur seker to maak dat in die skuilings mense nie net daar bly nie, maar hulle 'n klein ekonomie daar skep waardeur hulle self-onderhoudend kan raak".*

[53] Afrikaans: *"…hulle help om hulle self te help".*

[54] This is of course another example of the Master-Slave paradox: government support to whites is defined as no support at all, and therefore they can freely assert that the government "fell away" in 1994.

> dependent on somebody that has to feed us'… Dependence is a very big problem[55] (S, 04:05)

The stance of classic economic liberalism depends on free and rational agents, which are correspondingly produced as desired subject positions by this discourse. When individuals fail to find their place in the liberal economy, they are interpreted as rationally responding to signals – such as protected employment or state largesse – that distort the efficient functioning of the market. The solution to agents that cannot support themselves is thus to remove these unhealthy signals, which are seen as interfering with the free flow of goods and services. An important plank of the classic liberal critique of apartheid is that it prevented industry from accessing the skills of the entire population, creating artificial restraints such as the colour bar that distorted the functioning of a market that would otherwise have tended towards greater efficiency, towards growth, and therefore to higher employment and prosperity for all. This critique of apartheid has to a large extent been built into the post-apartheid consensus, which effectively saw the end of a radical politics dominated by either the left or the right (Norval, 1996, p. 267).

This liberal centrism surfaces in the way both experts and journalists talk about poor whites. According to an Australian journalist, Afrikaners are "said to be less entrepreneurial than British South Africans because of their previously protected positions in the lower levels of

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[55] Afrikaans: *"Dit is belangrik om hulle te leer om vir hulle self te kan help. Want die vondse is dalk nie altyd daar nie, en dit maak ook… dit tas ook die mense se selfbeeld aan, dat jy altyd moet na iemand toe gaan om jou te help. En dit is ook nie goed vir hulle kinders in die huis nie, om te weet, 'jinne, my ma is afhankelik van iemand wat vir ons moet kos gee' nie… Afhankelikheid is 'n baie groot probleem."*

the public service"[56] (A, 06:34). There is a seam in the discourse that goes as far as stigmatising the people that historically relied on state employment. Frans Cronje of the Institute of Race Relations, for example, says that if you were "a bit of a layabout you would find your way into the state apparatus; you would become a bureaucrat or something like that" (B, 02:51).

Because white poverty has been constructed as having specifically racialized roots – either as the deserved or unearned consequence of apartheid – it is a short discursive step to asserting that white people *themselves* must solve it, and that it is acceptable to solve it in a way that *specifically targets white people*. Whites, with their considerable socioeconomic power, thus try to get a free pass for implementing racially exclusive projects. It is unnerving to see Lynette Francis, the Black Afrikaans-speaking host of SABC2's Fokus programme, frame waning state for whites-only charities as if it was a problem:

> One would expect that social assistance to whites would increase in proportion to the rise in white poverty. However, the opposite is true. Subsidies to welfare organisations that only support poor whites are being phased out…[57] (E, 00:33)

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[56] She doesn't state where she got this idea from. It is fairly well-known that Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans are the largest and most successful entrepreneurial class in South Africa, and that at least part of this can be attributed to the effects of affirmative action (Cronje, 2013).

[57] Afrikaans: *"'n Mens sou verwag dat maatskaplike besteding op wittes gelydelik sal toeneem, na gelang wit armoede styg. Maar die teendeel is waar. Subsidies aan welsynsorganisasies wat net help aan witarmes verleen, word uitgefaseer…"*

It is into this "gap" – a "gap" the dimensions of which the articulations discussed above have deepened and widened and centred – that organisations like Solidarity, AfriForum, and the SAFRP can move in. Some of the videos include the contact details for these organisations, and solicit donations to them. Even racist hiring practices can be proudly asserted in this space: one employer boasts that he has "made a point of employing white people" (C, 01:28) as an act of charity. The manager of an old age home is not embarrassed to say "only elderly needy whites live here"[58] (E, 03:59). White poverty is framed by Dirk Hermann as a lack of access to *white* housing[59] and not housing *per se* (D, 01:22). The word "white" is only said in Afrikaans (*"wit"*), and not translated into English translation in the subtitles, as can be seen in Figure 6-8.

Figure 6-8: "Tradisionele wit behuising" in Afrikaans becomes "traditional housing" in English (D, 01:22)



This return to racially specific programming is couched in the language of helping people help themselves, and fighting dependence on the government, which effectively articulates a

[58] Afrikaans: *"hier bly net blankes, helpsbehowende bejaardes"*

[59] Afrikaans: *"Daar's 430,000 wit armes wat nie eers toegang het tot tradisionele – kom ons sê – wit behuising het nie – so, dit wil sê, wat in informele omgewings moet bly"*

powerful subject position valued both by the official discourse of the neo-liberal (and non-racial) state, and narrow, ethnic exclusive organisations such as Solidarity and AfriForum. In order to strengthen the appeal to a broader range of social demands than just those of Afrikaners, these charities also focus on showing the benefits of granting them this independence. Ernst Roets, for example, the deputy CEO of AfriForum, is "an Afrikaans campaigner" who fights for an independent judiciary (G, 00:05:15). The poor whites themselves that are active in programmes supported by these charities are pictured building a "two-storey cottage" and planting a "beautiful vegetable garden" (H, 06:00); poor white homes raise their own funds from woodwork by residents (O, 03:11); and they feed themselves using sophisticated plastic tunnel farming methods (E, 06:56). Clearly, however, this lack of dependence on the state is cover for an altogether more sinister initiative: the establishment of a parallel racially exclusive state-within-a-state.

6.4. What hope for the discourse of non-racialism?

These articulations suggest that the hegemony of the non-racial discourse is under serious threat. Non-racialism does peek through here and there in the videos themselves, and would have been far more powerfully represented if the journalists had bothered to speak to experts in government or the academy, instead of referring almost exclusively to entities linked to AfriForum. At least one set of filmmakers draws attention to the narrowness of the narrative that the films establish:

> Coronation Park… [is] an economically depressed shantytown […] where the apartheid oppressor has become the economically oppressed, a place where the new Black superclass, affirmative action and, Black economic empowerment is to blame for all the residents' hardships – at

> least, that's the picture painted by international stories attempting to cover the complexities of South Africa's economic transformation through this filter (P, 00:40)

The documentary is – again – about Irene van Niekerk, but this time about how she coaches her athlete daughter, 'young' Irene. They are depicted as full agents leading lives that have a fair share of opportunity and hope, and whose success depends on their individual determination and ability to deal with adversity. In resisting the standard narrative, which they inaccurately externalise as 'foreign' to South Africa, these filmmakers thus opt for the standard neo-liberal narrative: that there are chances for all South Africans and they just need to try harder if they want to escape poverty.

This does not actually mark such a strong contrast from the articulations of (in)dependence that have been discussed, though there are some limited examples of where articulations are made perpendicular to the dominant narrative. The Black consciousness scholar Xolela Mangcu for example resists absolutely articulating anything unique (and certainly anything 'uncanny') about white poverty. He clearly and succinctly articulates revulsion to *all* poverty as central to the post-apartheid South African project:

> When you see a white child who's five years old, who's homeless, it evokes in you the same feelings that it would evoke when you see a Black child. Because that's what our struggle was about – a response… a *moral* response to suffering and poverty and injustice. (B, 05:10)

In the very few cases where poor whites are depicted on camera receiving substantial support from government, white gratitude and contentment is performed, and not white pain. "I am very happy that I've got this little house… and all my [Black] neighbours are very happy with

me" says Harry Swanepoel (O, 00:01:26). Even John Simpson, who is otherwise very committed to a different narrative, raises the possibility that "if [white people] can fit into a system that isn't created in their image any longer, many of them will have a good future here" (G, 06:02).

In terms of dis-locations, there are again very few instances of alternative articulations. A sharp analysis of white dislocation is offered by middle-class Black businessman Kabelo Sikawati: "White people have put themselves in a corner. They have failed to mingle with African people because they see themselves as a different class as a whole" (A, 13:00). In fact, the possibility of mutual recognition (a subversion of the Fanonian/Hegelian Master-Slave dynamic, see 6.3.4. is only raised a couple of times; in a fleeting moment, for example, two elderly men, one Black and one white, smile at each other from their separate tables, while eating their frugal meals (Figure 6-9, T, 01:35). In another scene, the dreaded move to Munsieville, resisted by almost everybody else in Coronation Park, is described in positive terms by resident Louis Volschenk:

> I believe that where we are going to in Munsieville it will be much better, as well as for our future moving forward. The important thing is that we have to cooperate with them, because then they will give us their cooperation[60] (L, 01:14).

[60] Afrikaans: *"Ek glo daar waar ons by Munsieville heen gaan sal dit baie beter gaan, en dit sal ook vir ons se toekoms wees vorentoe. Want die groot ding van alles is, ons moet 'n samewerking met hulle hê, want hulle sal hul samewerking met ons gee* [sic]*"*

Figure 6-9: Two elderly men share a fleeting moment of mutual recognition (T, 01:35)



In terms of the articulations of crisis, as we saw above, lip service is paid to the idea that Black poverty is indeed a far bigger problem than white poverty. This is almost never spelled out statistically, and so it is useful to remember the specific statistical dynamics of South African poverty as spelled out in §1.3. Even at the higher end of poverty estimates (Table 1-1), only 1 in 400 poor South Africans is white; white poverty rates decreased from 2% to 1% between 1994 and 2011 (Cronje, 2013). What is remarkable is the extent to which the local and international media, aided and abetted by AfriForum and their bedfellows, baldly assert the reverse as established fact. The fact-checking non-profit organisation AfricaCheck has repeatedly called out supposedly reputable media agencies such as the BBC on their execrable standards of reporting on white poverty in South Africa. John Simpson's insert, for example, claimed that 200,000 whites lived in informal settlements in 2013, two years after the 2011 National Census had established that

> …just 7,754 white households lived in informal settlements. If each household consisted of four people, which is slightly higher than the national average of 3.6 used in the 2011 Census, it would mean that there

were around 31,000[61] whites living in informal dwellings (Rademeyer, 2013).

In Simpson's highly disingenuous response to this and other criticisms, he says that these are all just "estimates" and that it was impossible for him to be "racist" because reporting on the ANC's election win in 1994 was one of the happiest moments in his career (Simpson, 2013). It is clear that when the ability of an ANC government to produce reliable statistics is discounted as "estimation" comparable to the motivated guesses of AfriForum, a racialized hierarchy of reliability is being constructed.

In terms of the articulation of reversals, in one clip the government is pictured "giving low-cost housing to a white family" (O, 00:27). When Essop Pahad loses his temper with the Australian journalist, he tries to explain to her why affirmative action is not the same as racism:

> We had an *apartheid* policy that was declared a crime against humanity. Now either we reproduce apartheid, or we move, and we change, and we change to a non-racial society. But to move to a non-racial society you've got to empower those who for more than 350 years had been systematically disempowered, systematically oppressed, systematically repressed, systematically deprived of every single possibility to grow. Now, how are you going to do that without taking a position? (A, 09:05)

[61] Even this estimate, as Rademeyer points out, includes people who live in sheds in people's backyards, a prevalent practice, and not "camps" as asserted by Simpson.

The only other government minister who is interviewed is Sanki Mthembi-Mahanyele, minister of housing in the Mandela administration (1994-1999):

> For the first time through the single units, we are able to accommodate people on a nonracial basis. You know, we've get the Swanepoels and 29 other families. And secondly it is important in the sense that people will begin to see that we are just not making statements when we say we are deracialising society. But we are actually practically making sure that our people begin to mix. (O, 00:00:48)

This commitment to non-racialism was not some fluke of the Mandela years. The erstwhile deputy president Jacob Zuma expressed in 2008 the standard mantra of the non-racialist after his visit to the Bethlehem informal settlement: "there should be no South African who must be in poverty, whether white or black or yellow" (B, 00:03:57). And, despite protestations to the contrary, there is ongoing government support for poor white people, to the same (often limited) extent that there is government support for Black people. The move to Munsieville saw the articulation of the same policy position: residents were offered temporary accommodation in Munsieville, with no reference to race, and would get government houses in the five new extensions of Krugersdorp, with extensive support from the Mogale City municipality (K, 01:47). Once there, they attest to being "one big family again"[62] (M, 02:05). The supposed attempt to conceal white poverty, or make speaking about it "politically incorrect," is revealed as a mirage.

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[62] Afrikaans: *"weerens 'n groot familie"*

Where the discourses intersect is in their adoption of similar articulations of dependence and agency. So when 'JD' points to the bad decisions he has made in his own life that resulted in his impoverishment, instead of blaming affirmative action or government neglect, Reggie Yates congratulates him on taking "ownership" of his situation (J, 30:26). Later, a middle class interracial couple in Johannesburg's trendy Neighbourgoods Market states that "everyone faces same economic conditions: if you go to Europe… everybody faces the same economic conditions, and that is fair" (J, 41:30). This firm belief in the fairness of the market, and the equality of opportunity for all, is also displayed by Phindi's husband Tshepo, who prescribes a shift away from 'dependency' thinking as the remedy to South Africa's economic problems:

> We were never taught that we should change the economy. The system taught us to be either a worker or a social worker, a policeman… the system never taught us to be empowerers. They taught us that we need to be empowered. (C, 02:18)

The hegemony of free market thinking thus appears to be more-or-less unchallenged in this particular set of video texts.

6.5. Conclusion: The *volkseie* resurgent

The formal end of apartheid effectively dislodged and neutralised the white ethno-nationalist project of exercising hegemonic control over the State, and hence also its *carte blanche* control of the territory called "South Africa". In 1996, when Aletta Norval analysed the death of apartheid discourse, it was perhaps easier to be hopeful about the odds of an entrenched non-racial hegemony. Though her tone is cautiously optimistic, there are hints from the beginning that the project is doomed, given the very high demands she describes for its

success. South Africa would have to "eliminate" gross material inequalities – no less – while at the same time "fostering" difference in the entrenchment of radical democratic institutions (Norval, 1996, pp. 305–306). She points to the large necessary tension in the centre of the discourse of non-racialism as being embodied in "affirmative action" – and this is indeed the heart of the logical problem between eradicating inequalities, and fostering differences: the inequalities are so historically intermeshed with the differences that it seems necessarily that to focus on one is to neglect the other. From the analysis I have offered above, it is clear that this tension remains unresolved in South Africa, and that any the hegemony of non-racialism is under increasing and serious threat.

The role of civil society in these threats is quite clearly critical. There is no shortage of Afrikaans organic intellectuals who have articulated the move from the organic, natural category of "white Afrikaner" instituted by apartheid discourse to the voluntary, cultural category understood as a possible subject position in a multi-racial and multicultural South Africa in such a way as to protect privilege and power. As I have argued above, levels of prosperity that exceed both all their compatriots, and on certain metrics the prosperity of white communities in colonial metropoles, must be concealed beneath a layer of vulnerability and victimhood. White Afrikanerdom wears its dead farmers and destitute squatters as camouflage, holding up the injured and bleeding skin of the most vulnerable among them as if they represented the entire body of the *volk*.

The articulation of white pain is linked to other kinds of dis-locations: feeling lost on the land, feeling as if the land is unintelligible. The sense of *ontworteldheid* is once again critical to articulating the unity of a lost community. The elements of this new community have to be formed from the scatterlings of the chosen people, and, as it was in the 1930s, the Afrikaans

language and the history of the *volk* are crucial semantic battlefields for asserting a unified white Afrikaans subject position.

The myth needs to have its own timeline, which is created by the articulation of a particular crisis borne of the end of apartheid. This timeline reverses the official accounts of statisticians and demographers: it is a convenient fiction that may be sold to credulous journalists around the world who relish the opportunity to confirm the racist stereotypes of their audiences. Not only must the crisis be articulated on a particular timeline, but it must pre-emptively deny the conditions of its own deconstruction by asserting that attempts to show how arbitrary and invented its articulations are merely confirm the pattern of concealment established by the construction of the vengeful Black government, intent on making white people pay for their past crimes.

These articulations all come together to create a case that fuses elegantly with a discourse that is hegemonic not only in South Africa, but in much of the world: the idea that human beings are rational self-maximisers who must be left engage in free markets with each other so that they are not forced to become dependent on public largesse. That an ethnic minority, one that "voluntarily" gave up political power, and is now severely oppressed, should want to have some independence and the opportunity to focus on the well-being of its own members, is certainly understandable. To the extent that it plays to the neoliberal consensus, it is even understandable within the boundaries of what has become of non-racial discourse in South Africa, where self-sustaining ethnic communities who rely less on government may be constructed as a good thing.

Organisations such as AfriForum have placed a discursive crowbar at the heart of the discourse of non-racialism by focusing intently on the tensions within the notion of affirmative action. According to AfriForum CEO Kallie Kriel,

> Unfortunately, the situation is that the current government [who have said] in the past […] they fought for a non-racial society free of racial discrimination, and […] what we see now is the same kind of system that we had in the past, it's just being implemented by other people, and it is a racially driven society we see more and more… it is ironic that the government that fought against racial legislation is now doing exactly the same what they fought against (A, 00:08:00)

This persistent attack on the same moment in the discourse might seem like artless blundering, but for AfriForum it is part of a sophisticated political project. Their approach is built on "three oppositions: the domination of (black) majority rule is posited against (white, Afrikaans) minority rights; the gains of blacks' rights comes at the cost of whites' rights; and racial integration threatens the right to be Afrikaans" (Boersema, 2013, pp. 102–103).

At the level of territory, these articulations of the new myth of the *volkseie* avoid being hemmed in to a geographic deadend or *Volkstaat*, while holding open the door to potential future emigration, as their status as victims would already be established around the world. Certainly, recent statements by government figures in Australia (Peter Dutton) and the United States (Donald Trump) would suggest that this strategy has been successful. First prize, however, is the continued space to dominate both land-ownership and control, and the fruits of the economy, within the whole of South Africa. The discourse as a whole serves to erase the notion that there is any white privilege in the country, which attempts to pre-empt a structural critique of the economy and land control. It is important to hold on to the linguistic and historical elements of this discourse because, while white English-speaking South Africans benefit from the work of AfriForum and certainly gain a lot from downplaying white privilege, AfriForum's focus is undoubtedly on the impossible, empty signifier at the

heart of "what is ours and ours alone". The organisation offers its own education programmes, agricultural extension services, environmental services social services, and they have recently started taking on legal prosecutions in the "public" interest. Typically, payment for all of these services is "the responsibility of fellow Afrikaners who are better off"[63] (E, 08:04). Their discourse thus supports the development of institutions that start to look very much like a parallel state, and that even rely on systems of taxation to keep them going. In one of the conferences covered in the videos, participants hold programmes in their hands that talk of the *Reddingsdaad* – or act of rescue – an initiative in the 1930s that saw millions being raised through subscription fees to place a greater portion of control of the economy in the hands of white Afrikaners; though much was promised to poor Afrikaners, it was mostly those already better off that benefited from it (Moodie, 1975). As has been noted in the case of developing nations that rely on a significant amount of foreign aid and intervention, parallel state-like institutions within a country can weaken and distort the operations of the internal bodies, which co-exist in what comes to be a *chimera* state (Zimmermann, 2013). AfriForum seems to be performing a similar "act of rescue" in the 21st century, in trying to establish parallel state institutions through leveraging Afrikaner economic muscle, that will grow more and more powerful. This modern answer to *ontworteldheid* then is to re-root the *volk* in the chimera state, where they can maintain most of their old privileges, including a dominant relationship with labour and the land, without actually having political control.

[63] Afrikaans: *"die verantwoordelikheid […] van mede Afrikaners wat beter daaraan toe is"*

Chapter 7: Race, Rhinos, and Fatal Masculinity

While the particular racial narratives associated with AfriForum and Solidarity have a broad appeal, they can't quite match the popularity of conservation as a national project. The number of rhinoceros poached annually in Africa spiked to 1,315 in 2015, making it the worst year so far in the current crisis (Van Noorden, 2016). In South Africa's Kruger National Park (KNP), home to 45% and 20% of the world's white and black rhinos respectively, experts worry that populations have reached a "tipping point" where eventual decline is inevitable (Shaw & Rademeyer, 2016, p. 4). The illegal multimillion dollar trade in horn driving the slaughter also has a human cost, as poaching is increasingly met with lethal resistance from conservation officials. Though reliable data are hard to come by, as many as 77 suspected poachers were killed in Mozambique in 2014 (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2016, p. 4) and 150 to 200 in KNP in the five years to 2015 (Shaw & Rademeyer, 2016, pp. 12–14). This deadly conflict has in part been driven by a public campaign that has played out between a "(mostly) white public in South Africa and (mostly) 'black poachers' from Mozambique" (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2016, p. 9).

The colonial and racist underpinnings of some anti-poaching discourse has received critical attention. It has, for example, been argued that shoot-on-sight policies to protect biodiversity in Africa were historically enabled through discursive practices that debased the humanity of the poacher while anthropomorphising the animal, contrasting (as has been discussed) the "compassionate, sporting, and conservation-minded" white European hunter to the Black African poacher who "travels alone or in all-male gangs, and possesses cunning and superior arms" (Neumann, 2004, p. 826). Often, the creation of conservation areas dispossessed local people of their land, turning them from hunters into poachers overnight (Carruthers, 1995; L. M. Harris & Hazen, 2005; D. A. McDonald, 2002). Managing these divisions requires force,

and increasingly the militarization of conservation is seen as a justifiable response to the illegal killing of animals (Duffy, 2014). The fact that key species – such as the rhinos of the KNP – are found along difficult-to-manage national borders, further contributes to the intermeshing of military and conservation objectives, a phenomenon characterised as "green militarization" (Lunstrum, 2014) which, it is argued, forms a subset of the broader phenomenon of material, social, and discursive "green violence" (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2016). In South Africa, with its legacy of racialized oppression, a continuity has been observed between the counterinsurgency methods employed by apartheid South Africa against liberation fighters crossing the borders from Mozambique or Zimbabwe, and those of the contemporary state's anti-poaching efforts, which were for a certain period coordinated by a retired apartheid-era major-general (Duffy, 2014; Humphreys & Smith, 2014).

Concerns over whether the South African state is ready and willing to protect the rhino, which many argue it is not (e.g. Shaw & Rademeyer, 2016), generate a "politics of hysteria" incubated in social media, and addressed to state power (Büscher, 2016, pp. 992–993). Though concern for rhinos is to a certain extent expressed across social and racial divides, it is most intense among a white minority whose "belonging" in Africa is legitimized through conservation (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2016, p. 9). In this discourse, the state's ability to protect rhinos is equated with its ability to protect white interests, which (as we have seen in the extreme case in Chapter 6) are understood as being under threat. State power is entreated by rhino activists to visit extreme violence, and even torture, on rhino poachers, who are routinely represented as less-than-human (Lunstrum, 2017).

Overall, scholarship on the *racialized* aspect of green violence has thus far focused on its disproportionate effects (the deaths of marginalised Black men); historical continuities (the colonial legal apparatus of poaching; apartheid-era military tactics); and historically and

currently circulating discursive strategies (narratives that for example valorise white conservation and anathematize Black poaching). An interesting theme in the evidence marshalled by various scholars has, however, remained unexamined. We read for example that a poacher's "essential identity is… *male*, black African" (Neumann, 2004, p. 823 emphasis added); tracking down poachers is always a "man-hunt" (Humphreys & Smith, 2014, p. 813) and the white online public uses language like "Wish I could be there with you pulling triggers and making widows" and "Hope [they] chop [poachers'] balls off 1cm at a time" (Lunstrum, 2017, p. 138). The dynamics between race and gender (and, by extension, sexuality) in the authorization of green violence has thus yet to be explored. It is precisely this analytical gap that will be filled in this chapter, building a richer model of how racialized and gendered identities are mobilised in environmentalist discourses.

Such a perspective is grounded in two main principles. First, "intersecting social divisions cannot be analysed as items that are added up but, rather, as constituting each other" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 200). Second, as suggested by queer theory, it is important to undermine the 'natural' status of these categories, drawing attention to the normative role they play in socially constructed oppressive hierarchies (Butler, 1998). As will be argued in more detail below, these principles can be brought into alignment around the axis of *embodiment*.

7.1. Mapping the "territoriality of power"

Ruth Wilson Gilmore argues that racism works both legally and extra-legally by producing, renewing, and exploiting group-specific vulnerabilities to *premature death* (Gilmore, 2002, p. 16, 2007, p. 247). The *discursive* dimensions of this production, renewal, and exploitation as it relates to co-constructions with gender and sexuality, may be approached through a Fanonian understanding of race-gender, contextualised in the spatiality of rhino poaching, as

developed in this section. As was presented in §2.2.2. Gilmore focuses on the "territoriality of power… [which]… entails investigating space, place, and location as simultaneously shaped by gender, class, and scale" (2002, p. 22). Analysis must therefore address the dialectical relationship between a complex of co-constructing social divisions, and their spatial context. The insight that social divisions are overdetermined means that they must also be open to overlapping socio-cultural and political-economic explanations.

Gilmore argues in the context of the United States (and the Californian penal system specifically) that to the extent that the state represented as white and masculine, opposition to the racial hierarchy is represented through the spectre of an "unruly African American woman" (1999, p. 177), or "welfare queen" (2007, p. 45). This character leaches off the state while sating her various immoral hungers, and producing the criminal (male) children who have to be locked in cages. Given the high public expectations of state force in a country built on slavery and genocide (2002, p. 20) these discursive constructions legitimize heavy-handed responses to the moral panic surrounding these "criminal" young men, authorizing, reinforcing and renovating what Gilmore, following Stuart Hall, calls "fatal couplings of power and difference" (2002, p. 16).

In response to their demonization by the state, and the locking away of their children, Black mothers successfully organise themselves (and other marginalised people) across the socio-spatial divides of race/gender/class/region through leveraging the "ideological power of motherhood" (2007, p. 246). These ebbs and flows of power across territory, where marginalised mothers in far-flung areas impoverished by globalisation organise themselves to reclaim power from a state bent on imprisoning their children, are also *discursive struggles* over who is a "mother" and who is a "welfare queen" and therefore struggles for and against the hegemony of white masculinity, and its death-dealing racial hierarchy.

In the context of rhino-poaching in Africa, struggles over the *meaning* of wild spaces, and of animal-killers, are of central importance. Unlike the Black mothers in California who organise themselves *against* violence, conservationists in South Africa organise themselves to *promote* it. As other analysts have pointed out, anti-poaching discourse seeks to create a "space" or "state" of exception (Agamben, 1998, 2005) where civil law no longer applies. This relies on the metaphor of a fictional siege – an emergency justifying special powers – which in turn relies on a "fictionalised notion of the enemy" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 16) that makes killing more palatable to the public.

That gender and sexuality are intimately interwoven in racist hierarchies has been the subject of extensive analysis in many disciplines. Stuart Hall (2001) notes a white obsession with the sexuality of Black people in Western media production (2001, p. 327), specifically with Black men's penises. As was discussed above (§2.2.1. and §3.3.1. Frantz Fanon developed a comprehensive psychosexual aetiology for the social origins of the racial order, by starting with close attention to his own body, his own lived experience. The Fanonian suffering body has gender, sexuality, class, and race, as well as a particular position in the colonial space. It is the sum of its articulated categories against a backdrop of territorial power. Fanon's phenomenology was a deliberate move against the erasure of colonial violence and suffering epitomised by Western knowledge production. As a psychoanalyst, he wrote against the Freudian assumption that individual developmental (or *ontogenetic*) factors antagonise "normal" adjustment to society, suggesting that for colonised people adjusting to society is *itself* the source of psychological problems. To the extent that colonial complexes are *sociogenetic*, then, what is required from the analyst is *sociodiagnosis* (Fanon, 1952/2008, pp. 4–5). This sociodiagnostic toolkit, elements of which we describe below, is rich in its potential for discursive application.

In contrast to the Jungian *collective* unconscious populated with instincts and archetypes that acquire a quasi-universal status, Fanon invokes a highly context-specific *cultural unconscious.* He characterises it, in a manner that points towards the importance of discourse, as "a constellation of postulates, a series of propositions that slowly and subtly – with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio – work their way into one's mind and shape one's view of the world of the group to which one belongs" (1952/2008, p. 118). For white-skinned people, a Black body is a dirty body, both morally and physically; Blackness is to whiteness as darkness and sin are to innocence and "magical, heavenly light" (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 146). The unconscious is populated with these indexical relationships, which shape profoundly individual desire and behaviour.

The "good" white and the "bad" Black coalesce into archetypal figures called *imagos* (see also Jung, 1991). The Black imago plays a role in the development of the white self, as the perfect Other, ideally not-self and "absolutely unassimilable" (Fanon, 1952/2008, pp. 124–126 f. 25). In psychoanalytic theory, the Self develops in childhood in opposition to the Other; thus the Black imago may appear to the white person during times of depression or anxiety as a satyr or murderer, becoming "the mainstay of his preoccupations and desires" (1952/2008, pp. 130–131). A character sketch of this *Black Satyr*[1] aids understanding Fanon's theory. He describes a common white fixation with the supposed bestiality of Black men, and the size of their penises (1952/2008, p. 128), which supposedly turn the white man's penis into a "little toy" (1952/2008, p. 130), a fact that symbolically *castrates the white man*. The lynching and castration of the Black man can thus be understood as a form of

[1] Neither "Black Satyr" nor "White Father" (which we introduce below) are Fanon's exact terms: I have coined them as shorthand references to the imagos described.

sexual revenge (1952/2008, pp. 122–123). Fanon argues that this belief in the superior erotic powers of Black men reveals a white male heterosexual *fear* of impotence, an anxiety about giving pleasure.

This fear is in turn generated by a European cultural aspiration towards the intellectual. Unconsciously, it is assumed by white men that for every intellectual gain, there is a corresponding diminution of sexual potency. Because this is experienced as a loss, there is a concomitant "irrational longing for unusual eras of sexual license, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepressed incest" (1952/2008, p. 127). The 'civilised' white man, who cannot countenance this savage longing, must retain his virtue by *projecting* all vice onto the Black man. So, for example, when it comes to rape, the Black man becomes the "specialist… the master of this matter" (ibid.). Indeed, every reprehensible thing must be distanced from the white ego through the ascription of its origin to someone else (1952/2008, p. 147). In this manner, the Black Satyr comes to stand for *all* evil (1952/2008, p. 141).

Gilmore's identification of the "welfare queen" as a foil to positive representations of motherhood that might otherwise reduce public support for the carceral state, presents us with a female imago, the breeder of vermin and vice who is a crucial figure in the enforcement of a sub-human, expendable status for Black men, reproduced through narratives in popular media. Fanon argues that stories (as well as games and other cultural artefacts) are particularly important because they serve as an outlet for accumulated aggression, or catharsis. which lodges racial imagos in the cultural unconscious during childhood, when catharsis happens *collectively.* As was discussed in §2.2.1. when the Black child "invests the hero, who is white, with all his own aggression" (1952/2008, p. 114) and the enemy is obliterated, the child experiences a catharsis (a release of psychic energy) that is *anti-Black*. As the catharsis is repeated, the child adopts this white explorer or missionary as a kind of

paternal authority figure, whom we shall call the *White Father*. All people, Black and white, are expected to accept the degeneracy of the Black imago and the welfare queen; correspondingly, all must respect the authority of the white father.

In the cultural unconscious of the group, says Fanon, the White Father is "charged with maintaining order in it as a garrison controls a conquered city" (1952/2008, p. 112). For white children, the authority of the White Father harmonises with, and is analogous to, the authority of society, which they will be able to adjust to in a "normal" way as they become independent agents (1952/2008, p. 109). But Black children have to "ascend" from their families, which they tend to reject (1952/2008, p. 115). So while the white child matures harmoniously, the same process for the colonised Black child is experienced as a trauma grounded in alienation.

This analysis assumes the co-construction of social divisions, while seeking to undermine their 'natural' status. Fanon's theorization from the suffering body usefully brings these principles into conversation with the death-dealing nature of the racist order, for while the fictional enemy, the imago, is quite clearly a fantasy, the projection of this fantasy onto a specific body racializes and genders it, investing it with vicious lusts and a rational deficit, in a way that Fanon experiences *on* his body, specifically, in a way a white-skinned body without male genitalia simply would not experience it. Following Fanon, Saldanha (2006) argues that race has a biological reality in the body that is prior to racist ideology and must therefore be "re-ontologised". Assuming that race is entirely a social construction misses the many ways in which the relationship between racial terms and their extensions add up over time to create racial populations, through a "statistical accumulation of increasingly predictable affects, produced through the actual encounters and sensualities of bodies" (Saldanha, 2010, p. 4; see also §3.1.1.5. These encounters include, as Ahmed (2007)

describes, their being *slowed down* in space: stopped and questioned, being made to justify their presence. Analytically, the body is the site of these intersecting social divisions, and its movement through space a key to understanding their operations. Managing the movement and location of racialized people is a core project of the racial project, which is constantly "putting Black bodies in place" (Kipfer, 2007, p. 709). The territorial dimension of power in the racial state subsists in its ability to *locate* people, whether in a social hierarchy, a miners' compound or a Californian prison, or even at the scale of the individual psyche. As we have seen, Fanon's "zone of nonbeing" is an appropriately spatial metaphor.

Space itself is continuously produced through various human actions and undertakings (Lefebvre, 1991), which may be simultaneously embodied, material and semiotic. It is not merely the landscape and the sign that affect each other's meanings; human subjects in the space are also "given meaning". These meanings may serve as cords that tie people to places, though they can also be used as ropes to keep other people out. Spaces furthermore have an inherent "semiotic potential… determined by the inequalities between that particular space and others" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 213) which is realised through discourse. These discursive realisations may change over time as new meanings are projected onto spaces.

The next section will explore through the anti-rhino poaching campaign how racialized subjectivities and power structures may be built through Fanon-inflected spatial semiotics, understood as continuous with the Gilmorean project of analysing the territoriality of racist power.

7.2. Texts and Contexts

The texts that will be presented below should be read against the background of the "fraudulent relationships" of the new South Africa (§1.3. Though there has unquestionably

been racial social mobility and change since the end of apartheid, it is possible to imagine Mbeki's "Two Nations" (1998) as cartographic overlays on one another: the way people use space, what places mean to them, and their specific life chances, differ dramatically between maps. This separation persists online: as many as 77% of Black South Africans do not have an internet connection at home, compared to only 11% of white people (Servaes & Oyedemi, 2016, p. 210). The "two nations" also have a different relationship to wilderness areas, and to biodiversity conservation. While foreign and white tourists flock to national parks, for many Black people conservation areas are still sites of dispossession (Kepe, 2009). The forced removals associated with the creation of reserves such as the Kruger National Park have already been discussed (Carruthers, 1995; D. A. McDonald, 2002). This displacement did not end with the advent of majority rule in South Africa or Zimbabwe, or peace in Mozambique, and forcibly removed communities are now fertile recruiting ground for new poachers to supply the rhino horn trade (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2016, p. 4).

For white people, as David Hughes has documented in Zimbabwe (2005, 2010), conservation offers whites "a reason for being in Africa" – in some cases explicitly contrasted to intermarriage with African people and speaking an African language – and they have thus "(re)asserted a continental space commensurate with a particular white history and hope for the future" (Hughes, 2005, p. 161). It is therefore quite clear that the discursive formations underpinning conservation in the southern African context may vary widely between groups along divisions of race, class, and gender. And the anti-poaching campaign plays out against these differences. The campaign texts must appeal to a broadly construed, average target audience in order to meet their aims. Visually, the campaign relies heavily on iconic pictures of living, majestic rhinos with their prominent horns. What is interesting in this visual representation is the prominence of a particular trope in the campaign: the not infrequent,

often humorous, use of the rhino horn as a penis symbol (e.g. Figure 7-1). Male rhino campaigners have been photographed wearing nothing but the "rhinose" (a bright red plastic horn attached to the front of a car to show support for the cause) as a codpiece (Figure 7-2); pro-rhino paraphernalia playing on the word "horny" is also quite common. Before exploring this trope in greater detail, however, we will start by analysing some online data that confirms and advances some of the findings in the existing literature.

Figure 7-1: Save the Rhino International Campaign Poster (date unknown[2])



[2] Included in tweet on 24 January 2017 archived at https://twitter.com/stormer76/status/824130598340087808

Figure 7-2: Naked skydiver raises cash for rhinos (Image source: Citizen Alert ZA, 2012)



7.2.1. Celebrating "fatal woundings"

Analysis of campaign materials to date has largely focused on digital platforms, where communities come together to celebrate the death of poachers, enabling "a group of very vocal and mostly white people to air more general feelings of rage and violence" (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2016, p. 19). Estimates of white participation from the moderators of pro-rhino Facebook groups range from 80 to 90% (Büscher, 2016, p. 986). Lunstrum (2017) analysed thousands of posts and comments on the Facebook page of the South African National Parks authority (SANParks). While the rhino is embraced as part of the national

community, various violent "logics" undergird thinking about poachers: authorisation to "Shoot-to-kill, Shoot-on-sight," often in explicit opposition to South Africa's celebrated Constitution; requests to bring back apartheid-era border controls and military tactics; enthusiasm for the idea of hunting the hunters; various tropes of bodily excision with "special attention… paid to the removal of noses and genitals"; and "abandonment" to the wild (Lunstrum, 2017, pp. 4–5). "Shoot-on-sight" and other aspects of green militarization are material practices linked to specific discourse regimes that authorize institutions and subject roles, creating a particular patterning in the discursive space through the 'vicious' triangle (Figure 4-1). These practices work to erode the salience in these spaces of other regimes such as the Constitution, and other principles such as the assumption of innocence.

While their supporters bay for blood, SANParks officials tend to distance themselves from this violence, and encourage enthusiasts to adopt less violent positions (Lunstrum, 2017, p. 8). When poachers are killed in KNP, for example, the organisation adopts rhetorical strategies to create moral distance between itself and extrajudicial killing. In a press release uploaded to the SANParks Honorary Rangers Facebook page on 14 January 2016, the frequently used euphemism "fatally wounded" is used to describe the killing of poachers:

> [HEADLINE] Two poaching suspects fatally wounded following tourist sighting
>
> A suspicious man wearing a black shirt armed with what looked like a heavy calibre hunting rifle was spotted by tourists walking in the Kruger National Park (KNP) on the 13th of January 2016, around the Napi section of the park.
>
> This according to KNP Managing Executive, Glenn Phillips, who confirmed that after at least two sets of visitors informed the authorities

> about this suspect, a helicopter with the assistance of the K9 Specialised dog unit was deployed to attend to the matter.
>
> He said in the subsequent search by Rangers it appeared that the man was not alone, as he was found with a second suspect in the bush. "As the Rangers ordered the men to surrender they opened fire and a shoot-out ensued with Rangers, in which both suspects were fatally wounded and a high calibre hunting rifle was recovered"... (SANParks Honorary Rangers, 2016)

"Fatally wounded" is a passive construction. The more direct option ("we killed them") might draw too much attention to the brute violence of extrajudicial killing. Being "fatally wounded" could happen by accident, or without human intervention. The shooters, as the concealed subjects of the sentence, are semiotically absent. It is clear from the release that the two suspects had one rifle, while KNP was able to field a dog unit, a helicopter, and a team of armed rangers. The odds in the shootout were thus not stacked evenly, though this is concealed in the text. Reference to the "heavy calibre hunting rifle" (which is mentioned twice) of the poachers creates a vivid sense for readers of the kind of damage that the poachers might have done to the rangers. It is easy, however, to miss the fact that the rangers killed an unarmed man: the second poacher from whom no gun was recovered. The rangers' guns, on the other hand, are not described at all, and we therefore have no clear sense of what the poachers faced. While the rangers are the subjects of peaceful verb phrases, such as "attend to the matter" and "ordered the men to surrender", the suspects are the ones who "opened fire". The effect is created of an aggressive and heavily armed foe (which can be true of only one of the men) that left no course of action open to the rangers. other than the one that resulted in those "fatal woundings".

The text also makes space, and puts people in place. The tourist who reported the men belongs naturally in the KNP, and is in alliance with the rangers, while the man with the gun, who wears a black shirt (as opposed to a ranger's khaki shirt) is "suspicious" and his comrade in the bush is a "suspect" even though he has no gun. The message is clear: as a tourist, you are in place in the KNP, and entitled to consume unspoiled wilderness. But if you are not – if, indeed, you are trying to make money off the resources of the land – you are a suspect, you are the wrong kind of consumer, and you may be killed. If dirt is "matter out of place" (Douglas, 1966/2003, p. 50) then these poachers are clearly dirt-like bodies that may be cleaned away. This seemingly banal press release therefore seems to mask a process of violent space-making that is not that different in its implications to the more blatant imprecations of the pro-rhino public.

The violence against the poachers is balanced discursively against frequent graphic depictions of dead or dying rhinos, horribly butchered and bloody (e.g. Figure 7-3).

Figure 7-3: "How many more this year?" – Butchered rhino carcasses



The pain and suffering of the rhinos propels the poachers out of the protection of a shared humanity, outside of the borders of the expectations of Constitutional and legal protection.

These images (which are not taken from the SANParks Facebook page but are representative of the way that rhino killings are represented) gird the enthusiasm and bloodthirstiness of the Facebook commenters. A quick look at the public response to the press release confirms the findings of Lunstrum (2017) and Büscher (2016). The report of the killings was by far the most popular posting in January, liked by 207 people and shared 43 times. All 22 comments, were supportive of the killings. Ninety percent of comments came from white people: white women were responsible for 16 out of 22 comments; the other comments were made by four white and two Black men.

The majority of comments were variations on "Well done, Rangers! Stay safe". The celebratory tone of the comments suggests that the community encourages KNP to take similar action in the future. One commenter remarked "LEAVE OUR RHINO ALONE" which gestures towards including rhinos in a national community (Lunstrum, 2017) using capital letters, which (by digital convention) indicates shouting, signalling their anger and hinting at the future violent consequences should they decide to poach. The comment "Great job, take them all out" on the other hand grants a broad license to KNP, excusing them from any failure to apply due process.

Seen as a moral tableau, through raced and gendered eyes, this is the scene of a public execution, with a majority of eager and affluent white women cheering the executioner as he deals death to the "guilty" Black men. Race has not been invoked in any clear fashion, although it lurks below the surface. We have evidence of a fatal power-difference coupling against a specific territory of power. The effects of the violence are clearly racialized, as are the protagonists in the tableau. In our next example, we will see that there are also clear textual warrants for the production of a specifically raced and gendered vulnerability to premature death.

7.2.2. Enter the Black Satyr

To see how poachers are positioned as existing outside of the (white) norms of law and community, we need now to go to the busy streets of South Africa's largest city, Johannesburg, to look at a bumper sticker. South Africa has developed a peculiar "system of automobility" (Urry, 2004) that saw "cars, car-drivers, roads, petroleum supplies and many novel objects, technologies and signs" (2004, p. 27) develop along specifically *racial* contours. In the history of Johannesburg, prime, white property developments have traditionally taken place in areas intentionally unconnected to the public transport network, and accessible only by motor car, leaving a legacy of "neo-apartheid" in the northern suburbs (Beavon, 2000). The car, as a commodity that "provides status to its owner/user through its sign-values (such as speed, security, safety, sexual desire, career success, freedom, family, masculinity)" (Urry, 2004, p. 26) could not be owned by, and thereby confer this status on, Black people without challenging white supremacy. As Posel (2010) notes, the apartheid-era norm for white people to express "suspicion and distaste in the presence of… African people driving cars (other than as chauffeurs for white owners)" (2010, p. 170) partly explains why Black ownership of cars and other commodities, post-apartheid, has been "invested with the iconography of a joyous emancipation" (2010, p. 159). Despite economic development and a growing Black middle class, by the time of the national census in 2011, only 19% of Black households owned cars, compared to 91% of white households (Stats SA, 2012). The semiotic landscape of busy city streets in contemporary South Africa – the *city carscape* – is thus typified by a majority of Black people walking or using public transport, and a majority of white people driving their own cars (see Graham, 2007). Cars for all races are icons of economic ascendancy. Bumper stickers, such as the example below, are thus already deployed in a highly racialised context.

In terms of communicative functions, bumper stickers present an opportunity to "interject one's own perspectives, values and statements into the environment of mass-mediated messages" as well as to "proclaim a unique personal identity" (Case, 1992, p. 107). People use bumper stickers to anonymously communicate public emotion (Newhagen & Ancell, 1995) to engage in political protest or debate (Bloch, 2000), to articulate "social vision" (Chiluwa, 2008) and to negotiate complex identities in gendered, patriarchal contexts (Doyle & Tranter, 2015; Noble & Baldwin, 2001). We should not conceive of this identity work as being done only on people in other cars. Passers-by and pedestrians are also interpellated, as we argued above, these signs performatively imbue space with specific meanings, hailing people into particular subject positions.

Figure 7-4: "DRIED TESTICLES" bumper sticker, (c. 2015)[3]



For reasons that include higher levels of poverty, which drives so-called "transactional" sex (in return for food or other resources) as well as inferior access to healthcare, Black people bear the brunt of the HIV epidemic in South Africa. Whereas only 0,3% of white people have

[3] Copyright and production information unavailable. This image and Figure 7-5 were shared at numerous points in time on the Internet; last accessed on 13 March 2018 at https://dykewriter.wordpress.com/2015/05/24/dried-poacher-testicles-cures-aids-and-everything/ (posted 24 May 2015).

HIV, 15% of Black people do (Shisana et al., 2014, p. xxv). This fact is widely known, and features in white rationalizations of the sexual undesirability of Black people (Milani, 2014b). Making bold medical claims on a city street about the efficacy of a natural ingredient as a cure for a sexually transmitted infection references the genre of traditional African medicine advertising, which tends to focus, in explicit pamphlets and pasted bills, on sexual prowess, fertility, and success in life and love (Edwards & Milani, 2014). By alluding to this genre, the medical practice itself (known by the isiZulu word for medicine, *umuthi)* is also invoked. At the same time, because of the reference to rhino poaching, the belief in certain south-east Asian medical traditions in the aphrodisiac properties of rhino horn, claimed to be at the root of the poaching problem in the first place, is also invoked. Asian and African medical practices share an adherence to the "Doctrine of Signatures," the idea that "appearance suggests… use" (Williams & Whiting, 2016, p. 266). In the realm of "zootherapy" the utility of the medicine is ascribed to "the complete or partial resemblance of an animal or its behaviour to a specific part of the human body, organ, bodily function, bodily reaction or attribute" (ibid.). Under this logic, a strong rhino horn denotes a manly erection.

Importantly, *umuthi* has specific associations in the South African cultural unconscious. Reports of "muti killings" – an "'epidemic' of occult-related violent crimes" (Vincent, 2008, p. 43) where humans are killed for their body parts to be used as medicine, are a staple of South African tabloids as well as a preoccupation of the Western press (see Bishop, 2012). Furthermore, magical "cures for AIDS" reference the myth of the "virgin cure" – the idea that HIV-positive men were raping children who they knew could not be infected with HIV, in order to cure themselves (Epstein & Jewkes, 2009). This is another example of the Doctrine of Signatures, where the consumption of virginity supposedly takes the body back to the healthy state it was in before the sex act that resulted in HIV infection: consuming

purity works to purify. However, this reasoning for sexual violence is unsupported by any evidence, and "predicated on racist assumptions about the amorality of African men [and] highly stigmatising towards people with HIV" (ibid.). This is unsurprising, given that the Black man is often constructed as the "master" of rape (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 127).

This bumper sticker clearly invokes the Black Satyr. Rhino-loving middle-class car-drivers interpellate what Fanon calls the "biological-sexual-sensual-genital-nigger" (1952/2008, p. 156) on the side of the road or in the minibus taxi, situating them in a broad trans-regional racial community that includes the poachers, through mimicking the street-side traditional medicine advertisements only "they" use. The Black man does not need to be named explicitly because everybody knows he is there. He is the one who has AIDS; he is the one who uses *umuthi*; he is the one who is killing the rhinos; and it is a terrific joke to set these violent creatures on each other.

As for jokes, we have already explored in Chapter 5 how they may be imbricated in disciplinary work to protect a particular social order. The pleasure we take from them may furthermore point to "what is being repressed in more serious talk" (Billig, 1997, p. 150). The producers and users of the bumper sticker structure their joke to make it clear from its context on the bumper of a car – the unlikely juxtaposition of rhino poaching and AIDS, and the coy reference to "testicles" – that this is meant to be funny. One thing that makes the joke humorous is the unexpected use of testicles: to cure a dread disease. There is no joke in "Castrate rhino poachers!" nor does "Dried rhino poacher testicles are a cure for cancer" take the amusing turn of joining the discursive dots between poachers and AIDS. The joke is for one audience – other car-drivers, who tend to be white and middle class – at the expense of another audience, the audience addressed by traditional medicine advertising – who tend to be working class and Black – supposedly fooled by this parodic imitation. It is funny, and

popular, and widely shared, precisely because it is shameful, precisely because white people have to repress talk of superstitious Black people with AIDS murdering each other in "normal talk".

Needless to say, these kinds of jokes are not only visible in the cityscape but also easily travel through a variety of online discursive spaces. And it is the intertextual interconnectedness between these spaces that should be highlighted because it constitutes a humorous, though problematic, discursive web that polices who is welcome, and who is not.

The joke on the bumper sticker is fixated at the level of the genital through the mention of testicles and the sexually transmissible nature of HIV/AIDS. For Fanon a Black man having sex with a white woman is a symbolic castration of the white man, whose penis becomes a "little toy" in comparison. The white man's revenge, characteristically, is castration followed by lynching, a sexual revenge. A variation on this theme is played in another joke that circulates in the form of a meme in the anti-rhino poaching online community.

Figure 7-5: "DEHORN RHINO POACHERS" Internet meme (c. 2015)[4]



[4] Copyright and production information unavailable. Image last accessed on 13 March 2018 at https://dykewriter.wordpress.com/2015/05/24/dried-poacher-testicles-cures-aids-and-everything/ (posted 24 May 2015).

The red triangle is the internationally accepted sign for a danger warning. This image pretends to be an official road-sign, creating an imaginary space where summary penectomies with what looks like a large machete could be performed on people who fit the category of "rhino poacher". In invoking a real-world space, people who share this meme also create online space with an inside and an outside: inside is our community, which approves of this disciplinary technology; outside are the Others.

As was the case with the bumper sticker, part of the humorous effect of this text derives from a bait-and-switch tactic with the audience. The "Others" outside of the community, the foot-soldiers who actually poach the rhinos, are unlikely to be warned by this sign: it is created for the amusement of the campaigners. Its mimicry of a road-sign is incomplete: "dehorn" is in the imperative voice, whereas a real warning sign would be declarative, as in "rhino poachers will be dehorned". The saucy pun on "dehorn" and the transgressive representation of violence and nudity titillate the audience; humour is achieved through the unexpected inversion of the relationship between poacher and the rhino, or at least the rhino's protector (represented by the human performing the penectomy). This specific revenge is reminiscent of the Fanonian sexual revenge against the feared erotic power of the Black man who symbolically castrates the white man by having sex with the white woman (typically imagined as a rape). If the rhino horn is a symbolic erection, and it is supposedly a surplus of Black sexuality that necessitates castration, then the white man's aim in both these instances (rape and poaching) can be understood as avoiding the symbolic castration caused by his failure to protect the rhino, or the woman, from the Black man. Protection against penis-destroying violence is the theme that joins the two cases, and constitutes the pretext for retaliatory violence.

While the bumper sticker mimics *umuthi* advertising supposedly aimed at savage Black men, the dehorning meme incompletely mimics a road-sign supposedly aimed at would-be poachers. Both signs function to police the boundary between those who love rhinos, and those who would kill them, who become castratable and killable people. This open, if jocular, support for the mutilation and murder of poachers could be seen as existing on the fringes of the discourse. However, there are traces of similar ideas even in more socially acceptable, public-spirited approaches to saving rhinos, one of which will be examined in the next example.

7.2.3. Enter the White Father

We saw earlier that tourists, as consumers of conservation, *belong* in the KNP in ways that poachers, as interlopers, do not. This commodity logic also applies to nature-lovers in urban areas, who can participate in protecting rhinos from faraway urban centres through *consuming* rhino activism. In March 2015, two rectangular louvered billboards were placed in parallel in the domestic terminal of O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, containing the pay-off line “Come Together to Protect What’s Ours” and a call to action to donate R10 to the campaign by sending an SMS:

Figure 7-6: Boucher's Legacy billboard in O.R. Tambo airport (photograph by the author)



The campaign is branded with the familiar logo of South African Breweries' (SAB) flagship beer, Castle Lager. When this campaign launched, SAB was the second-largest brewer in the world, with a massive advertising spend. The billboard brings together three pillars of white South African masculinity: cricket (the man on the left is famous Proteas wicket-keeper Mark Boucher), love of the bush, and beer. As has been noted before (Mager, 2005; Milani & Shaikjee, 2013), SAB has articulated masculinity as central to its beer brands since at least 1960, which took on a distinctly multiracial feel just before and after 1994. Sports sponsorship and advertising has been central to this masculinist, and racial, project. Boucher's cricket whites are replaced with the standard khaki uniform of the game ranger, on the left, and a multiracial "human chain" in a wilderness setting is visible around a family of rhinos in the centre. On the right, the logo of Castle Lager, which looks like a shield or crest of arms, has been amended to include the text "Boucher's Legacy" and combined with an image of a rhino and the motto "Our Rhinos in Safe Hands," a reference to wicket-keeping, echoed on the two large mitt-covered hands that symbolically 'protect' the rhino.

The use of models in visual advertising can be theorised in various ways: we can say that the audience *associates* certain desirable properties of Mark Boucher with the campaign and therefore supports it; that audience members *identify* with Boucher and therefore want the things that he wants (e.g. to "protect what's ours"), or that we do not truly know what we desire until a "rival" figure – such as Boucher – desires it on our behalf (Coetzee, 1980, p. 37). In each case – association, identification, or vicarious desire – Mark Boucher serves as a lodestone for what is worth wanting. He represents the symbolic White Father, protector of the family and society, and a moral compass. If the White Father is a *type* of figure prevalent in the colonial unconscious, then Boucher becomes in this image a *token* of the type. It is his heroic leadership and his warlike shield behind which the audience is being admonished to "come together".

SAB advertising was instrumental in the post-1994 articulation of the "Rainbow Nation" narrative, and this billboard is exemplary of that narrative's strengths and weaknesses. People can come together behind a common goal, but the leader of the campaign remains a white man. We have already mentioned the alarming *racial* disparities in top management positions (see §1.3. The disproportionate representation of white men in leadership roles suggests that they are regarded as leaders that one can trust to get the job done. This pattern persists in certain sports, in the economy, and in elite pursuits such as conservation and game farming, where the people in charge are still white, still men, and (as in the heydays of Afrikaner nationalism) still dressed in khaki. Within this unequal human landscape, Black people are included as having an important role to play, but they are relegated to the background as protectors and collaborators with other white people.

A territorial metaphor is also at work in this text. The multiracial crowd led by Boucher forms a chain, which becomes a fence or a border, that closes the rhinos off from the bad

people, from potential harm. The proprietorial assertion that the rhinos are "OURS" echoes the angry Facebook commenter in §7.2.1. and their inclusion inside the human chain, and consequently inside the national community symbolically pushes anybody who would harm them outside of it – into a zone of nonbeing, or a space of exception. Fanon's account of childhood collective catharsis resonates strongly here. In the same way that children's sympathies are with the white missionary being cooked, so our emotional support is drawn towards the rhino and their human protectors, while our rage is targeted at the savages who would harm them. The poachers are phantom presences, just out of the frame, but no less real for their invocation through the imagery of the shield and the human chain: the image is in a certain sense "waiting for the barbarians". Also out of frame is the multimillion dollar trade that drives poaching, and it is to this part of the story that we now turn our attention.

7.2.4. Introducing an Eastern Imago

The trade in rhino horn is global, and so is the campaign to stop poaching. Activists in South Africa and elsewhere have designed communication products to reduce demands in the growing, cash-rich markets of Vietnam and China. In addition to a poacher and a protector, we thus have a third *dramatis persona*: the purchaser. This purchaser is generally understood to be an Asian man, and close attention to campaign materials reveals that masculinity and sexuality also play an important role in the way he is constructed.

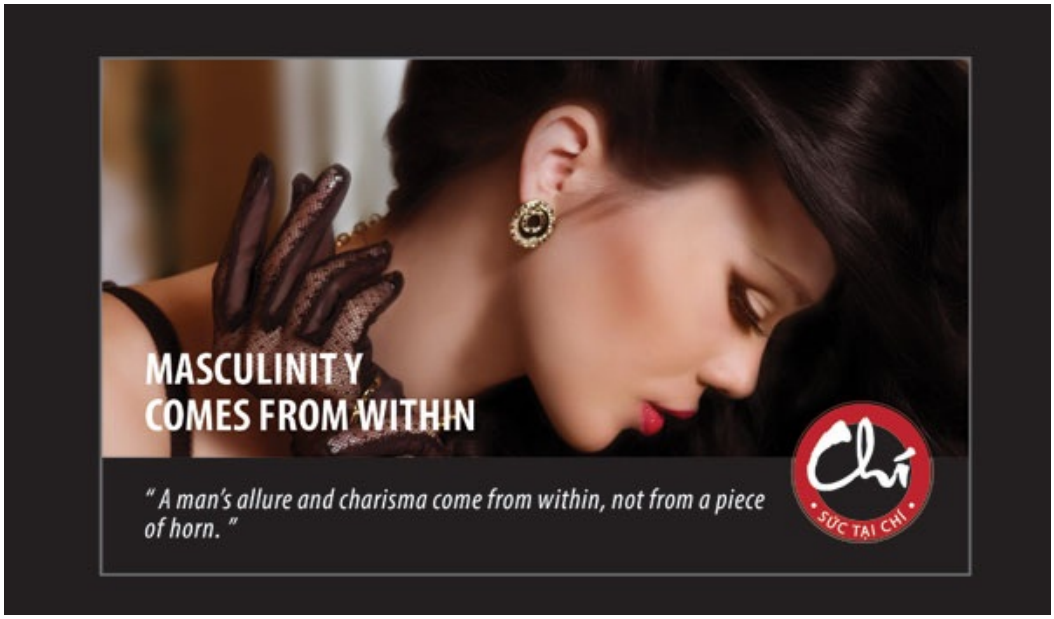
Fanon has been fruitfully applied in other contexts to white constructions of Asian masculinity. The hyper-sexualisation of Black men in colonial cultural representation, with its fixation on large penises, is inverted in Western representations of Asian men as asexual, and feminised (Fung, 1996). While the Black man's punishment is to be castrated, it is as if the Asian man already is; he is "defined by a striking absence down there" (Fung, 1996, p. 183; see also Eng, 2001). For example, in a study of Asian Americans in gay porn, it was

shown that for an actor to be taken seriously as "masculine" and in the penetrative role, he had to be represented as assimilated into white culture (Tan Hoang, 2004). Fanon himself hints at an Eastern imago: he says that Indochina is constructed by France as the land of "cut-rate boys and women" who have a "serene" attitude towards death (1952/2008, pp. 176–177).

A coalition of partners led by the World Wildlife Fund's South Africa office developed a campaign aimed at Vietnamese men and distributed through a number of media (World Wildlife Federation, 2014). The quote below is extracted from the official campaign strategy description on the WWF website, while Figure 7-7 is the poster (used as a print ad in magazines and as a billboard) that was produced.

> [The campaign] drives home the message that Viet Nam's most impressive and charismatic men have created their own good fortune with their internal drive, dedication and talent, and know that a piece of horn is no substitute for the power that lies inside of them… Four images (…) were developed to build a *new social norm* that success, masculinity and good luck, in man's life, comes from his own will and internal strength, not from a piece of horn. (World Wildlife Federation, 2014 emphasis added)

Figure 7-7: World Wildlife Federation Chi Campaign (2014): Masculinity comes from within



Because the strategy document states that the social norm is "new" we are led to understand that it was absent before this campaign. The "old" norm is supposedly that these good things – "success, masculinity, and good luck" – do not have their primary cause in the man himself, but in forces *outside of his body*. The Vietnamese man is thereby interpellated as someone who must ingest his masculinity in order to make up for what he lacks. That the Vietnamese man should aspire to a particular "normal" masculinity – to confidence, dedication, talent, and a strong erection, is implicit in the produced image. In Example 6, the model is deployed for her association with sex as the naturalized object of heterosexual male desire; her makeup, jewellery, hair and lace gloves index expensive taste, and thereby consumption. Visually, the male viewer consumes her as she consumes luxury goods. The angle of her neck and the tilt of her head is visually suggestive of an erect penis; and her downward gaze represents both submission to his irresistible power, and sexual pleasure – a *real* pleasure that is implicitly compared to the *fake* pleasure one would get from a man using a rhino horn aphrodisiac.

For the purposes of this chapter, the interaction with the spaces in Vietnam where these texts were displayed is less important than the way that the WWF team has imagined this fetishistic East, hungry for African resources – in this case, so many thousands of penis symbols – to make up for its own lack. While building on fairly common orientalist assumptions, as well as in-country marketing research, the campaign materials reveals how a global hierarchy of race-gender, and sexuality is reproduced in South Africa.

7.3. Conclusions

This analysis of the co-construction of race-gender-(sexuality) in one strand of the anti-rhino poaching discourse suggests a triangular structure, where the roles of poacher, protector, and purchaser are played by Black African, white European, and Asian, revealing surpluses, sufficiencies, or deficits of masculinity, in distinct territorial contexts. The faraway, inscrutable and effeminate Vietnamese must buy his erection from Africa; the savage African still stuck in the bush must be castrated for killing the rhino; and the noble white man must lead in the space in-between, in order to "protect what's ours". But these caricatures do not have equal weight. The Black Satyr and Eastern Imago are in orbit around the White Father whose authority is normalised, and whose prime position in the hierarchy is reproduced, coupling *power* to *difference*. Through the repetition of these associations in discourse, there is also a slide from token to type: Boucher's leadership reinforces the White Father, the poachers confirm the Black Satyr, the Vietnamese purchasers deepen the notion of the feminised and dangerously lacking Eastern Man. Thus do contingencies in the world take on the appearance of natural facts about the world, of racial essences. The relationship between token and type must be understood as a dialectic one.

The principle that unifies race-gender-sexuality constructions and space-making is that these fictions are embodied. Bodies exist in space and must move through it: their meaning in social life arises from material realities (Saldanha, 2010); from the co-constructed social divisions partially based on fantastic imagos; and from the semantic interplay between text, bodies, and space. Ultimately, these meanings become the calcified constraints that must be broken through. In the examples we have examined, these fictions create suspects who are out of place, and thereby produce vulnerability to premature death.

Public authorisation for violence against poachers is tied up with these race-gender constructions. The rhino horn is a metaphor for the hard penis, which in turn is metonymic of virility; the African hacks it off to sell it to the Asian who lacks it. As protector, the white man is himself symbolically castrated when a rhino is killed, and mutilation is thus the appropriate revenge. This is not the only way that rhinos are humanised, and poachers dehumanised, but it is clearly a dramatic one.

The territoriality of (fatal) power is thus at least partly mapped out discursively. The liminal existence of the poacher, who roams the borderlands that were forcibly taken from his ancestors, is confirmed socially through the discursive invocation of the Black Satyr: he is in a place outside of civilization, outside of the law, and his death will almost invariably be his fault. Lands under conservation are reproduced as people-free zones, sites of leisure or spiritual communion with nature, where all people who are not middle-class consumers of the environment as tourists are out of place. The Eastern Imago, on the other hand, is reconstructed along with a notion of the East that is menacing, mysterious, and feminine. An insatiable, fetishistic demand for horn legitimizes escalations of violence, as, in the logic of masculinity, an erection is essential to manhood, and worth any price to have. In the centre of this fantasy, the White Father is required to maintain order. His space is the space of

economic development, rational progress, infrastructure, fair-minded stewardship of the earth, and as these good things supposedly align with the aspirations of the marginalised, he has a claim to that coveted time-space of a "better future". His role is to keep people and things in place and their correct relations, against the forces of entropy.

White masculinity is thus valorised as "belonging" to Africa through its positioning at the centre of the campaign as the protector of the land, while the violent Black poacher is pushed to the deviant periphery, as a threatening force, much as young Black men are in the Californian penal system. This is not just a bad thing for poachers. As is clear from Fanon's phenomenology, invoking a racist construction can't be done in a targeted manner *just* to authorise the killing of poachers. It did not matter that Fanon was not himself a slave or a cannibal: he was still "battered down by tom toms". The bumper sticker specifically treats every Black person in the taxi behind the car as its audience: it is not targeted specifically at poachers, but at Blackness in general. The effect of these texts is the reproduction of the racial hierarchy.

It is interesting to note the inversion that has been accomplished. The arrival of European settlers in southern Africa four centuries ago caused the decimation of the region's wildlife: the real historical enemy of biodiversity has been the White Father. And yet it is the Black and Indigenous populations that are represented as if they represent a threat to the land. White stewardship is constructed as trustworthy, Black intervention as disastrous.

For both Gilmore and Fanon, race, sexuality, and gender are inseparable: the categories co-constitute each other, and it is very hard to separate a queer approach to masculinity from a queer approach to race. These race-gender-sexuality constructions authorise extrajudicial killing in the southern African anti-poaching campaign, and we have shown that a psychosexual phenomenology of racialized embodiment helpfully unpicks power-difference

couplings in space, meeting Gilmore's exhortation to examine the territoriality of power, as interacting with gender and other social divisions, in deconstructing racism. Doing so may even be the basis for hopeful action. As Gilmore notes in her tenth thesis on social movements, "people can and do *make* power" (Gilmore, 2007, p. 248) and so it must therefore be possible for people to come together to destroy these death-dealing racial hierarchies. The post-Gramscian approach to hegemony that has informed this analysis supports Gilmore's articulation: discursive formations are material practices, and our interpellation into a number of different discourses opens up the possibility of *doing things differently* – i.e. of breaking these fatal couplings of power and difference.

Chapter 8: White autochthony in South Africa's "soul country"

Who controls access to the land is increasingly becoming a factor in achieving national developmental objectives, such as the exploitation of mineral resources. Mining rights are separate from surface rights under South African law, but land owners must still be consulted, and potentially compensated, for access to land, and all "interested and affected parties" are supposed to have a say in the granting of prospecting and mining licences (Department of Mineral Resources, 2012, p. 34). Plans to use a method known as hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking", to release the estimated 30 to 500 trillion cubic feet of shale gas reserve beneath the Karoo region of South Africa, have seen a (largely Black) government face resolute opposition from (largely white) communities at every turn. A powerful but fractious group of environmentalists, lawyers, locals, and landowners have successfully advocated for a moratorium on licences for fracking, effectively delaying, or perhaps permanently scuppering, plans to get the gas out of the ground. They have been accused of standing in the way of transformation, and of protecting "big fat white interests"[1].

This chapter seeks to evaluate the racial dimensions of this face-off through careful analysis of the discourse of the anti-fracking movement. Much of the opposition to fracking has been organised and popularised on social media. The South African campaign has influenced and been influenced by global resistance to fracking, which has seen it banned or temporarily halted in numerous territories around the world. An international network of activists use Facebook and Twitter to distribute information, recruit members, organise resistance events

[1] Jonathan Deal, CEO of Treasure Karoo Action Group, public Facebook comment, 2013 (archived in the corpus at 015/010, see note 3 for referencing system).

such as protests and blockades, raise funds, and share strategies and resources (Hopke, 2015; Mazur, 2016; Vasi, Walker, Johnson, & Tan, 2015). By browsing through the publicly available conversations conducted by anti-fracking groups on Facebook, it is possible to observe articulatory practice in real time at a given scale, or track change as the discourse evolves over time and space. Given the right sampling frame (as discussed in 4.2.2. it becomes possible to approach the question of just to what extent elements of South Africa's colonial history, and elements of its highly racialized and divided past, are articulated in anti-fracking discourse.

Before contextualising the campaign and arguing for a particular way of engaging with it in the second section of this chapter, I will lay out a few conceptual tools related to identity construction in discourses about the land in section one, and contextualise the study in section two. The analysis of the data is contained in two parts: section three identifies three common articulations and gestures towards possible nodal points in the discourse, while section four traces the relationship between these practices and the discourses of the land.

8.1. Belonging on the land

In Chapter 1, I discussed Rudyard Kipling's claim that Cecil John Rhodes's soul would animate southern Africa long after his death. The colonial drive to recognise oneself in conquered lands is made visible in the practice of naming them: when Rhodes inscribed himself on Rhodesia he was repeating the common imperial practice that had seen places like Virginia or Victoria spring up in the past. These naming practices of course go hand in hand with telling stories of discovery, liberation, the advance of Christian civilization, or the assertion of *terra nullius*, the "coloniser's dream" (Connell, 2007, p. 47). It is worth going back to Edward Said's observation that was quoted in §2.2.1.

> The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and *who now plans its future* – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative (Said, 1994/2014, p. xiii emphasis added).

The imperial project goes hand-in-hand with an imaginative project that reveals both articulations of belonging on the land, and anxieties about invasion and the threat of being supplanted. The present-day discourses of the supposed inheritors of the imperial dream – the descendants of the white settler colonialists that live in places such as South Africa – can be studied for their discontinuities and continuities with these narratives. Certainly, who gets to decide the future of the land is a critical issue in many domains, and environmentalism is a critical example. These narratives are however not domain-specific, and stretch through many subject areas. As already discussed in the South African context, a central theme of white writing has dealt with the recognition or misrecognition of white belonging within the landscape, and their acceptance or rejection by the land (Coetzee, 1988; van Wyk Smith, 1990). Similar themes have been explored in white writing in Zimbabwe (see Hughes, 2010) and other colonial contexts such as Canada and the United States (see for example A. Baldwin et al., 2011; Buell, 1996).

As was shown in Chapter 7, the construction of who belongs on the land and who does not can be a matter of life and death. Myths of belonging structure the martial, juridical, economic, and other power systems that extend over land with the colonial incursion. In colonial contexts, these myths of belonging, and the governmental technologies that accompany them, have the function of supplanting the belonging, humanity, and access to rights of other people. Frequent mention has already been made of Black "pariahs" (Plaatje,

1916/1982, p. 21); the word captures concisely the overlap between these systems of power: Black people were excluded by force and by law, but they were also turned into strangers, social outcasts who don't fit in and don't belong. Against definitions of the national that foreground relationships with people that will never meet each other (i.e. Anderson, 1991), Nira Yuval-Davis contends that "the 'dirty business of boundary maintenance' that underlies the politics of belonging is all about potentially meeting other people and deciding whether they stand inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation and/or other communities of belonging, whether they are 'us' or 'them'" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 204). Reading Sol Plaatje through this definition suggests that making Black people unwelcome – defining them as strangers, intruders, and indeed pariahs – on the land was a key constitutional act of the notion of a "South African" nation. This alienation from the land combined with the supplanting of social hegemony is thus arguably the founding trauma of the South African national project; it has noticeable effects in the present, and there is no reason to expect that it will not continue to influence the future.

The semantic slippages between the notions of "land" and "country" or "nation" discussed in Chapter 6 can thus be brought into even sharper focus: to construct itself as a nation, white South Africa turned to Black bodies on the land as the location of the borders of that territory: defining the boundaries between Black and white belonging by policing the spatial affordances of people based on race became the central project of the twentieth century, far more relevant than the defence of mere territorial borders. From Plaatje onwards, and in various ways, Black 'pariahs' have resisted this settler-colonial zero-sum game, where every advance in white belonging had to be deducted from Black people. Because Black people really were "here first" the relevant ground for this contest can be described under the rubric of "autochthony" discussed in 2.2.3. Claims to autochthony must be understood as the

unstable and contingent formations that inscribe particular discursive regimes linked to belonging, even though they are often articulated as natural and self-evident. Autochthony has no essence, it is only accessible to us through systems of meaning-making, and unknowable outside of discourse.

8.2. Connecting with the Karoo

Against this background, I will now analyse conversations between environmentalists seeking to protect the rural calm of the Karoo against incursion by oil and gas companies.

8.2.1. Fracking the Karoo

Representing the wide, inhospitable, and seemingly endless plains of the Karoo in fine art or literature has been one of the animating challenges of white cultural production in South Africa (Coetzee, 1988) and "an enduring topos for imagining South Africa and, more broadly, Africa" (Geertsema, 2006, p. 106). Sleepy Karoo towns are marketed as tourism destinations through emphasizing a particular definition of "heritage" that legitimates "the authoritative status of whites as the appropriate guardians" of the land (McEwen & Steyn, 2013, p. 4). The sedimenting of historical identities continuous with the heritage tourism industry means the equation of specific race groups with specific places under apartheid has been perpetuated in the post-apartheid order. There are still spaces where white people live, spaces where tourists go, and spaces where Coloured people live: North End, the "Coloured area" of Prince Albert, for example, is spatially contained, and their social relations to the better off white townsfolk are dehistoricized and naturalised (ibid.).

The role that the Karoo plays in white cultural production in South Africa extends to many aspects of social life. Johan Geertsema has argued that quasi-poetic or philosophical representations of the Karoo as a place to experience the "sublime" – a gesture to that which

is beyond human reason – has a "levelling, dehistoricizing effect in denying prior claims to the land, specifically by black South Africans" (Geertsema, 2006, p. 104). He shows how the Afrikaner separatist Dan Roodt[2] rules out "autochthonous" claims to the Karoo by Indigenous people, as its harsh landscape enforces a nomadic life, while (as Locke might) at the same time asserting that the *trekboers* and their descendants were uniquely able to make the land "productive" (Geertsema, 2006, p. 110). The notion of a white Afrikaner identity that is in some ways like the Karoo – harsh, resilient, timeless – is at the heart of Roodt's vision of linguistic purity and territorial separation.

Making up the majority of the land area of South Africa, and very sparsely populated, the Karoo has also been referred to in recent years as the country's "energy mecca". Huge solar and wind farms dot the landscape; there are rumours of uranium mines, and the natural gas reserves under its surface are estimated to be some of the largest in the world. The Karoo is also an economically deprived region with high levels of unemployment, alcoholism, and other forms of social malaise, so economic activity that improves infrastructure and creates jobs is seen by many as a priority. As with the rest of the country, exposure to unemployment and poverty is heavily racialized, with the bulk of poor people being Black or "Coloured", and the bulk of better-off people being white.

The changing global "energy mix" is a deciding factor in the environmental, geopolitical, and economic fate of nations. As a middle-income country with sluggish growth and high unemployment, South Africa has made exploiting its large estimated natural gas reserves an infrastructure investment priority in the National Development Plan, a document intended to

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[2] Roodt is known for his extremism, which includes publishing the names of Afrikaner 'traitors' on the website of his ethno-fascist organization PRAAG (Pro-Afrikaanse Aksiegroep, or Pro-Afrikaans Action Group).

guide government policy and decision-making to 2030. The document envisions "increasing exploration to find domestic gas feedstock (including investigating shale and coal bed methane reserves) to diversify the energy mix and reduce carbon emissions" with shale gas resources in the Karoo basin being named specifically (National Planning Commission, 2012, pp. 49, 171). But community opposition to a particular extraction technology – hydraulic fracturing, or 'fracking' – has grown faster than the technology itself.

At its very surface, the resistance to unconventional gas extraction is discursive: Oil and gas companies call the process "hydraulic fracturing" and present it as technologically sophisticated and safe, while those opposed to the process usually call it "fracking" and stress its destructive and risky aspects. While oil and gas companies have promoted their narrative through spending money on marketing and lobbying, campaigners against fracking have largely taken to social media, specifically Facebook, to build solidarity and control the narrative in the minds of the public.

8.2.2. Studying Anti-Frackers Online

As was described in §4.2.2.1. this corpus was built on quantitative sampling principles that attempt to represent the overarching dimensions of the discourse of anti-fracking in South Africa. I analysed the data looking for two sets of discursive identities. Firstly, I was especially interested in how members talked about who belonged to their group, and who did not: who is "us" and who is "them"; who is friend and who is foe in the campaign against fracking, in order to understand processes of boundary maintenance. The ethical principles behind the exclusion/inclusion of particular entities in the group reveal the underlying discursive structure – the nodal points that give sense to the discourse, but are not always clearly named.

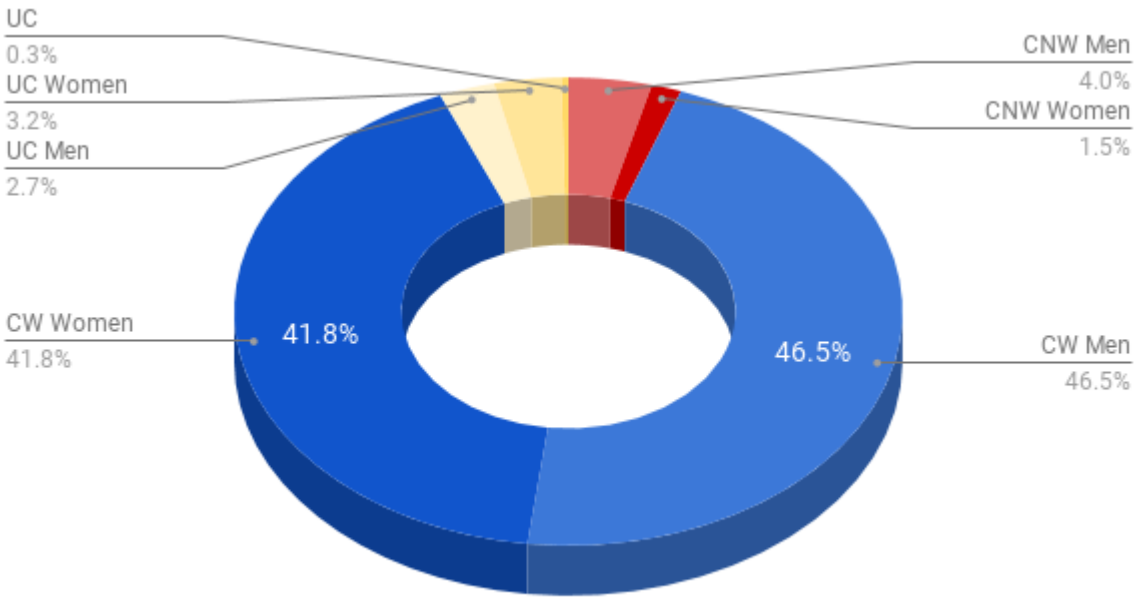
In applying Marttila's (2016) discursive identities , I focus on distinguishing protagonists from opponents in the analysis (see §4.1.1. At certain points I have combined protagonists with helpers as a single identity. In the internal logic of the Facebook group, members spend a great deal of time and energy celebrating environmental heroes, who fit the definition of being "champions and protectors of the paramount ethical ideals" (Marttila, 2016, p. 133) and would thus be 'protagonists' – except that they are not necessarily involved in the fracking debate. Similarly, Facebook group members position themselves sometimes as protagonists, and sometimes as helpers, making strict categorisation tricky. I did not examine 'objects' and 'resources', focusing instead on 'strategies;. In Figure 8-2, Figure 8-5, and Figure 8-10 below I have drawn positive/equivalent relations using solid green arrows, and negative/antagonistic relations using dotted red arrows. The relations to the nodal points can be inferred from the analysis and I have therefore shown them in light grey.

For the second part of the analysis, I noted as many instances as I could find in the corpora of members representing the land itself – the Karoo –sharing photographs, poems, or songs about the Karoo, or just recollections or statements linking them to the land. This analysis focused on sketching the narrative of belonging, which, as I shall argue below, is presented as an autochthonic myth.

Before presenting these findings, it is of some relevance before we look at the data that I also conducted a cursory visual analysis of the Facebook profiles of the posters and commenters on the Top 100 posts. My test was self-referential one: as a South African born in 1978, I grew up in an era when all people in the country were steeped in a particular "racial sense" – allocating people to specific population groups based on their appearance. In the case of Facebook, this 'sense' includes a quick scan of physical features of the Facebook profile picture and family pictures, first and family names, and linguistic performance on the page, in

order to determine whether a particular person "presents" as one of the four apartheid-era population "groups": white, Black African, Coloured, or Indian/Asian. To reduce the chance of error, I divided the commenters into three categories: clearly apartheid-era white (CW), clearly a category that would not have been called white under apartheid (CNW), or not clear (NC). Facebook public profile pages indicate the preferred gender pronouns of members, which is where the data on gender comes from. The results, contained in Figure 8-1, suggest that – although it may clash with how people themselves identify– this Facebook group was an overwhelmingly white space. To my eye, over 88% of the contributors seemed quite clearly white. According to mid-year estimates from Statistics South Africa, only 8% of the general South African population was white (2017, p. 2).

Figure 8-1: Visual analysis of racial presentation in profile of contributors to the Top 100



8.3. Three key nodal points of the anti-fracking discourse

As was discussed in §4.1. multiple centres of articulation, and therefore multiple nodal points, are possible once class reductionism and economism are rejected. In the analysis of the Facebook data, three nodal points became clearly visible, which are presented here.

8.3.1. Rainbow Consumerism

As was argued in Chapter 1, the post-apartheid "Rainbow Nation" arose from a space of interdiscursivity that brought non-racialism and the neo-liberal post-Cold War "consensus" into relations of commensurability. The particular discourse regime that was instituted in this space hailed 'new' South Africans as multi-coloured members of a global consumer society (Hart, 2002). This meant different things to different people. For well-to-do white South Africans, the end of economic sanctions and international opprobrium inaugurated a new era of economic growth and prosperity, while key events such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize jointly to Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk signalled that far from being made to feel bad about an historical crime against humanity, white peoples' participation in a peaceful transfer of political power was sufficient basis for a claim to moral conduct. For Black people, political power was established as the first bulwark, with economic advancement postponed to a future date when enlightened policy-making would open up of economic opportunity, and all South Africans could thrive within the framework of a market economy.

The Rainbow Nation discourse regime was never to escape its mythical origins to become a social imaginary in the full sense. The reason for this is the inherent contradiction in expecting market forces to meet the social demands of people whose participation in the market is tenuous and peripheral. It has also allowed the political bulwark to be slowly

eroded by the economic balance of power. Because the Rainbow Nation expected logics of supply and demand to solve social and political problems, it made these demands subservient to the demands of capital, which steered the entire national project away from a National Democratic Revolution with a clear liberatory goal in sight for the people of South Africa, to a narrative of personal enrichment and consumption.

The subject positions hailed in this discourse are clearly discernible in the anti-fracking discourse. A repeated and powerful articulation is that the anti-fracking movement is a multiracial movement. As was discussed above, there had been intimations that the anti-frackers were merely "protecting their own big fat white interests" (015/008[3]) and so there is often a tone of defensiveness in the assertions of a commitment to non-racialism. Members talk of themselves as "liberals like us" (003/037), some claim to support the liberation movement's most prominent political formation, the African National Congress (ANC, e.g. 029/010), and they are quick to celebrate struggle history, such as the "activist legacy" of Cradock[4] (080/003). Significantly, group members are reprimanded or excluded for racist speech, and some comments deemed offensive seem to have been deleted (012/034, 063/015).

[3] References to posts follow the following notation rule: The first three digits indicate the post reference number, which are ordered chronologically (2013: 001-025; 2014: 026-050; 2015: 051-075; 2016: 076-100), and the second three digits are sequential annotation reference numbers, i.e. 015-008 refers to the eighth annotation made on the fifteenth post in the corpus. The annotation files and coding log are available as public Google documents which can be viewed by other researchers.

[4] The town in the Karoo where the high profile struggle heroes who came to be called the "Cradock Four" were abducted and murdered by the apartheid government in 1985.

The group's installation of a multiracial "pantheon" of environmental heroes ('Protagonists') is also noteworthy. A common discursive identity in the text is Nigerian oilfields activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was executed in that country in 1995 under the military dictatorship of Sani Abacha (011/038, 015/013, 027/011, 031/009). White activists from the Treasure Karoo Action Group (TKAG) such as Jonathan Deal (002/024, 003/033, 055/031) are celebrated alongside Black public figures such as Advocate Thuli Madonsela[5], who is praised for her integrity in standing up to creeping state corruption (e.g. 086/006, 089/004, 091/001), Daantjie Japhta, the charismatic former mayor of Graaff-Reinet who is a member of the anti-fracking movement (008/014, 018/10), and the community at Xolobeni, who were protesting the building of a new titanium mine by an Australian company (098/004). Not all Black heroes are admitted unconditionally. Madonsela might "be bought" (086/014) by corrupt politicians, and the villagers at Xolobeni are criticised for violent protest tactics (098/014). The decolonial student movement, which is as stridently critical of the South African government as many of the anti-frackers, is ridiculed (082/015).

The tentative inclusion of Black heroes speaks to a particular anxiety about non-racialism that arises in other contexts. Images of public consultations on fracking where South Africans of all races come together to oppose fracking are shared as proof of "greater unity between the different stake holders" (018/008); one member asserts that it does not matter "what colour of skin you are this will affect everyone" (012/036). Where unity has to be forged across colour lines it is understood as lacking before, and if the relevance of skin colour to the harms of fracking has to be asserted, it is clearly being asserted against a counter-claim that the harms

[5] National Public Protector of South Africa from 2009 to 2016.

and benefits of natural gas exploitation will affect different 'racial' groups differently in the Karoo.

The first us/them sorting practice instituting a border is thus that 'we' are prepared to unite across race groups in the national interest, while 'they' exploit racial division for personal gain. When one member posts a Radio 702 meme with the first lines of the liberation movement's Freedom Charter in celebration of its sixtieth anniversary in 2015 – "We, the People of South Arica, declare for all our country and the world to know: that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white…" – another member responds "All the people – not only tenderpreneurs and their supporters !" (070/005). The discursive identity "tenderpreneur" invokes a particular antagonistic relationship to supposedly inexperienced, unqualified, or corrupt companies or individuals who are awarded government tenders under the strategy of preferential procurement to adjust for the racial imbalances of South African society (see also Kitis, Milani, & Levon, 2018). Hostility to the practice of preferential procurement per se is not necessarily equivalent to hostility to the figure of the "tenderpreneur" – it is possible to support preferential procurement within the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE[6]) framework and still believe that the process of awarding government tenders is flawed. Other articulations however do make this discursive move, as I will argue below.

Norval's two conditions for the hegemony of the discourse of non-racialism – the eradication of material inequalities, and the fostering of difference (1996, p. 305) – are in an almost fatal tension with each other. In order for material inequalities to be eradicated, government must

[6] Also known simply as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE)

single out its citizens for differential treatment, which, if not articulated as a social imaginary capable of representing the social demands of those who will lose privilege, is understood as an *attack* on difference. And so it is in the anti-fracking movement. Affirmative Action (AA) and BBBEE are singled out repeatedly for criticism: they are called "racist". Eskom, the state-owned electricity utility, was the focal point of much group anger. The failures of Eskom are attributed to what is perceived as ANC 'cadre' deployment, though the remedy is to do away with AA and just employ "people of proven competence in the relevant field in these positions regardless of race, creed or political affiliation" (065/012). Solar power is seen as a way to become self-sufficient, and "off the racist Eskom failing grid" (090/008). The state of the parastatals is summed up by one member in the following terms: "we only have idiots left – the clever ones left the country and the rest are sitting at home"[7] (074/013). This statement, by a white man in Afrikaans, is an interesting leveraging of shared socio-spatial knowledge. The idiots left in South Africa are ostensibly at Eskom – a parastatal supposedly transforming to be more representative of the South African population, letting in waves of new "idiots" at the expense of the country – while those who lose out either emigrate (if they're smart) or stay home, unemployed: the whites, in other words. BBBEE or BEE is also used as a synonym for creeping state failure and collapse. In the oil and gas industry, it is speculated that "fracking companies will gladly give 33.3% to BEE's […] who in any case will just break everything down and sell it as scrap" (069/027). BEE policies are mentioned as a reason to boycott oil companies (064/017). One member says of minister of energy (2014-2017) Tina Joemat-Petterson: "She is the type that will close a deal with

[7] Translations from the original Afrikaans are by the author. Afrikaans: *"Ja ja maar by ons is net idiote ....slimmes is landuit en die res sit by die huis ..."*

plumbing company to build the [nuclear] plant" (082/006). Don't worry, says another, a nuclear build is "not going to happen, lots of bribes and payoffs will, but no nuclear energy will happen. The fools can't even build 2 simple coal stations" (053/009).

The 'boycott' is in fact an even more dominant theme that relies to a certain extent on the perception that official government policy focused on the needs of a poor Black majority, while white people have to find other ways to be heard. Group members are likely to identify their political agency as being more effectively exercised as *consumers* than as *voters*. The boycott of Shell, in which the ANC is a stakeholder, is thus a predictable preoccupation. One shouldn't "under- estimate the SA consumer!" (027/010) says one member; "Shell forget that we have the money," says another "and they have the product" (064/009); boycotting Shell is "voting with our wallets" (096/008). This economic power is to a large extent understood as minority power: "If you think you are too small to make a difference try sleeping in a large room with just one ... mosquito !" (027/006). Though they understand that they are few, they know they can kick up a "*hell of a*[8] fuss!!" (065/007). This notion of the powerful minority consumer, considering the racial makeup of the group, is already racialized in the context of a country where average white household income is six times that of Black households (Stats SA, 2012, p. 42).

When the Karoo activist Jonathan Deal is challenged by a member on why he has not yet called for an official boycott of Shell, but has publicly called for the boycotting of the popular Vida e Caffé coffee shops, which through a new franchise deal would open coffee shops at Shell petrol stations, Deal responds:

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[8] Afrikaans: *"moerse"*

> in a polarised society like South Africa, where dishonest people with vested interests are running around accusing groups like TKAG of protecting their own big fat white interests, it is very difficult to get that [a boycott of Shell] going. Moreover, ANC Ex politician and wealthy businessman Chris Nissen told me to my face that if we called a boycott of Shell he would make sure that every black-owned taxi in the country filled up at Shell (015/010).

This logic says a lot about the structure of the consumer economy in South Africa, and the way that white activists understand themselves as operating within it. Vida e Caffé – a purveyor of expensive coffee and food in upmarket neighbourhoods – is seen as being responsive to the consumer behaviour of white people, whereas Shell is not. It is interesting that Deal takes Nissen at his word here: he believes that the politician would make good on his threat, and that all Black-owned taxis in the country would obey him, thereby flattening the political profile of "black-owned taxis" into a group of people obedient to the ANC, a laughable simplification. Nissen is the token that confirms a type. It is therefore a more realistic goal for him to target the small coffee shop than the big oil brand, as he understands that he does not have the social capital with anybody outside of his specific social and racial enclave to have any real negative impact on Shell.

The concept of voting with your wallets speaks to anxieties both about the relatively small impact that the middle class vote has on the policy decisions of the ANC, and to an anxiety about the poor people. Because members were often keen to show their support for all the people of South Africa, they occasionally articulated that the anti-fracking cause was also a pro-poor cause: "There is no price on clran water for poor people" (011/039) said one member. The problem with poor people, however, from the perspective of the anti-frackers,

was that they were gullible and willing to believe the lies of Shell: “Unfortunately it is the poor and less-educated sector that they are targeting” (037/009). The vaunted benefits of fracking just don’t apply to the poor, who according to this member lack the skills to get these jobs in the first place: “The poor poor people of the karoo will have no water if fracking are allowed..working on a fracking site require competant skilled people ..so no skills.and no water..where would that leave the poor people...” (072/007).

There does seem to be some limited awareness that the interests of unemployed people need to be taken into account seriously, and that their status as full agents was worthy of consideration. This awareness is however always in competition with the sense that it is no good reasoning with poor people, as they wouldn’t really understand the big picture. As this member puts it:

> One of the big challenges in SA is that the bulk of the people are fixated (understandably and necessarily) with improving their economic position and being treated in a socially just manner. They (again, understandably) are desperate to believe the untruths being told to them that environmental exploitation is an essential way to achieve economic growth, create jobs and build a better life for all. The links between unsustainable environmental exploitation and the erosion of socio-economic wellbeing need to become common knowledge. (SA012-032)

Poor people are thus presented as fixated on social justice, and desperate to believe that they will get jobs, which turns them into the “problem” (Du Bois, 1903/2008) that needs to be solved. This pathologisation of the poor is at certain points in the discourse combined with a neo-Malthusian worldview. The problem with the world is that “there is to many people in the planet” (075/011) and a “growing population exacerbates the problem” (012/026);

“Unless human population gets under control we will lose our wild spaces” (092/009). Though not all statements specify who the excess people are, this occasionally comes into focus, as in the following comment:

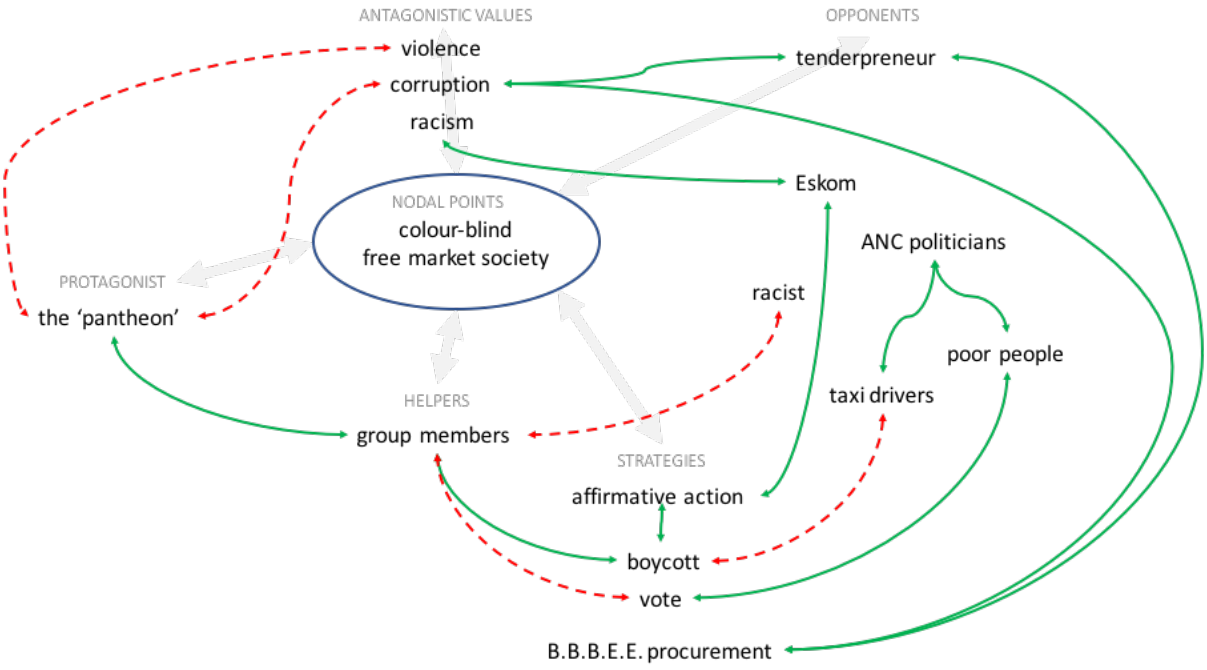
> What about facing the real problem? Numbers. What about using technology to stop US, the cause of all pollution, consumption, waste, of breeding untill we are say "responsible" enough? Or, as is the case, is our "rights" sacrosanct? Is it easier to chop down a forest for that townhouse complex, easier to give "grants", to hike taxes, than to face the real cause? (028/046)

This is a revealing articulation. The poster is concerned that “we” are irresponsibly expanding the population and killing the earth through our “breeding”. Rights that are sacrosanct, grants that are accessed, and taxes that are hiked are all dimensions of this problem. Who is paying these taxes? We are. And who is claiming these grants and rights? There is a thinly veiled eugenic urge here to implement “technologies” over expensive rights, which are clearly the rights of poor people accessing social security – grants such as the Child Support Grant which is widely believed to encourage young women to fall pregnant, even though this is not the case (Makiwane & Udjo, 2006). The commenter clearly speaks as a taxpayer, not as a grant recipient.

As can be seen in Figure 8-2 the ethical values that seem to govern the relations between these discursive entities include notions of colour-blindness, the fairness and efficiency of normal market forces, and the belief in the righteousness of flexing consumer power. Because corruption, supposed “tenderpreneur”-ship, BBBEE, AA, and the influence of ANC politicians have been extensively enchained as opposing this ideal social order, the issue of how to address the inequalities of the past is swept away in two gestures: the first gesture is

to merely draw attention to the present state of corruption within state institutions without averring whether or not race-based procurement or employment is a fair strategy to employ; the second is to explicitly enchain state-owned enterprises such as Eskom as racist, and participating in a politics of division.

Figure 8-2: Discourse Map 1: The Rainbow Consumer



While Chris Nissen is named as one politician, many others are represented in the sample. Nissen's threat to break the boycott using taxi drivers is the action blueprint for the kind of struggle in which the anti-frackers understand themselves to be. The ANC government is interfering in the functioning of a normal market by playing up racial tensions; not all members attack AA and BBBEE as embodying this, but there are also no defences of AA or BBBEE when it is attacked. The enchaining of this kind of interference in the market as racist and therefore antagonistic to the achievement of the ideal social order must therefore be understood as unchallenged. Group members furthermore construct themselves as consumers and as taxpayers, constructing poor people as a problem when they claim rights, access

grants, or become desperate to believe businesses or government agencies that say they can offer them jobs. The ideal subject position – who 'we' aspire to be – thus appears to be a sort of Rainbow Consumer, a participant in a multiracial market not hung up on the past.

8.3.2. Rooted in the Karoo

Being 'authentically' linked in some way to the Karoo itself was another major differentiator between "us" and "them". Group members think of themselves as "Karooists" (052/025) and refer to each other by the name of the town they come from e.g. "Well done Aberdeen[9]" (051/015) or by activity, such as farming. Honest, earthy work such as farming is also contrasted to the shady and irresponsible work of elites, as in "we have to survive in the Karoo on our farms and when it goes wrong they [the government] will pull up their shoulders and carry on living like kings" (010/008). People on the Karoo are described as having a particular fighting spirit that is at one point linked to a rugged masculinity: "go Karoo. Slow them we are no sissies" (051/034). Karoo people "stand together" (051/012); have longstanding connections with each other (024/008) including blood ties (030/003); and are people you should not "mess" with (051/016). The discourse is building the image of Karooists as a tough and close-knit clan. As in the previous articulation, Daantjie Japhta (Figure 8-3) plays a key role. He is pictured as representing the "people of the Karoo" (018/008) and his photo is captioned "leader of the Inqua clan" (018/001); an article that links from his picture on www.karoospace.co.za states that Japhta had said that "the Khoi people had decided they would not allow fracking in the Karoo" (Du Toit, 2013).

[9] Small town in the Eastern Cape Karoo, pop. 7,162 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aberdeen,_Eastern_Cape)

Figure 8-3: Daantjie Japhta, former mayor of Graaff-Reinet and "leader of the Inqua clan"



Japhta is however not mentioned again after this point (November 2013) and is not himself a member of the Facebook group. By 2015, members are wondering where the Khoe-San[10] stand on the debate. One group member asks: "I'm wondering where the voices are of the people who are the original karoo dwellers? (055/011). This member seems reticent to name the "original dwellers", is not clear where they are physically, and has no clear sense of how to contact or network with them. Not knowing exactly where they are is a very important admission in a discourse very much concerned with rootedness, with place names, and farms. The inability to *place* a Khoe-San community or individual other than the brief engagement with Japhta speaks to a role in the discourse that turns the "original dwellers" into symbols of connection to land that are unthreatening to actual white land occupation. In this vein, a particularly revealing articulation is made by another member:

[10] The name used to refer to the culturally linked but heterogeneous group of southern Africa's First Nations

> Ultimately, the Karroo belongs to the 'people of origin'. As their artwork found throughout the Karroo testifies to the copyright of the land. They have he final say, don't they?" (045/032).

This comment is made on an extended conversation about Shell South Africa CEO Bonang Mohale's assertion that Shell investment in the region would improve it, to which many members respond that the Karoo is perfect exactly as it is, and thus cannot be improved (this response will be discussed in greater detail in the next section). This particular reaction, which clearly assumes that Khoe-San people would support the anti-fracking movement, has two related discursive effects. First, it turns the Khoe-San into ghostly presences that have always actually exercised control over the land, but have somehow hovered above the processes of white settler colonial agricultural expansion with depoliticised benevolence, as their descendants are recruited as manual labourers, their livelihoods destroyed, and their languages decimated, processes which have to be strategically erased in order for their benevolence to be believable. Secondly, it lassoes into the self-definition of the anti-fracking movement the noble autochthonic artist whose ancient inscriptions on the land prove its claims to control, which may be worn as a badge of pride of connection to place by the anti-fracking movement, as opposed to a mark of shame. The shame must be suppressed through not asking questions about why their art is "found" throughout the Karoo, by whom, where it lands up, who now 'owns' it, etc. The Khoe-San are thus used to sanctify the anti-fracking movement through constructing them in a way that serves to *justify* current patterns of land use even as their original claim to the land is not denied. This is a prime example of how "good feeling" (Ahmed, 2004b, n.p.) may be taken up even as the reality of colonial dispossession is being (albeit obliquely) gestured to.

Corporations, on the other hand, and the government officials that enable them, are represented as being hostile to the Karoo. The devastation of the land that is envisaged by the anti-frackers is linked directly by one commenter to an argument made by the ecological activist and former advertising executive Jerry Mander[11]:

> Corporations exist beyond time and space […] they are legal creations that only exist on paper. They do not die a natural death; they outlive their own creators. And they have no commitment to locale, employees, or neighbors. This makes the modern corporation entirely different from the baker or grocer of previous years who survived by cultivating intimacy with the neighbors. Having no morality, *no commitment to place*, and no physical nature (a factory someplace, while being a physical entity, is not the corporation), a corporation can relocate all of its operations to another place at the first sign of inconvenience: demanding employees, too high taxes, restrictive environmental laws. (001/047, emphasis added)

This dyad (baker/corporation) quite literally hinges on a *commitment to place* as it is the absence of physical location – having to look a community of people in the eye – that enables the ephemeral, unnatural, and immoral character of the corporation. For the 'Karooists' of the anti-fracking movement, this is the very essence of the problem. They understand themselves as guarding the land against the devil (040/001, 041/001) who would turn "ons arme Karoo

[11] The quote is from Mander, J. (1991) In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology & the Survival of the Indian Nations. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

[*our poor Karoo*]" (020/004) into "Mordor[12]"; (020/008). Protecting the land is articulated as outweighing other considerations, such as the "economy" (086/001, see Figure 8-4).

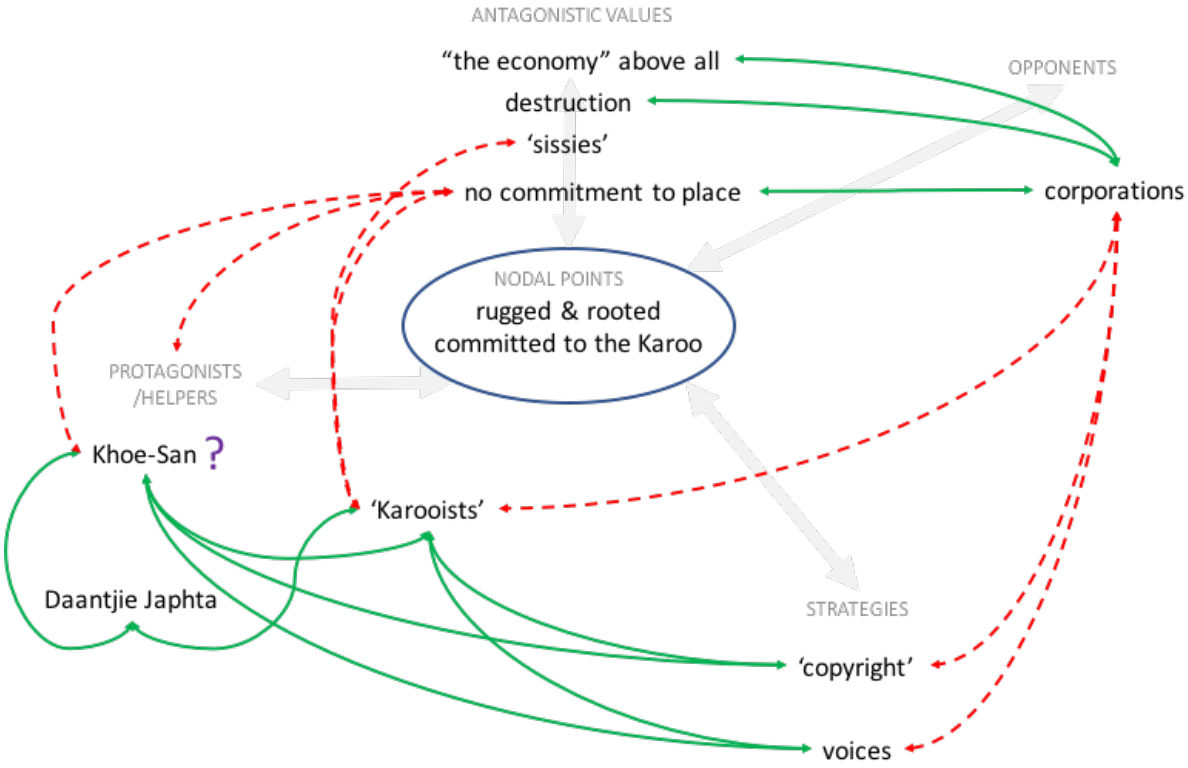
Figure 8-4: Fuck the Economy (086/001)



In the second discourse map (see Figure 8-5) the Karooists, as well as Daantjie Japhta and the Khoe-San antagonists, serve in dynamic relationships of protagonist leaders and helpers.

[12] Mordor is the hellish, environmentally devastated domain of the devil-figure Sauron in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings; Tolkien's environmental vision in many ways anticipated the modern environmental movement; see Dickerson and Evans (2006) for an eco-critical account.

Figure 8-5: Discourse Map 2: Rooted in the Karoo



The uncertainty about the Khoe-San (hence the question mark) in particular arises from the repeated statement that the Karooists actually rooted in the land, while the Khoe-San have an instrumental role as the holders of "copyright" to the land, as anti-fracking "voices", and not as fully political subjects who have been pushed to the margins of South African society. The other side of the axis is quite clearly the corporation, which has no relationship to place and can therefore turn places into 'Mordor' while appealing to the economic benefits of their work. This does not mean that the Karooists are 'sissies' or do not care about the economy, merely that they are rooted in the land and that they therefore take care of it in a rugged and practical way.

8.3.3. People of Reason

The ruling ANC government is consistently represented as lacking reason. This manifests itself in many ways. Firstly, they are uneducated (049/035) or are unable to learn because

they “bought their education” (093/004). A lack of education is not an excuse for bad policies: former minister of mineral resources Susan Shabangu and her colleagues “needs to be educated and then held accountable for there actions” (011/026). Minister of energy Tina Joemat-Pettersson “only got the job as Energy Minister, because she knew how to switch a light on and off” (053/015). When Joemat-Pettersson proposes procuring nuclear energy, one member asserts: “She knows NOTHING about the technicalities about nuclear and SQUAT about the cost if money. The same goes for [President Jacob] Zuma” (082/038).

Government officials are also represented as being more like animals than like people. In Figure 8-6 Minister Joemat-Petterson was caught in an unguarded moment in parliament (082/007); in the discussion that follows, one member emulates the popular television quiz show by saying “u are the weakest link good bye” (082/013). Another member immediately chimes in: “more like the missing link” (082/014). President Zuma also comes in for dehumanising: “To run a banana republic you need a baboon in charge...” (023/016). When one member suggests that Zuma has “sold his soul”, another one comments that he had no soul to sell (040/007). In the Christian tradition, soullessness is understood to be a property of an animal or a thing. Joemat-Pettersson is placed in this category again: “Just look at that things face .... she needs a round house kick out of her position” (088/008).

Figure 8-6: Tina Joemat-Petterson licks the outside of her cup (082/007)



The ruling party is articulated as being in an incommensurate relationship with logical thought. “Logic and the ANC do not go together” (057/023) says one member; “The ANC are an ecological disaster, but without the logical” (065/014) says another; “Logic is not part of the equation at all” (079/013) yet another. One member puts it very succinctly: “Our primitive government can not use logic..” (043/007).

The most popular post by far[13] was about government stupidity on energy policy (Figure 8-7). Television character Homer Simpson – famously a very stupid man, whose catch-phrase is “Doh!” while hitting himself on the head – is compared favourably in terms of intelligence to the South African government. A later comment posits stupidity as necessary for career

[13] Post 074 on 23 September 2015 had 744 interactions; the second-ranked Post 085 on 13 March 2016 had only 592. Post 074 combines three hugely popular elements in the South African discourse: solar power, government stupidity, and humour.

advancement in the national government: "T*he dumber you are, the higher up your position [in government] is"*[14] (082/016).

Figure 8-7: The South African government is considering nuclear (074/001)



The nuclear build also gives occasion for one member to compare the apartheid era government to the current one: "Please remember who built koeberg and palindaba....neither were the ANC government.....they cannot do it, they are incapable, don't worry, it won't happen" (053-019). Although the discourse here is anti-nuclear, we are left with no doubt that the white supremacist apartheid state was a much more intelligent, much more competent outfit than the current one, in that they successfully built a nuclear power station at Koeberg and an atomic "research" facility (with weapons capacity) at Pelindaba.

[14] Afrikaans: "Hoe dommer hoe hoer die poste". The fourth word in this comment should be spelled "hoër" – i.e. higher – and not "hoer" – which translates directly as "whore". The slip is inevitably taken up by later commenters to draw attention to minister Tina Joemat-Petterson's supposed promiscuity..

Another tendency across the sample is to talk about government and members of the ANC as if they are children, to the point of describing the party as a "kindergarten" (010/035). Even commenters who think they are being sympathetic to the government manage to infantilise its leaders, in this case of all 'developing' nations:

> I fear it is also ignorance and inexperience that make some of our leaders so easy to hoodwink. These corporate gluttons count on the inexperience of so many of the leaders in governments in 'developing' countries, especially when it comes to their understanding of global business, environmental issues, etc. (011/013).

The casual discounting of the agency of politicians is similar to what was noted above in respect to poor people. Another commenter is arguing that environmentalists should promote wind power to the national government: "by offering Government a viable alternative to shale gas - a bit like distracting a naughty toddler with a new toy - we ought to be able to wean them off this disgusting technology" (017/030). In a separate conversation about renewable energy, one commenter notes that "the technology is mature.... our decisionmakers are not!" (032/016).

The commenter who wants to 'wean' the government off fossil fuels like a 'toddler' goes on to comment that "a convincing case for it to be totally viable economically to provide a great proportion of SA's energy needs must be made" (017/030). The environmentalists of the group see it as their responsibility to make rational arguments, to build the logic, and to design the policy, which they should then admonish the impressionable government into making law. The solution is to talk to the government in stern and unambiguous language – what I shall call *policy voice.* A disagreement over how to talk about fracking is the major thrust of Jonathan Deal's attack on the World Wildlife Federation of South Africa (WWF-

SA) in the first post of the corpus. WWF-SA had submitted a "wish list" ahead of President Jacob Zuma's 2013 State of the Nation address that included as its first point: "No fracking without environmental safeguards"[15]. This wording infuriated Deal, who observes that the "South African government […] needs little encouragement to make the wrong choice" (001/005). Only unequivocal language that allows for no nuance (i.e. what are the safeguards, are they sufficient, etc.) can be allowed: "Fracking is a bad choice" (001/003).

The clearly racist tropes that are directed at ANC government appear again in attacks on the CEO of Shell South Africa – Bonang Mohale – though not on any other of the oil men, who are all white[16]. Mohale is "indicative of the kind of monkeys we have running most of the big corporate gangs" (026/006). In response to the meme in Figure 8-8 one member comments:

> I ALMOST described the face I saw. And the gesture. And the animal it reminded me of. Archetypal image. Goodness luckily overcame me before I spoke out of turn. (062/036)

Overtly racist speech is generally policed in the group – though this seems to be enforced in a very uneven manner[17]. This commenter is performing their self-censorship, appealing to two

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[15] https://www.iol.co.za/news/wwfs-wishlist-for-sa-environment-1470003#.URzgXEL88sp hyperlinked at SA001-001 and accessed on 14 September 2017

[16] For example, International Shell CEO Peter Voser should have a fracking well under his house (005/006), Falcon Oil CEO Phillip O'Quigley is "sulky" (051/003), and General Manager for Shell South Africa Jan-Willem Eggink deserves what's coming to him when he returns to the Netherlands (055-018).

[17] The various dehumanizing strategies reserved for Jacob Zuma and Tina Joemat-Pettersson, for example, are not reacted to as 'racist' by members, perhaps because the phrasing allows the denial of racist intentions. For example, "to run a banana republic..." mentioned above is phrased as an aphorism that clearly refers to Zuma based on its context, but is deniable as a racist slur as nobody *actually* said "Zuma is a baboon".

implicit and shared group understandings: one, that he looks like a monkey, and two, that to call a Black person a monkey in a public forum would lead to accusations of racism. The comment "Goodness luckily overcame me" is of course highly ironic, as the comment still calls Mohale a monkey – implicitly calling his physiognomy and gesture apelike – without actually using the word.

Figure 8-8: The Bonang Mohale meme (062/001)



As was argued in Chapter 6, white references to African traditional medicine, *umuthi*, are often laden with associations of primitivism, which is clearly the case in a later comment on Figure 8-8, "if i rub this muti on my head no one can see me" (062/047).

Mohale is likened to Jacob Zuma. A commenter who had previously called Zuma a "cowherd"[18] (053/026) apostrophises Mohale: "Do we all look like sheep you herder of cows !" (062-016). This strategy not only draws a parallel between the two men, it also places them

[18] Afrikaans: *"'n vee wagter"*

closer to animals, and turns an ordinary and culturally meaningful task for millions of adolescent boys around South Africa into an insult. They have the "same hairstyle" (062/032) but Mohale is a "bigger bullshitter" (026/027). Mohale is also called "another showerhead" (045/041) – a reference to Zuma's testimony at his trial for the rape of 'Khwezi' that he had a shower after sex with her as he believed this would reduce his chances of contracting HIV[19]. These persistent equivalences also shade into confusion: some members are clearly not sure whether Mohale is a businessman or a politician. He is "obviously bribed" (062/048) says one member; another asks how he may be voted out of power (062/050); another speculates that he is getting a "massive kickback" (062/066). When these members see a Black face, they apply the discursive repertoire usually reserved for politicians. Another element of the repertoire usually used against politicians on a corporate payroll, but uniquely targeted at Mohale among other business leaders, is the idea that he is a "puppet". Thus, we are told that Mohale is a corporate puppet (062/011), a paid-up stooge (062/044), the "spin puppet bonehead Bonang" (062/045), and even an "AA puppet" (045/036). For these commenters, it is unthinkable that Mohale has the agency to actually be the one pulling the strings.

A not uncommon practice when talking about Black people in the corpus was to use orthography that imitated Black South African English (BSAE) pronunciation, a type of "Mock BSAE" with ideological underpinnings not dissimilar to those explored by Jane Hill in the United States in the context of Mock Spanish, which associates Spanish-speakers with "the non-serious, the casual, the laid-back, the humorous, the vulgar" (Hill, 2008). Responses

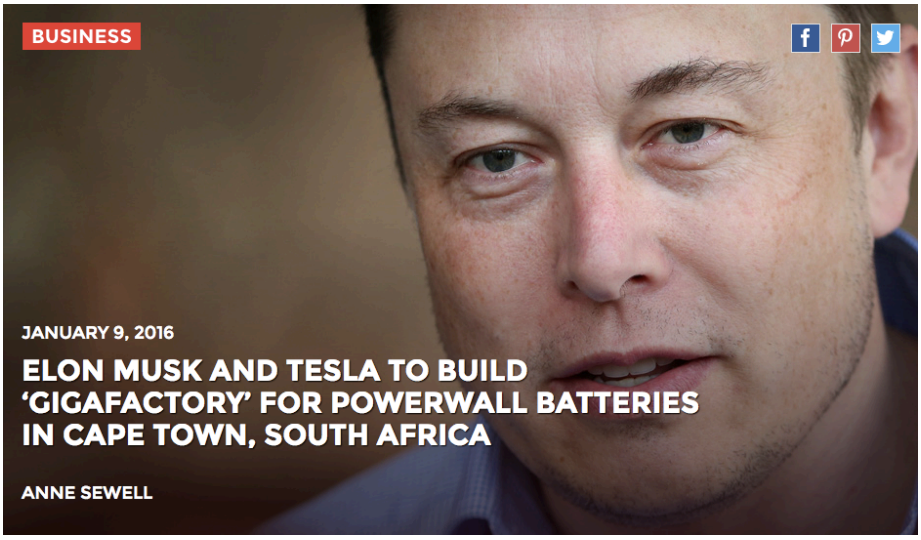
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[19] Political cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro, or 'Zapiro', has been drawing Zuma with a showerhead coming out of his cranium ever since this bizarre statement. The links to HIV and *umuthi* repeated in this corpus from the anti-rhino poaching corpus discussed in the previous chapter suggest that these associations are staples of the white construction of black people.

to memes showing up Bonang Mohale's supposed stupidity included "Eish!" (026/017) and "if you feed the frack water to your pigs they will fly! Seriaasly!" (026/023). Some members imitate and mock the supposed reasoning of poor unemployed people using what they understand to be a BSAE accent: "ish Charles, I've only got a honorary standard 5 we don't need clean drinking water we need short term jooobs !!" (011/012). When speaking of the impact of environmental damage on workers, one member says "the only people left carrying the can are the 'wekers'" (038/033). Politicians in the ANC are described as "pee-pull" with no morals (065/005); and one of the first responses to the Homer Simpson meme discussed above is a loud (i.e. capitalised) "EISH" (SA074-005). One member pretended, repeatedly, that the names of Bonang Mohale and Susan Shabangu were dirty words: Mohale's "marketing rhetoric" for example, is a "load of Bonang" (008/011).

Another well-known businessman fares very differently to Mohale. Elon Musk, owner of TESLA, becomes an avatar for all that is good and heroic. He is a "genius" (078/004), an ally against fracking and nuclear power (078/005), "a very smart and generous guy" (078/009), and his way of thinking is the "future" (081/006). He is even represented as a defender of two related and beloved discursive identities, consumers and cars, as he supposedly believes "it is immoral for a [car] dealership to make a profit on service" (028/024). Musk's popularity is easily understandable. On the one hand he offers white commenters the story of a white South African who has risen to international acclaim; on the other, he offers them a future for their cherished car culture and high levels of energy consumption that is perceived as guilt-free. His example is also seen as legitimising white flight from South Africa: he would never have accomplished what he has "in the backyard of the falling rand" says one member, adding sarcastically "Banana republics lead the way" (078/015).

Figure 8-9: Elon Musk, the great white hope (078/001)



Germany's (limited) fracking ban is repeatedly celebrated by members (035/001, 050/001, 071/001) and a smiling Angela Merkel is pictured as the face of the ban, in "the number one sensible country" (097/006) on earth. The situation in South Africa on the other hand is articulated in the following terms: "Only problem, we don't have a German goverment (or mentality) in SA!" (035/009). The member is not seriously suggesting that South Africa cede its sovereignty to Germany, but making a mischievous joke that relies on a shared sentiment that European control of African countries (such as during the colonial period) is broadly-speaking beneficial for Africa. This "German mentality" is also typified in the form of Dr Stefan Cramer, the German "hydrogeologist" (043/002) whose arrival in the Karoo is greatly anticipated (024/005); he explains why the shale gas reserves in the Karoo are unlikely to be as great or as cheap to extract as was thought (057/003) and attains the status of a roving environmental hero, moving on to fight uranium mining next (085/013). His expertise is the basis for much of the scientific grounding that enables policy voice.

At certain points in the discourse, an entire worldview becomes visible that contextualises the state of African development, and the role that Europe has played:

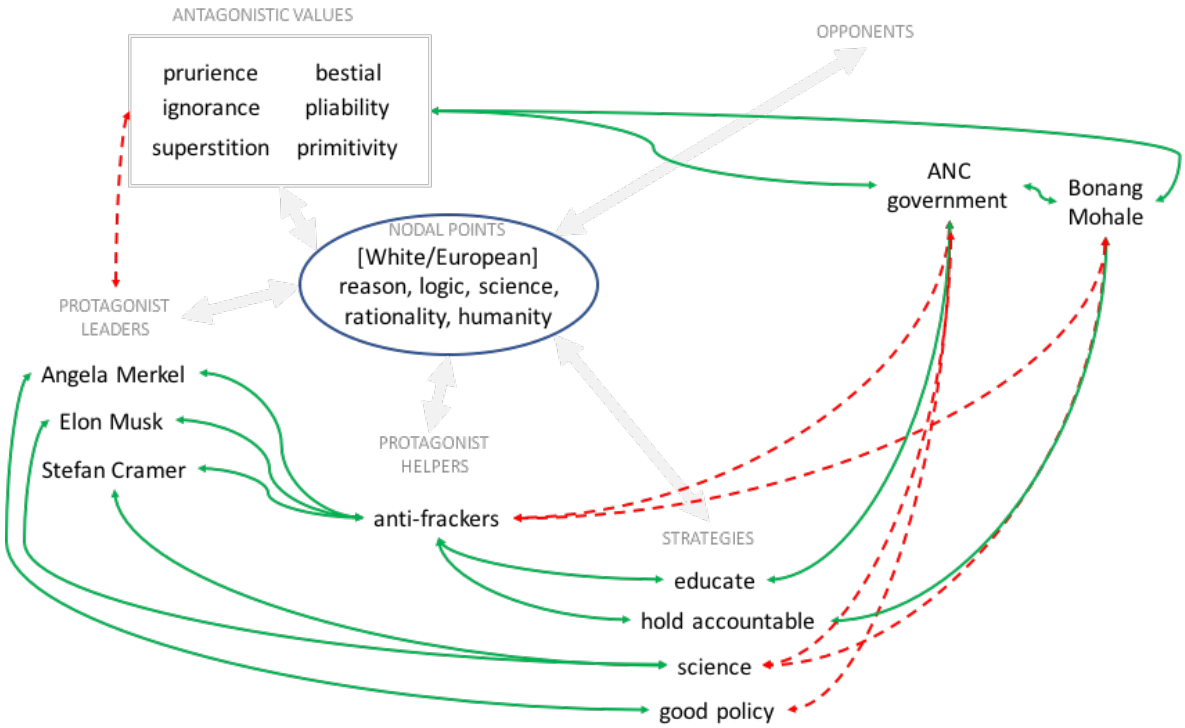
> Who do you think sold out the millions of African masses and their minerals to speculators, but their very own people? The ruthless few chiefs and greedy politicians were not able to manage themselves by putting something back into their economy or even creating one, but rather they bought up wall street and real-estate in London,,, so is that our fault as well now!! The undeveloped people have always been primitive and this cannot be blamed on Europeans. (065/063).

Africans are at one point described as "obsessessed with clinging to superstition, dangerous and bizarre beliefs" (039/036); they "stream in by millions to create slums" (065/066); they are killing each other when they should be farming (069/016), and the "only legacy that Africa gives is deserts, genocide, and ruin"[20] (062/055). In a similar triangular structure to that identified in the analysis of the rhino poaching campaign (Chapter 6), a problematically undistinguished ethnic group – Asian people – are constructed distinctly from the no less unproblematic undifferentiated Africans. The Chinese are "opportunitistic locusts bred by communisms" (017/023); and their mere presence in a town is considered "so damned sinister" (085/008). Tellingly, they are described as the new colonisers of Africa with "no patriotism for newly conquered lands" (065/067). Implicitly, we are reminded that the previous colonisers might have conquered other peoples' lands, but at least they love the land they conquered.

[20] Afrikaans: *"Al nalatingskap wat Afrika gee is woestyne, volksmoorde en gebrokenheid"*

The discursive map (Figure 8-10 is clearly organised around some notion of an ideal humanity that is governed by reason, logic, science, and rationality. As was discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, these notions clearly underpin racial liberalism.

Figure 8-10: Discursive Map 3: Placing logical Europeans at the centre of the discourse



Because of the racial imagoes conjured up, and the fact that chosen protagonist leaders are all white people and the opponents are all Black people, described in vile and racist language, it is possible to add "whiteness" to this nodal point – while noting that whiteness is only represented visually, and not discussed in the comments explicitly. White people are merely represented as logical, scientific, etc., there is no verbalisation of the idea that logic or science are white or European characteristics. The positive connectors between "educate" and "hold accountable", and the ANC government, are important. While some members articulate that the government would be open to reason, and should be engaged with on the basis of the evidence in a deliberative manner, others state that this is waste of time: bribes have been paid, they wouldn't understand, they are stupid anyway. The question of the educability of

the ANC government is a site of discursive struggle reminiscent of the disagreements between the government of the Cape Colony and the London Missionary Society in the nineteenth century: the government though that Black people were not worth the effort and would never be able to stand on an equal footing with white people, whereas the missionaries believed that this might be possible if Black people would only slough off their ignorant superstitions and cultural practices, and start to dress, talk, and think like Europeans (see Keegan, 1997).

8.4. The myth of white autochthony

The second part of this analysis aims to read the anti-fracking campaign as an environmentalist discourse against the backdrop of the three key articulations discussed above. The name of the group – "chase SHELL OIL out of the Karoo !" is as eloquent a summary as one needs of the conservationist central plank of the campaign: Shell Oil's plans to extract shale gas from the Karoo basin using hydraulic fracturing must be stopped. The boundary of the Karoo – the boundary outside of which Shell Oil is going to be chased – is thus a relevant spatiality that needs to be taken into account in understanding the anti-fracking discourse. This section thus examines the dialectic between the anti-fracking discourse and the land itself.

The Karoo is consistently referred to in the group in highly affective, even spiritual terms. It is, for example, "a place that touches every Afrikaner"[21] (008/009); it is "our heartland"[22]

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[21] Afrikaans: *"Die Karoo… [is] 'n plek wat elke Afrikaner raak"*. This text appears in the soundtrack of the YouTube clip embedded in this point in the discussion.

[22] Afrikaans: *"ons hartland"*

(032/011); it is "soul country and it makes better human beings out of people" (062/070). A member says they will "never forget the stars" (072-002) and another agrees: "it never leaves you" (072/017). The idea of fracking the Karoo is a "clash/confrontation/war between head and heart, tangible and the intangible, measurable and the immeasurable" (067-007). While the "sublime" might not be a major theme in the canon of white writing in South Africa (Coetzee, 1988) these articulations certainly support Geertsema's (2006) contention that the sublime may be mobilised politically as an abstraction from the messiness of individual and group histories of oppression and dispossession.

In the series of head/heart dyads proposed by the member above, fracking is implied to be on the side of the head, the tangible, and the measurable, while the Karoo is the heart, the intangible, and the immeasurable. However, while members don't dispute the importance of strong affective connections, many are very clear that anti-frackers must *know* the Karoo, as well as feel it. When a member dismisses scientific studies as informed by greed, they are sharply rebuked: "Let us forget about science and studies and, I suppose sing Kumbayaa? […] You will lose the Karoo and you will lose it because of this attitude" (032/020). *Keeping* the Karoo is strongly articulated in a number of examples with scientifically *knowing* it: the claim that dolerite intrusions "cooked" the gas out of the shale (003/051; 024/001) is just one of the "Six reasons why fracking will never happen in the Karoo" (043/003). The assertion that oil and gas companies are on a fool's errand – that there is no point even in prospecting, because there is no chance that the gas is there – is asserted repeatedly in these conversations. Likewise, the harms of the process itself are referenced extensively from international reports of varying quality, and mapped onto the specifics of the Karoo using earlier mining-related surveys of the region (006/008).

The head and the heart come together in a number of places in the sample, including in the anti-fracking video by the South African folk singer David Kramer (067/001). In the video, he starts by singing a song in Afrikaans, with the following lyrics:

> Ooh, do you know the Karoo?
> Home of snake and lizard
> Many years ago, that lizard was a fish
> Now you'll find shells in the rocks
> You'll find skeletons in the clay
> This whole dry world was underwater
> That's the truth
> Underwater, underwater
> This whole dry expanse was underwater
> That's the truth[23] (067/001)

Kramer then speaks directly to the camera, and says, in English: "There's a place, a vast and beautiful place, an ancient place. It's a place I come from, and it's a place I write about, it's a place that's inspired me and my music. It's called the Karoo" (067/001).

To know the Karoo in Kramer's song is to know it on an evolutionary or geological timescale. He is both referring to the paleontological importance of the area, which is one of the richest fossil fields in the world, and to the awe he feels when he considers these many

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[23] Afrikaans: *"O, ken jy die Karoo / Hier bly slang en akkedis / Baie jare terug was daai akkedis 'n vis / Nou kry jy skulpe in die rotse / Jy kry skedels in die klei / Hierdie hele droë wêreld onderwater / Glo vir my / Onderwater, onderwater / Hierdie hele droë leegte was onderwater / Glo vir my"*

millions of years of history, the inspiration for his music. In this context, it is this "ancient" history that makes the Karoo worth saving – both for the head and for the heart. The implied audience of his song are people who don't know, or perhaps have heard but don't believe, this paleontological reading of the land. Kramer thus places himself and his connection to the Karoo on a timescale that stretches back millions of years. His *belonging* is not a matter of recent history: it is *ancient* – it is Kramer's claim to autochthony.

David McDermott Hughes noted how white Rhodesians mythologised Lake Kariba – a dam that was opened in 1959 at the height of colonial influence – by representing it in geological time, even at one point imagining it surrounded by dinosaurs (Hughes, 2010, pp. 36–37). This representation allows the changes to the land wrought by white colonialists to be represented as being ancient, and to naturalise and normalise their presence on the land. Kramer's song is likewise a link in the chain of equivalence of a related myth, in that it foregrounds both the paleontological-geological knowledge of the Karoo and the authority of Kramer as the sage-like white man connected both to the science and the mystery of this "ancient" history, while pushing into the background other histories and knowledges that might compete with this one, such as for example the colonial treatment of the Khoe-San and the ensuing treatment of Black landholders in the region. The 'you' that Kramer's song speaks to might know other things about the Karoo, just not what *he* does. And so they don't really *know* it at all.

The Karoo is repeatedly called "perfect". Bonang Mohale's biggest sin in Figure 8-8 (062/001) was to assert that Shell's investment might improve the Karoo. The Karoo is "already perfect, it cannot be made better" (045/028) – "no tampering needed!" (062/014) – assert members. Its perfection was ordained by God, making Mohale's interference sacrilegious: "I'd like to know what both the Soul of The Karoo, and Creator, think about the improvements that Shell has in mind" (045/049) says one member. "Anyone who thinks they

can leave it (the Karoo) better than they found it is actually saying that they can do a better job than He who created it!" (062/026) says another.

Articulations of the Karoo's supposed perfection might plausibly be limited to its natural landscape, but that is not how the Karoo's beauty is represented by group members. A typical Karoo scene is shared at Figure 8-11 and one member comments "The purity and awesome beauty of the Karoo is so worth fighting for" (036/003).

Figure 8-11: A typical Karoo scene (036/001) (image © Rob Southey)



When group members use this kind of language to describe an image that has a windpump and a concrete farm dam at its focal point, they naturalise the presence on the land of the trappings of extensive agricultural activity established through the colonial incursion. In other places in the sample we hear that the Karoo is "pristine" (032/019), "perfect" (045/014), and "untouched for millions of years" (045/030), in need of no repair as "you can not repair nature" (062/019), "unspoiled" (062/034), and that it is a "wide open space of unspoilt beauty ! With the 'quiet' of memories and history !!" (072/018). The typical "Karoo scene" with its ubiquitous windpump has clearly been constructed in the white imagination as natural, god-

ordained, peaceful, perfect, and beautiful. Given that it is possible to read the expansion of agriculture in the Karoo as a catastrophe for the people who lived there beforehand, some of whom were killed, or were coerced into agricultural labour, or otherwise displaced, it becomes clear that the "'quiet' of memories and history" (072/018) invoked above is *white* colonial history and *white* memory. For most other South Africans alive today, there was nothing 'quiet' about this history.

Certainty of the Karoo's perfection is a driving force behind the *policy voice* that asserts the undesirability of government control of land, the bulwark against which is the rights of the owners. The anti-frackers invoke a very strong sense of property rights: they say they would defend their land with "locked gates and loaded shotguns" (051/004) and Jonathan Deal tells a farmer that nobody else can make plans for "YOUR farm" (061/038). Statements of possession are very common (see Figure 8-12), sometimes with great emphasis: "OUR country, OUR Karoo, OUR livelihoods and OUR frigging environment" (068/002) or simply: "LEAVE OUR KAROO ALONE!!!!!!!" (045/043).

Figure 8-12: Keep your hands off our Karoo (SA027-001)



While they clear feel the Karoo is theirs, it is not something that can be bought and sold. “How can you put a price tag on the Karoo?” asks one member (011/037); it is “NOT WORTH ANY AMOUNT OF MONEY” (011/044) says another; it is “not for sale” because it “belongs to everyone” (045/017). These vague assertions that the Karoo belongs to everyone are at odds with the “locked gates and loaded shotguns” that are indeed evident throughout the region, and the repeated assertions that the Karoo belongs to “us”. As has already been noted, it is also often convenient to assert that the Karoo belongs to “the original dwellers” – as long as nobody can quite place them. The claim that the Karoo “belongs to everyone” works as two terms in inverse proportion to each other: the stronger the right over the land, the fewer the number of people who are actually empowered to exercise it.

We can see in this group that white autochthony is asserted in the Karoo in geological time in both a scientific and a mythical gesture. Being rooted in the evolutionary history of the Karoo and its fossil record, knowing its geology and its hydrology, connects white people to the land as universal people who have transcended any particular painful history: they are people who don’t have anything to feel bad about; people whose current social relations with others are insignificant compared with the awesome, ineffable beauty of the Karoo. At the same time, their imprint on the land – the windpump, the farm dam – is naturalised as part of that very beauty: their agriculture is the condition in the first place for the experience of the sublime that enables the transcendence of history. This ancient spiritual “heartland” is thus cleansed of the messy details of colonialism and present racial inequality through the sweep of geological time. Significant chunks of the “ignorance contract” (McEwen & Steyn, 2013; Steyn, 2012) therefore seem to be about what is known, rather than what is not.

8.5. Conclusion

Colonial hegemony over land required that white settlers develop a sense that they were the ones who really belonged there, while the people who had lived there before them did not. The diachronic dimension of this discourse has not been explored extensively in this chapter, though some parts of it are visible. The hard-line construction of Black people as soulless, close to animals, and not capable of reason has competed for centuries with the "liberal" position that Black people are merely culturally or environmentally ill-equipped to make complex decisions about land and the economy. Although the 1913 Land Act was repealed and extensive attempts at land restitution made, the end of apartheid did not put an end to white South Africa's prerogative to control the land, and to determine its future. In fact, in environmentalist discourse, and the case of the anti-fracking movement in the Karoo specifically, we can see that a white autochthony is still being forged, both out of affective and cognitive materials

The myth works to universalize white people as rooted in an evolutionary and geological timescale, and to naturalise their social practices and relations, especially the economies that they control. This myth is able to articulate itself in relation to the three nodal points that maintain clear boundaries between "us" and "them". Firstly, autochthonous whites can claim that they are anti-racists, and distance themselves from the practices of the apartheid past, by building the attractive ethical ideal of a non-racial society where people exercise their freedom in a transparent and multi-coloured marketplace. Secondly, they can assert the claims of "everyone" – especially the Khoe-San – to have a say in determining the future of the land, as long as the people who claim to be rooted there have their own myths to back this up. And thirdly, they construct themselves as the firm yet reasonable adults of environmental

discourse in South Africa, far-sighted and scientific in their approach, who are uniquely positioned to see the correct policy choices.

Chapter 9: Giving Back the Land: By Way of Conclusion

Julius Malema, the firebrand young commander-in-chief of the second-largest opposition party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), has a knack for capturing the radical strands of the national mood in his pithy and provocative articulations. In his parliamentary motion supporting a constitutional review that would enable expropriation without compensation, his argument underscored a discursive shift: "The time for reconciliation is over; now is the time for justice" (Malema, 2018). Justice requires the people to "pay no one for benefiting from the crimes against humanity" (ibid.). The refusal by the centre-right Democratic Alliance, the largest opposition party with which the EFF governs key cities, to support the motion, resulted in Malema a week later threatening to topple the mayor of Port Elizabeth, Athol Trollip, because to unseat a white mayor would send a special message to the DA that the EFF is "cutting the throat of whiteness" (Areff, 2018). Building on an emotive representation of centuries of racist dispossession and dehumanisation, Malema inserts a scalpel between the assumption of the sanctity of property, and the persistence of white power and the racial order. The results of his exploitation of the political moment will play out in the near future.

A theme that has run throughout this dissertation has been just how entangled whiteness is in the liberal regime of property rights. Much of this can be attributed to the Lockean heritage: that the very definition of how private property comes into being in the liberal order is a racist definition, contrasting Indigenous 'waste' of land to its efficient use by industrious colonisers who mix their labour in it. Property that is owned by the colonisers becomes magically combined not only with their bodies, but with the bodies of their descendants, so that later remedies for the procedural evil of racist practice do nothing to challenge the actual distribution of property that it has brought about, quite literally enshrining whiteness as property. Gesturing to the clauses of the Constitution that suggest that expropriation without

compensation may be a technical possibility within the legal framework of the current Constitution does nothing to counter material practices that seem to have tightened the grip of hegemonic whiteness on the South African landscape since 1994. White post-apartheid economic prosperity has seen new game farms established and new mansions built in Bantry Bay, along with the burgeoning of whitely lifestyle destinations in the Karoo, while the "prison camps we now call townships" (Malema, 2018) have only multiplied and expanded.

I have argued in this dissertation for a 'thick' interpretation of the land question: that the call to give back the land is also a call for a discursive shift, a new moral order, a revision of the social compact between rich and poor, and Black and white, one that turns its back decisively on current property distribution patterns. And indeed evidence of the 'hegemonic' status of the prevailing race-as-property order has been presented throughout: the #IzweLethu joke cycle plays on sacrosanct order of property rights built on Lockean concerns over land use (Chapter 5); the conservative white counter-myth to non-racialism represents any challenge to the current property distribution as pathological and violent revenge (Chapter 6); the anti-rhino poaching campaign creates categories of persons-out-of-place that may be eliminated on sight (Chapter 7); and it is hard to tell in the anti-fracking debate where the Rainbow Nation starts and the logic of the free market ends (Chapter 8). While the logic of "expropriation without compensation" is not at all novel, Malema's centring of the current debate on this issue at this particular historical juncture is very significant. The racial order is so entwined with the capitalist order – and land dispossession, as we have seen, so entangled in the transformation by white people of everybody else into a source of cheap labour – that a decisive break must be made with the assumptions underlying both power structures.

This does not of course imply the nationalisation of land (although this happens to be an EFF policy) nor signal the dawn of socialist utopia in South Africa. The lessons of

postfoundationalist discourse theory offered in Chapter 3 should be proof enough against illusions of a coherent, strictly rational, and ideologically 'pure' new discursive regime to replace the old. But it does suggest that the scales are tipping in favour of a new hegemony that will unseat the old. This dissertation is thus submitted in a peculiar conjunction, where discursive struggle yields exciting glimpses of the deaths of old worlds, and the potential rise of new ones still "struggling to be born"[1].

9.1. A 'structural topology' of whiteness and the land

This section will bring together aspects of the findings of the four analytical chapters in order to facilitate "collocation" which, as was discussed in §4.2.3. identifies the main aspects of the findings to facilitate "comparisons with […] research conducted on similar phenomena" (Marttila, 2016, p. 145). While I have offered some of this collocation in each of the individual chapters, I will now build a broader "structural topology" (or discourse map) from the various data sets discussed above. I will not present this topology however as a diagram suggesting a single map, but rather as a series of regularities observed across data sets that might be understood as detail or details on the larger map or maps. These regularities may be party of the larger "truth" about discourses of the land and whiteness in South Africa, but are not the whole picture.

9.1.1. Whom can you trust? Separating protagonists from antagonists

White people, and white men specifically, are constructed throughout as trustworthy stewards of the land. Mark Boucher in his khaki outfit, in the role of the White Father, is only the most

[1] Žižek's punchier version of an idea from Gramsci

prominent token of this racial fiction, a fiction that must erase the historical role of other white men in khaki who, over centuries, decimated the region's biodiversity. White leadership is constructed as benefiting the economy and the environment: whether Boucher, or Angela Merkel, Elon Musk, or Stefan Cramer, or the do-it-yourself entrepreneurs of AfriForum. A clear and persistent semantic link is made between whiteness and problem-solving, a go-getter attitude, and scientific sophistication.

Between the rhino poachers on one hand, and the government officials, and corporate "puppets" like Bonang Mohale on the other, it becomes clear that Black people are represented in the exact opposite manner: irrational; full of insatiable lust for blood, money, and sex; and in general as a malignant presence on the land. The "poor white" data set extends this untrustworthiness with the land to a general untrustworthiness with white bodies: the libel that whites are denied social assistance and otherwise intentionally victimised by a new Black government is solemnly reproduced by journalists because it fits a racially hierarchized pattern of thinking. Whiteness as a racial project is thus pegged to the future prosperity of the land and its (white) people.

This fundamental binary opposition between (white) industrious improvers of the land and (Black) Indigenous hedonistic land-wasters is, as we have seen before, a grounding term of racial liberalism. And it is so nicely played on by the #IzweLethu joke cycle: representing Black people on their land as Oprah with her horses, as a dignified man on a wooden chair in a mealie field, or as a person rubbing their belly while they simply admire their land, there is an implied resolute insistence that the people who stole the land have no right to question how its rightful owners plan to use it.

In the other discursive formations, Black identities are mobilised symbolically as the antagonists of social and environmental campaigns, and occasionally as helpers, but not as

the leading protagonists, who are uniformly[2] represented as white. This suggests at least two key nodal points across the datasets, both of which have been discussed at a number of junctures, and which form a matching pair: "White Reason" and "Rational Land Use". In the joke cycle, we see the rejection especially of the latter nodal point, along with the important gesture to existence of the horizon of intelligibility installed by the hegemonic discourse, and hence the futility of a rational engagement with the scions of white land control. The counter-hegemonic discursive formation is thus articulated around the key nodal point of "(the historical Black entitlement to) Land" which also governs the strategy of "dis/engagement" with white "reason".

9.1.2. Stilettoes and "structures without bodies"

The logic of the stiletto is that it is unfair to hold an individual personally responsible for the structural injustice from which they benefit, as they are not personally responsible for it. If this principle is violated by an individual at whose expense the structural injustice exists, they however *are* held personally responsible, and deemed worthy of punishment. Thus was a sardonic political statement and a small withheld tip punished with attempted academic exclusion, global vilification, and death threats (Chapter 5), while the 'victim' was rewarded in status and cash. Whiteness is a "collective without individuals" (Ahmed 2004b, n.p.), or what I have called a structure without bodies, where there is quite literally no body to be held accountable. This enforces a sociopolitical inertia, a bias towards the status quo. This basic dynamic underlies C. I. Harris's (1993) "whiteness as property" where an entitlement to the existing property distribution is legally assumed and protected: you cannot just take away

[2] Daantjie Japhta is a possible exception to this. As a token of Khoe-San leadership, however, as discussed in §8.3.2. this is not particularly challenging to the white abrogation of land control.

from people what their ancestors acquired unfairly, for this would land you in jail. So you are personally liable if you challenge the structure, but not if you continue to benefit from it.

That this sanguine approach to the unequal distribution of social goods is not just the product of economic conservativism, but entangled in a system of white supremacy, is brought into sharp focus in the "poor whites" data. It seems that if you feel the system is unfair and you are also white, then you have strong claims on individuals (especially political actors) whose fault it is that you are poor. Solidarity and AfriForum (and their journalistic lackeys) profess familiarity with the statistical picture of poverty in South Africa, and at the same time argue that whites have been in some way especially singled out in the post-apartheid order. When whites (supposedly) suffer comparative disadvantage it is the responsibility of individual unkind/vengeful Blacks, but when they enjoy comparative advantage it is attributable to a structure for which no white person is personally responsible.

A structure without bodies is of course no structure at all: it is the myth of the level playing field, where individuals must make do with what they are given and compete with each other for what they want to achieve in life. It is this myth, a critical complementary and interwoven discursive formation to hegemonic whiteness, that re-interprets any attempt to challenge unjust structure – such as BBBEE or AA as seen in Chapters 6 and 8 – as unacceptable racial prejudice motivated by individual greed and mendacity.

9.1.3. The affective terrain

Another cross-cutting conclusion is that there is clear evidence that discursive struggle over the race-land connection in South Africa is fought on an emotional battlefield. The struggle in Chapter 5 was over the currency of Ashleigh Schultz's 'tears': are we moved by her distress, indeed, so moved that we will donate to her as a compensation her for it, or can we bring

ourselves instead to laugh at her "typical white tears"? In the joke cycle, this theme was expanded on in the Black Twitter-scape as a response to white vulnerability more broadly construed: to babies, to romantic partners, to friends at work. Humorous pleasure is taken in subverting the social order that values *kindness* to white people: it is shown that this kindness is not reciprocated. Even the white people most vulnerable to Black people are tokens of a profoundly unkind racial order. The affective economy operative in this counter-hegemonic humour is precisely to connect the white subject position to the unkind racial order, and break its links with "people like us": colleagues, romantic partners, children, and working class waitresses.

The "poor white" videos in Chapter 6 work in the opposite direction: they deploy affect to articulate the white subject role as deeply wounded and vulnerable in the post-apartheid order. This articulation works both against hegemonic non-racialism in that it undermines the justice of a required redistribution of historical wealth, as well as against the more radical and counter-hegemonic notion of whites as having gained significantly and disproportionately to what is fair from the transition to democracy. By representing whites in visible distress, the videos seek to mobilise pity to dislocate the notion of white 'victors' and to resignify them as 'victims'. Emotional reactions such as sympathy or pity are discursively crucial precisely because other articulations – such as for example the statistical picture of racialized poverty – actively undermine the rational basis for white victimhood. But it is typically emotion, and not reason, that is operative in discursive struggles.

The anti-rhino poaching campaign discussed in Chapter 7 includes the rhinoceros in a national community of belonging from which poachers are excluded. The frequent representation of their bloody, butchered carcasses invokes sympathetic pain – a pain that is proportionate to the proposed torture and murder of the rhino poachers. Pain works both to

humanise the rhino and – through the deployment of the Black Satyr – to dehumanise the poacher, whose subject role is pushed into the zone of non-being, or state of exception, justifying the practice of being killed on sight.

Finally, the "good feeling" that comes across most powerfully in the anti-fracking Facebook group is love – specifically, love of the land. The frequent and poetic references to Karoo sunsets, idyllic farms, and rural values binds the community of anti-frackers to each other and to the landscape. Through professions of love the myth of autochthony is validated: it is the "adhesive force" that seals the connection between people and territory. It is not necessarily an exclusive connection – all South Africans can love the land – but in proposing a very specific (colonial, agricultural, unjust) vision of the land to love the white anti-frackers discursively negate other visions of the Karoo, or other ways to show love for the land.

9.1.4. Discourse as material practice: formations, institutions, and subject positions

The land-relevant whitely discursive formations sedimented through discursive acts, which are also material practices, can be thought of as clustering around three centres which comprise one or more nodal points: an entitlement to the current distribution of land and social goods, a preference for white land stewardship as rational and efficient, and a resurgent notion of the *volkseie* that envisions the dawn of the chimera state. If we include the institutions and subject roles mentioned in these datasets, as well as some of those mentioned in other research (Ballard, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, Hughes, 2005, 2010; McEwen & Steyn, 2013), it becomes clearer how everyday material practices in South Africa reinforce a sense of white hegemonic land control.

This hegemony can be observed through the lens of the Constitutional debate: legal scholars point out that the letter of the South African Constitution does not enshrine property rights as

sacrosanct, and yet patterns in everyday articulatory practices suggest that this has not had much discursive impact. In the suburbs, the cultural practices and social mores of white people police the behaviour of all other people who can afford to live near them, so while some integration happens, it is "market-led" and on white terms. The fences around these places get higher, and anybody wishing to access them first has to be interrogated by security guards. In rural areas, white farmers patrol the roads to remove undesirables; people out of place in game areas may be shot on sight. The privatisation of security, and the securitisation of reserves and parks and housing complexes, means that freedom of movement, or a sense of change to the grand picture of 1913, is not a lived reality. To not be criminals, Black people must either play to the norms of their new white neighbours, or stay in their "prison camp" townships. The experience of the stranglehold of apartheid-era patterns of racial land domination are thus unaffected by the clauses of the Constitution designed to offer the possibility of redress.

The material practice that the EFF has targeted most clearly is the swift deprivation of white property without some form of compensation. A recent Constitutional Court decision settled a fair division of disputed land in a case that was initiated in December 1998; even now, over 20 years later, the claim is back in the Land Claims Court for a decision on the specific entitlements of the parties, which may include questions of compensation (Cameron, 2017). Some of the original claimants and respondents are now dead. Understandably, claims that the Constitution is "anti-black" (e.g. Black First Land First, 2016) take their energy from the actual roll-out of land reform under the present Constitutional order, rather than from a close reading of the text of the document itself.

Counter-hegemonic practices in turn, such as stepping up the pace, efficacy, and ambition of programmes like affirmative action and land redistribution, are likely to give energy to white

advocates of the '*volkseie'* and other versions of ethnic self-sufficiency that have been critiqued as resulting in the chimera state. Institutions such as the charities and unions associated with AfriForum, farmers collectives associated with AgriSA, and even sectional title and other neighbourhood management groups are thus likely to increase in relevance to the perpetuation of continued white hegemonic land control, unless the current Constitutional order can materially become able to represent the interests of a broader cross-section of society.

Another tactic of resistance, of which there is already plenty of evidence in the discursive field, is leveraging the global power of whiteness as the arbiter of 'market' value. Continued foreign direct investment into the country, much of which from North America and Europe, and the 'value' of Brand South Africa, are tightly linked to historical financial dependencies and trade networks that make South Africa as a nation particularly vulnerable to what the rest of the white world thinks about the country. Symbolically, South African whiteness is constructed in a constant productive tension with the perceived global norms of Euro-American whiteness, and relies for much of its symbolic power on participation in this global marketplace of symbolic value as an outpost of Europe (and by implication of the neoliberal consensus underlying market democracies) on the southern tip of Africa. Struggle over the material practices of land allocation and control, and the supposed sanctity of property as well as minority rights under liberal rights dispensations, have already started to gain prominence in international media, for many of the same reasons (and employing similar tropes) discussed in Chapter 5. The hegemonic status of whiteness in South Africa is shored up by these symbolic and material global investments in the future of the settler community.

9.2. Limitations of this study and opportunities for future research

In many ways, this thesis is just the beginning of a more thorough investigation into the complex ways in which a 'racial' identity manages to inscribe itself onto the landscape as the horizon of intelligibility. The hegemonic status of a Lockean property order in the liberal dispensation has been examined through the lens of revolutionary humour, and it has been shown that white neo-nationalists leverage the international media to assert a wounded whiteness that bears no debt for historical ills and should therefore be left to develop its own institutions, sapping the energy from (extra-national) political will to see property distributions changed. It has furthermore been shown that racialised imagos are deployed in order to position white men as the ideal guardians of the land and its natural beauty, and that white belonging on the land is produced through a fable of autochthony in a specific environmentalist campaign. What has not been addressed is the imbrication more broadly of environmentalist discourse in the politics of national development, and in the reduction of racial inequality specifically. The role of racialised identity constructions in common-sense ideas about property and its distribution have been showed in a limited set of cases, but the language of Constitutionalism and of liberal rights themselves has not been dealt with in great detail. Both of these areas are crucial areas of discursive struggle that will only become more important as the development of a sustainable energy policy, with its heavy impact on the mining sector and on climate change politics, and as the Constitutional review process to examine "expropriation without compensation" is driven forward. It is in these two areas specifically that I believe much fruitful future research may be undertaken.

9.3. Recommendations for counter-hegemonic discursive practice

This dissertation has suggested that Kipling's threat was, and still is, realised in hegemonic white land control: Rhodes's spirit is still the soul of the land. Examples of the counter-hegemonic discursive practices of Ntokozo Qwabe, Wandile Dlamini, certain members of South African "Black Twitter" and political actors such as the EFF and Black First Land First, have been profiled along the way. If a new hegemony does indeed become installed in the near future, it is likely that existing counter-hegemonic formations such as the '*volkseie*' will gain strength, and currently hegemonic formations such as the alliance between whiteness and sacrosanct property rights will take on new, counter-hegemonic profiles.

If this research has added anything to counter-hegemonic practice, it may be the broader focus on the 'thick' sense of the land that I have been advocating. I would go so far as to argue that a narrow counter-hegemonic focus on a 'thin' sense of the land – just getting back the title to what can be proven to have been physically stolen – is insufficient for the installation of hegemony, which, after all, relies on the consent of broad cross-sections of society – all of Gramsci's "social groups" – including historical 'victors'. My recommendations thus focus on this thicker sense.

For all South Africans to be able to see themselves in the land, and to participate in the projection of social vision, if indeed the nation is to remain the cogent unit of political organisation, requires the conscious counter-engineering of the notion of a "level playing field". That all people are consulted in a process (such as whether to frack in the Karoo) can conceivably benefit people who can afford lawyers, and those who can produce a political outcome from behind the scenes. On the one hand we have the perpetuation of white socioeconomic power, and on the other the deepening of political corruption. Neither serve

the great majority of the people of South Africa. And yet as a diagnosis of the first decades of South African democracy, they fit pretty well.

So what practices should we focus on counter-engineering? The strict enforcement of narrow definitions of property rights are a good place to start. Replacing all freehold title with renewable state leases is one option that is already on the table. Material practices that limit freedom of movement could be reviewed: boom gates, security villages, and access control to mountains, rivers, and dams, all contribute to a sense of elite domination. Forcible and uncompromising racial and economic desegregation is discursively essential to any future hegemony. This suggests that a focus on the expropriation of prime development land in the centre of affluent neighbourhoods and gated communities should be prioritised. It is worthwhile remembering Aleta Norval's conditions for the hegemony of non-racialism: the elimination of material inequalities, as well as the accommodation of racial and cultural difference. This combined elimination and accommodation needs to be imagined in its *spatial* dimensions, and materialised in planning, development, and architecture.

The dilemma faced by any such radical re-imagining or re-engineering is the balance of power between the individual and the state, and between the nation and the world. South Africa is not an island: we trade with other nations, people migrate in and out, there may be internal and external threats to national security. Within the state, trust in public processes cannot always be built before individuals are made subject to them. Researchers should thus be focusing on these exact questions: balancing the radical redistribution of wealth with the overall health of the economy; forging a national sense of a shared purpose while at the same time insisting that beneficiaries of historical injustice not be allowed to continue to enjoy the fruits of this injustice. The staggering difficulty of achieving this should not in itself deter us. For we are after all limited in our current thinking by a horizon of intelligibility that makes

that which is not present orthodoxy seem nonsensical. And yet what we should remind ourselves of again and again is just how ridiculous our 'orthodoxy' is: generations of people inheriting racialized poverty and deprivation, with the promise of improvement dangled somewhere in the future. Hopefully we will one day be able to look back on the philosophers of this system as the real 'clowns' of the piece.

As for philosophy, one of the founding notions of liberalism, the egalitarian insistence that every person count for one, and not more than one, is actually a very useful place to start when imagining a different country. Making equality real, and valuing every human life equally, is *real* and not racial liberalism. We might even need to start gazing at the land, like Cecil John Rhodes, to impose a completely different social vision on it. If we can do these things honestly and effectively, perhaps Rhodes's spirit can be vanquished after all.

Appendix: Ntokozo Qwabe's Deleted Facebook Post



Ntokozo Qwabe feeling elated at **OBZ Cafe**.
28 Apr at 7:15pm •

LOL wow unable to stop smiling because something so black, wonderful & LIT just happened! And of course, the catalyst was a radical non-binary trans black activist - Wandile Dlamini - from the Rhodes Must Fall movement. Because trans activists have BEEN the ultimate blessers of this decolonial struggle!

To cut the long story short, we are out at Obz Cafe with the said activist, and the time for the bill comes. Our waitress is a white woman. I ask the said activist what the going rate for tips/gratuity is in these shores. They look at me very reluctantly and they say 'give me the slip, I'll sort that out'. I give them the slip.

They take a pen & slip in a note where the gratuity/tip amount is supposed to be entered. The note reads in bold: "WE WILL GIVE TIP WHEN YOU RETURN THE LAND". The waitress comes to us with a card machine for the bill to be sorted out. She sees the note & starts shaking. She leaves us & bursts into typical white tears (like why are you crying when all we've done is make a kind request? lol!). Anyways, so this white woman goes to her colleagues who are furious. She exits to cry at the back & a white male colleague of hers reluctantly comes out to address us & to annoy us more with his own white tears telling us that he finds our act "racist".

We then start breaking it down for this white man & ask him why they are catching feelings when we haven't even started (like the part where we take up arms hasn't even come & yall are already out here drowning us in your white tears? Really white people? Wow.). We start drawing him to the political nature of the act & why we couldn't be bothered that they decided to catch feelings from the note. We tell him it's great that business as usual has stopped & the pressing issue of land is now on the agenda in that space - seeing the cowntry was celebrating 'Freedom Day' yesterday. We then chase him back to do his job. And continue with our conversation before exiting the café.

Moral of the story: the time has come when no white person will be absolved. We are tired of "not all white people" and all other bullshit. We are here, and we want the stolen land back. No white person will be out here living their best life while we are out here being a landless and dispossessed black mass. NO white person shall rest. It is irrelevant whether you personally have land/wealth or you don't. Go to your fellow white people & mobilise for them to give us the land back. That will be the starting point of all our interactions from now. We will agitate all our spaces with the big question: WHERE IS THE LAND?

Thank you to all the non binary, trans & all other black bodies who have been at the helm of this decolonial moment in the settler colony known as South Afrika. NOTHING will ever be the same again. Alibuye Izwe Lethu!

#IzweLethuNgoku



Write a comment...

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