Adamastor Unbound?

Whiteness and Landscape in Post-1994 South Africa

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C. J. Langenhoven's 1918 poem "Die Stem" (literally "The Voice" but usually translated as "The Call"), the text for South Africa's apartheid-era national anthem, imagines a landscape that calls to the Afrikaner people to come together as a nation. In language that asserts possession of heaven and earth—"from the blue of *our* heaven, from the depths of *our* sea, over *our* eternal mountains"[1]—a voice is heard "from *our* beloved, from *our* land South Africa" that is answered by the people: "We shall answer your call, we shall sacrifice what you ask"[2] (Grové 1969: 72). The construction of intimate communion between an ethnic group and its homeland is not unusual in the Blut und Boden nationalisms of Europe. And yet, for Afrikaners, a culture had to be elaborated that squared their presence in and connection to Africa with their undeniable nonautochthonic status and their treasured European genealogy. In the parallel case of English-speaking white South Africans, who sang a broadly Anglo-inclusive translation of the hymn, the line "There's no land that shares our loving"[3] was less a statement of fact than an aspirational attempt to forge white racial unity from the lingering sense that these descendants of the imperial aggressors of the South African War (1899–1902) still owed their primary allegiance to Britain.

The figuration in "Die Stem" of a countryside calling out to white South Africans to come together to form a nation suggests a settler-colonial cosmopolitics in which landscape plays a central, even agentive, role. Generations of literary scholars, cultural geographers, and discourse analysts have indeed explored the myriad ways in which white South African identification has developed dialectically with both material and

symbolic landscapes (e.g., J. M. Coetzee 1988; Foster 2008; Mpendukana and Stroud 2019). The landscape's agency—or *sentience*—has however not been explored as a dynamic of white identification, despite its ubiquity as a literary device. This chapter thus presents sociocultural analysis of three moments in white cultural production during the postapartheid period. These moments suggest that a lingering cosmopolitical uncertainty over whether whites are welcomed, or rejected, by the land haunts white identity projects. It will be argued that the provocative notion of a *xenophobic landscape* features both as a white anxiety and as a strategic resource for the continued domination of land.

Ethnographic explorations of sentient landscapes have tended to focus on Indigenous epistemologies, where land often plays a central role in pedagogy and knowledge production (e.g., Styres 2011, 2019), ecological justice (e.g., Strang 2020), or land justice (e.g., Di Giminiani 2018). Much of this work contrasts, explicitly or implicitly, Indigenous ways of knowing and thinking the land to those of an European colonial/imperial modernity that is alienated from a natural world treated as an inanimate resource to be exploited. To posit the existence of settler-colonial sentient landscapes might therefore seem something of a misclassification. Ethnographic accounts of Indigenous sentient landscapes have, however, repeatedly drawn attention to corresponding colonial constructions. Povinelli, for example, argues that the white Australian fixation on the productivity and ownership of land is as much an "unassailable totem" (1995: 506) as the idea that the land smells and feels human beings as they pass over it. Di Giminiani (2018) suggests that the principles that underlie neoliberal property discourses in Chile are not after all very different to those of the Indigenous Mapuche, only less well elaborated.

If the landscape is sentient, the question of whose side it will take—of whether it favors the *autochthon* and must therefore reject the *xenos*—is clearly an important concern for the establishment and development of settler-colonial societies. The symbolic production of the landscape is intimately interconnected with its material domination. As Roderick Neumann points out, the stakes of struggles for the meaning of landscapes are literally people's "livelihoods in place" (2011: 845). In this chapter, I read the symbolic production of the agency of the South African landscape by culturally dominant white settler-colonial groups as providing the conditions for their territorial domination. That the land might not welcome colonizing groups was an anxiety that needed to be overcome in the taming of the land, whose power then might be put to use as supportive of the rejection of new, unwelcome "others." Asking "Whose landscape?" is thus an important entry point into analysis of the symbolic and material (re)production of power relations that keep colonial and other social di-

visions in place, including race, ability, gender, and social class (see also Gilmore 2002).

In the next section, I discuss how landscape features in South Africa's territories of power. I describe how Adamastor, the monstrous mythological figure of the Cape of Storms in Luís de Camões's 1572 epic poem *Os Lusìadas,* has haunted the white literary imagination. I then present three moments from the past quarter century connected to ongoing processes of white identification. The first is from 1999 and relates to Cyril Coetzee's painting *T'kama-Adamastor*, which hangs in the University of the Witwatersrand's Cullen Library in Johannesburg. The second dates from May 2013, when the BBC aired a documentary feature framed by the question, Do white people have a future in South Africa? The third is the campaign against fracking the Karoo, seen through the lens of ethnographic material collected in 2016. In the concluding section, I connect Adamastor's haunting of the white imagination to the persistence of what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) calls "abyssal thinking."

Space, Race, and the Social Life of Landscape

Racial hierarchies are frequently mapped onto spatial orders, and race and space co-occur in entangled and dialectical relationships. The production of socio-spatial epistemologies of race tends to associate particular places with specific racial identities and to restrict mobility in space (Lipsitz 2007; Natter and Jones 1997). Apartheid's development as the "enforced coincidence between spatial and 'racial' relations" (Cohen 1988: 8) was succeeded by "neo-apartheid" in South African suburban development enabled by neoliberal policymaking (Beavon 2000) and discourses naturalizing ongoing segregation (Durrheim and Dixon 2001; McEwen and Steyn 2013). White South Africans asserted a right to define "neighborhood character" (Ballard 2005) in discursive gestures aimed at keeping "African" cultural practices (and hence unruly Black bodies) out of their suburbs (see also Ballard 2010).

The "imaginative appropriation" of landscape was central to the historical forging of a white national identity in South Africa (Foster 2008). Specific landscapes become God-given "heartlands" threatened after apartheid by Black misrule (Burnett 2019). White constructions of landscape are, however, marked by nagging ambivalences about belonging, arising from histories of colonial dispossession. The landscape is as much a source of unease as of repose; generations of material and symbolic production were required for it to become "home." The alien trees of Johannesburg's artificial urban forest, for example, reflected back to its white

habitués their European heritage, while row upon row of identical township houses for Black people reflected their supposed lack of an urban culture and the idea that their "real" home was in the homeland reserves set aside for them (Foster 2009: 192–97; Dlamini 2009: 151–52). The historical construction of urban (white) spaces as lush and green—so unlike the surrounding anarchic veld of Africa, "a place of unease, uncertainty and fear . . . [that] might erupt into violence" (Foster 2009: 201)—underwent significant revision towards the end of apartheid, when the idea of South Africa as a European bastion faded under the necessity of asserting a local, rooted, and Indigenous status, even as privatization and neoliberalization were segregating urban spaces into private and gated zones. While exotic green lawns remain important signifiers of "civilization" (Cane 2019), the assiduously marketed inclusion of local fauna and flora in exclusive "eco-villages" suggests an aspiration to Indigenous belonging (Ballard and Jones 2011; Raidoo 2020) even as African social realities are kept at bay.

South African literature has grappled extensively with its segregated locations of enunciation, the "tyranny of place" (Mphahlele 1987) characterized by "the diastole and systole of appropriation and renunciation, aggression and resistance" (van Wyk Smith 1990: 2–3). It is against this backdrop that two contrasting visions of the land appear in white writing: the pastoral, where a "dream topography" consists of "thousands of farms, each a separate kingdom ruled over by a benign patriarch" (J. M. Coetzee 1988: 6), and the antipastoral, where the landscape is mysterious, silent, and blank. The former requires of man that he prove his virtue in the rural idyll through honest toil; the fact that he is white, while it is Black people who labor, must thus 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?" (1988: 5). Black people are similarly pushed into the background in the antipastoral tradition, which represents a "failure to imagine a peopled landscape" (1988: 9). Where communion with the land is allowed to happen, it brings forth monsters, "the return of what is repressed in the poetry of the silent landscape" (1988: 10). It is to just such a monster that we now turn.

Enter Adamastor

The story of Adamastor, claimed both as the origin of European-style literature and of literary criticism in South Africa, has been told and retold in a number of forms since Luís de Camões's 1572 epic poem *Os Lusìadas* (see Gray 1977). As the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama and his crew

approach the Cape of Storms, they are filled with terror at a form emerging from darkness. A mysterious giant emerges in the rocky cape, cursing the imperialistic hubris of the Portuguese who dare to violate his realm (Graham 2012: 19). The ships will be wrecked, he warns, and catastrophe will befall those who reach land. Undeterred, da Gama commands the giant to identify himself. The giant explains that he is Adamastor, a Titan who loved and tried to ravish the sea nymph Tethys. As she escaped, she laughingly drew attention to his hugeness, which made their union impossible. Tethys and her mother lured Adamastor to a trysting point, where he embraced a decoy, falling under a spell that gradually turned him to rock. Adamastor became the massive form of Table Mountain, while Tethys herself was transformed into the waves, lapping tantalizingly and eternally around the giant's form.

Adamastor's frequent recurrence in South African poetry and prose often attends anxiety about race relations in South Africa (Gray 1977), where the giant's curse rings down the ages as a prediction of the inevitable failure of the European colonial project. This "punitively haunting Adamastor with his increasingly verified prophecies of racial revenge" (Crewe 1999: 81) was a European cultural invention, a repository for the symbolic elaboration of Africa, itself an "ancient text under revision [which] veered sharply between visions of paradise and purgatory, refreshment and desolation, fabled Christian empires and hazardous torrid zones" (Twidle 2012: 33). Adamastor's Latin etymological roots make him a rival to Adam, while in Greek he is "untamed" or "untamable":

> In the literature of colonial contact, then, the presence of the inanimate world, as it exceeds and threatens the biblical act of naming, all too easily becomes the maligned, mysterious Other. Such texts—in giving voice to coded, symbolically articulated threats to the colonial project while never dealing explicitly with the circumstances of indigenous resistance—then produce nature that does the work of culture. (Twidle 2012: 32)

Nature's resistance to colonization is thus necessary to the extent that the full agency of African people fails to find a place in the colonial moral and symbolic order. The figure of the savage Titan makes white explorers more human by contrast, reinforcing their own awareness of selfhood and agency, while legitimating subjugation of the threatening Other (Samin 2006). Africa's association with monstrous alterity furthermore generates sexualized "twin penetration anxieties": on the one hand the settler thrusting himself inland is "threatened with engulfment by the alien land," while on the other "his women are in danger of being penetrated and contaminated by the monstrous others who inhabit this territory" (Graham 2012: 18). This latter anxiety retraces the figure of the Black man as penis symbol, the "mainstay" of colonial white fear and desires (Fanon [1952]

2008: 150–51). It is against this threat, then, that white women constitute the "cherished frontier on which the status and superiority of the settler race depended" (Graham 2012: 18; see also Ahmed 2004). The figure of Adamastor as the savage would-be rapist of Tethys, cursing da Gama's colonial ships, has thus been a frequent preoccupation of the solipsistic settler imagination.

Taming Adamastor

The last five years of the twentieth century were a time of great hope and renewal in South Africa, a time when President Nelson Mandela was received by rapturous crowds around the world, when the country's admission to international sporting events resulted in a series of celebrated triumphs, when the end of the cultural and academic boycotts breathed new life into moribund social and cultural institutions, and when the ruling African National Congress's promise of a "better life for all" seemed just over the horizon. At the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, a bastion of liberalism throughout apartheid and the institution where Mandela had studied law, the question of how to reflect the dawn of this New South Africa was mooted. Professor Alan Crump convinced Vice-Chancellor Robert Charlton in 1994 to explore commissioning a new painting for a blank wall in the Cullen Library that faced two older paintings that celebrated the colonial project. The new commission would represent a break with that past and was intended to "reflect the radical transformation the country was undergoing" (Crump 2000: n.p.). Money was raised to pay for it, and the proposal of painter Cyril Coetzee to "reconstruct the colonial narrative of discovery metaphorically through the eyes of an indigenous African people" was approved (ibid.). The resulting painting was *T'kama-Adamastor* (figure 1.1), a version of the Adamastor myth inspired by an André Brink novella.

A handsomely produced art book with scholarly essays was published to accompany the painting. Celebrated author Ivan Vladislavić was recruited as editor, while prominent literary and art critics, as well as Coetzee and Brink themselves, contributed essays. The book engages elaborately with the archive of the Cullen Library, a repository of centuries of mostly European knowledge production about Africa. While Crump's claim about the perspective of the work being "through the eyes of" African indigenes engenders some unease from one of the critics—the iconography is after all exclusively European—the editor addresses the question of perspective by arguing that the painting "might fulfil Brink's proposition that the critical task for artists is not to look from the 'other'

Figure 1.1. *T'kama-Adamastor* by Cyril Coetzee (1999). © Africana Collections, University of the Witwatersrand.

side, but to find entirely new ways of looking" (Vladislavić 2000). Coetzee himself explains in his essay that he has tried to "make ironic and fantastic use of a variety of tropes and clichés of the colonial world-view" (C. Coetzee 2000: 3–4). This idea of "new ways of looking" that are "ironic and fantastic" is echoed in the volume's subtitle, "Inventions of Africa in a South African Painting."

Coetzee positions the painting as a metaphorical response, from the perspective of an (unnamed) Indigenous African people, to two other paintings that hang in the library—*Colonists 1826* by Colin Gill (1934) and *Vasco da Gama: Departure for the Cape* by J. H. Amshewitz (1935) (C. Coetzee 2000: 5–9). In Coetzee's painting, which follows the triptych layout also used by Gill and Amshewitz, the colonial contact narrative is fantastically reinvented with a visual vocabulary borrowed from Albrecht Dürer and Hieronymus Bosch, among others, and structured around Brink's story. In his novella, the Khoi chief T'kama is introduced as the first "avatar" of Adamastor. His desire to have sex with a white colonial woman (painted by Coetzee as Eve to T'kama's Adam) is thwarted by his long penis, which grows longer with every attempt. Eventually, he can wrap it around his waist. After a crocodile severs the offending member with a single bite, T'kama uses a more manageable clay phallus. The penis is however given a suggestive visual afterlife by Coetzee in the shape of the ostrich neck, which ascends from the Khoi chief's midriff.

Both works are ostensibly parodic of Eurocentric colonial contact narratives. In the account that Brink gives of his novella, "redefining that moment, redefining and reacknowledging Adamastor, is part of the demand that we redefine ourselves" (Brink and Nethersole 2000: 57). But Brink's deployment of Khoi mythology within a magical realist style arguably turns the precolonial world into a "site of wish fulfilment" (Twidle 2012:

42). The white writer arrogates to himself both the renovation of his own identity and the production of the "native" perspective on this process. One might expect the "invention" of Africa—through retelling the story of contact—to be "Adamastor's prerogative, not that of the invaders" (Klein 2018: 110). While Brink's (and by extension Coetzee's) ironic tone and postmodern destabilizations of his authorial reliability create room for the denial of intention or content, the white auteur is reinscribed as interpreter-in-chief of South Africa's colonial history.

This inscription is achieved through an act of ventriloquism. In both novel and painting, the powerful image of the ship as a bird dropping off boats like eggs from under its wings is supposedly produced from an Indigenous perspective. The image however "belongs to the same set of self-aggrandizing gestures that early modern European travel writers resorted to as a way of showcasing the seemingly effortless superiority of western technology over naïve indigenous world-views" (Klein 2018: 114). These gestures to centering an African perspective thus take place within an "almost exclusively European framework: the gaze mocked and ironized on the canvas through its many allusions to Renaissance artworks replicates the view from Europe, not Africa" (120). It is again whites who are doing the world making, passing off "more or less unreconstructed Eurocentric contact myths" (Hanzimanolis 2002: 256) as Khoi perspectives.

The bodily deformations visible in the painting reproduce gendered and sexualized anxieties associated with the colonial project (Hanzimanolis 2002). Adamastor's clay penis is paralleled by the abdomens of the Khoi maidens, hidden underwater. Margaret Hanzimanolis argues that these representations sterilize the Indigenous body, foreclosing the possibility of its populating the land, thereby opening up semiotic space for a new national identity to emerge. She reads the deformations of this painting in place as signifying "a reluctance, on the part of the formerly dominating culture, to relinquish command of certain enclaves of influence" (2002: 251). The Cullen Library, in which the painting hangs, contains one of the world's largest and most valuable collections of Africana, and is a popular research and working space for students at one of Africa's premier institutions of higher learning. It is a site intimately involved in ongoing knowledge production. With the decision to fill its only empty wall with this painting, "the door shuts rather loudly on an important opportunity" (2002: 263). Identities after colonialism and apartheid, and knowledge about Africa, are symbolically hemmed in.

So instead of marking a "transformative" moment and speaking back to the works by Gill and Amshewitz, the painting reaffirms elements of these colonial celebrations. In her essay in the edited collection that accompanied the painting, literary scholar Reingard Nethersole remarks on

how the 1930s artists showed "the anxiety and uncertainty white pioneers had to undergo, and the defiant bravery they had to exhibit, in order to overcome adversity and make the country inhabitable" (2000: 37). This careless reproduction of terra nullius finds no real rejoinder from Brink or Coetzee, whose fantastical retreat from a reckoning with European colonial violence is in its own way an attempt to make the country "inhabitable"—for them and their families, in perpetuity, unburdened by decisive reparations or the centrality of perspectives on colonialism not structured by the white imagination. It is telling that every person described as involved in the commissioning, funding, and launch of the book and painting, bar one art critic, was white; and it is telling that every one of these white people, bar one literary scholar, was a man. We thus observe in the refiguration of Adamastor the next generation of "adamastorbation": white men having conversations with themselves about identity and belonging, rooted in their own anxieties and desires. A white cultural horizon as definitive of knowledge production in postapartheid South Africa is reproduced, and the figure of a landscape rejecting whiteness has been decisively tamed. T'kama-Adamastor has been emasculated, sterilized, his big penis replaced with a small clay pipe, while "his" perspective on colonial contact places European knowledge production at the very center, structured by the white, male gaze of scholars and artists.

"This Lovely Terrain Has Turned into a Battlefield"

The defiant bravery of white pioneers making a country "inhabitable" was powerfully evoked in May 2013, when the BBC broadcast a news insert by veteran journalist John Simpson asking the question, "Do White People have a Future in South Africa?"[4] The six-and-a-half-minute clip starts and ends at the Voortrekker Monument, the quasi-fascist neoclassical edifice in Tshwane-Pretoria that serves as a key site for the memorialization of Afrikaner nationalism. Over a sad, slow melody played on a mouth organ, Simpson calls the Voortrekkers "pioneers" who "carved out the Boer republics," and who went on to suffer terribly in British concentration camps. Lingering shots of statues of these brave souls from other vantage points in Pretoria create the sense that they continue to watch over the landscape. Simpson moves quickly through the rest of South African history: when these "pioneers" introduced apartheid, the "victims turned oppressors." Bringing his narration into the present day, he remarks that "now they voluntarily have given up political power altogether."

There is clearly little room for the liberation struggle, nor Black agency in any form, to intrude into history making in this summary account.

There is only the narrative arc of white victims turned oppressors, and then—as is shown in the rest of the clip—turned victims once again. While relations between white and Black are central to Simpson's framing of South African politics, the settings for the starting and opening sequences (the Voortrekker Monument), and the six intervening locations I will discuss below, suggest that racialized social relations are understood as *mediated* by the landscape, which emerges in tandem with specific subject positions. The first location is a primary school, where we see a visibly moved Simpson listening as a racially diverse hall of pupils sing songs together, before paging through the 1977 yearbook to point out his own daughters from the sea of all-white faces. He remarks that the school now "feels so much better and happier and freer." The location then shifts to the bars and restaurants of Vilakazi Street in Soweto, where a mostly Black clientele struggles to find parking space for their Porsches and BMWs, and where a festive atmosphere prevails, which, we are informed, is "in many ways . . . the dominant face of the new South Africa." When he interviews the "political activist" Mandla Nyaqela, who reminds him that white people still control most of the economy and the land, the camera does not focus on Nyaqela's face but on the beer bottle in front of him. The next location—another concession to lingering white power—is also presented as not entirely serious: it is a raucous scene of middle-class Afrikaners enjoying drinks and braaied (barbecued) meat served to them by Black staff, while *Boeremusiek* plays. Simpson concedes that many whites are still rich, but the anachronistic, folksy soundtrack that has been chosen undermines the seriousness of this characterization.

The tone then shifts abruptly, with a further change of location: "One ugly secret in the new South Africa is white poverty." In a white "squatter camp" called Sunshine Corner, we meet Frans de Jager, one of "at least two hundred thousand" whites living in poverty, who explains to Simpson that he cannot access social grants because "ninety-nine percent they don't help you because you're speaking to a Black person." Simpson ratifies the claim: "After all, white people never provided Blacks with a social security safety net when they ran the country." The location then shifts to the agricultural countryside. "But there's worse. Here, outside Pretoria, the killing ground begins." Simpson interviews a distraught Belinda van Noord, whose father and brother were killed during a robbery of their general store. As she moves past mounds of red earth dug for their graves, clutching their pictures, Simpson informs us that "two other white farmers" also recently murdered lie buried there. The police "don't seem to do much about it," and as for international media attention, "it's scarcely reported outside South Africa." Simpson concludes: "This lovely terrain has turned into a battlefield."

The tone shifts again with a new location. A cheerful acoustic guitar riff and a song in isiZulu accompany attractive shots of Church Square, once the "heart of Pretoria and of Afrikanerdom." But there is a problem: "Many whites feel like strangers in their own country, precisely as Blacks did under apartheid." This is explained visually and in Simpson's narration; the name of Pretoria is changing to Tshwane, while Black townspeople pose for pictures in front of the famous statue of Boer president Paul Kruger. "There's not a white face here," Simpson intones, "a living one at any rate." But Simpson is here to meet a white man, the deputy CEO of the Afrikaner rights organization AfriForum, Ernst Roets, who is presented as a brave crusader against growing government disrespect for the rule of law.

Simpson joins the Roets family on a bench at the edge of the square, where he asks Roets's wife whether she thinks there is a future for her child, on whose bright and happy face the camera lingers. She answers affirmatively, "If everyone just do their little bit to make this a better place then, ja, I am definitely sure there is a future for every one of us." This seemingly positive note occasions a transition back to the Voortrekker Monument, and a return to the tune of the lonely mouth organ. Of the five million white people "still" in South Africa, "many" will have a "good future," says Simpson. "But the wheel has turned. Just as it did when the Voortrekkers first arrived. And history can be pretty unforgiving."

This remarkable video, produced by a respected British journalist for an international audience, retraces tropes of central importance to maintaining South Africa as "inhabitable" by (and in the possession of) whites. Black people are represented as indulging in frenzied orgies of consumption on township streets, drunkenly pointing fingers at rich whites, while Black social workers supposedly deny social services to poor whites in acts of revenge for apartheid crimes. When the men of the Van Noord family are gunned down (by Black people), those meant to preserve law and order (also Black people) do nothing to bring the killers to justice and instead engage in an assault on a free judiciary (according to Roets). But this white suffering remains an "ugly secret" and farm attacks "scarcely reported"—except, that is, by brave journalists such as Simpson, who can pierce through the political correctness to ask tough questions about the New South Africa.[5]

Though this drama plays out in the acts of individuals and between social groups, the extent to which it is mediated through representations of the landscape is striking. In the opening and closing scenes, statues of the Voortrekker pioneers survey Pretoria sadly, memorialized as innocently "carving out" their republics from terra nullius, from land constructed as uninhabitable/uninhabited. Now we see the "habitability" that they

created: the orderly white world of the monument and the school, with its prominently displayed honor rolls and racially mixed student body, strongly contrasted to the jumble of Black exuberance and wealth on the streets of Soweto, where expensive cars can barely find space to park. Subterranean monsters lurk in the rural areas, however, where red mounds mark the places on the "battlefield" where white farmers have fallen. On Church Square, the former "heart" of Afrikanerdom, the camera follows Black people clambering over Boer monuments, as if in triumph. The renaming of Pretoria to Tshwane and the predominance of Black faces on the square is articulated as having effects on white people similar to those apartheid had on Black people; white suffering is clearly inevitable if they no longer name and control the land. The idea of a white heartland, where white faces are not crowded out by Black, and where the semiotic landscape of colonialism and apartheid are left undisturbed, is normalized in Simpson's reportage as a reasonable response to a new dispensation in which they risk being finally "engulfed" by the land that they penetrated.

Spaces for white "self-determination," white "heartlands" with racially exclusive social institutions and extensive territorial control, are unstated but clearly adumbrated goals of a number of postapartheid white-run organizations, of which AfriForum is the most prominent. "Carving out" their own space on the postapartheid landscape requires exaggerating the scale of white poverty and vulnerability to violence, while also misrepresenting the government's response to it. To interrupt the perception of white South Africans as colonial victors living off the fat of the land, the land must be represented as still hostile, as persistently in need of taming. The threats of Adamastor must thus be allowed to resound once more, reminding the (white) world that "civilization" at the tip of Africa is dependent on whites being allowed to organize their own spaces, on their own terms.

"Locked Gates and Loaded Shotguns"

The arid plains of the Karoo hold a special place in the white imagination. For a colonial experience that started on the coast, the desert beyond the escarpment was hinterland, the unknown, the start of the "real" Africa. Inhospitable and vast, the blankness of the Karoo was particularly amenable to the fiction of terra nullius. Eventually parceled out into large white-owned agricultural plots supporting sheep and goats, a landscape of low farmhouses and ancient koppies on vast plains dotted with concrete dams and wind pumps came to be treasured as a place of calm, august beauty. The publication in 2011 of government-endorsed plans for Shell Oil and others to be granted prospecting licenses to explore the viability of hy-

draulic fracturing ("fracking") of natural gas thus drew fierce and immediate opposition from environmentalists and landowners (see Fig 2013). Horror stories from Australia and Pennsylvania of earthquakes, burning rivers, and poisoned water spread quickly through online and local social networks. Local "Karooists" and city-dwelling Karoo lovers alike cultivated the idea of a corrupt, despoiling government in cahoots with big oil and gas, representing an imminent threat to a treasured region outsiders neither knew nor loved (Burnett 2019). Landowners vowed to protect their lands with "locked gates and loaded shotguns."[6]

The most sustained environmental opposition came from the Treasure Karoo Action Group (TKAG), which under the leadership of CEO Jonathan Deal dominated much of the narrative of the fight against fracking. Environmental justice groups such as the Support Centre for Land Change (SCLC), which opposed fracking at the same time as advancing land restitution and reform, tried at times to work both with landowners and with TKAG, but with limited success. The leaders of SCLC are clear-eyed about the pitfalls of working with "mainstream" environmentalists in South Africa. "When the victory comes, they will say it was their victory," says Chriszanne Janse van Rensburg, who heads SCLC in Graaff Reinet. Phumi Booysen, one of SCLC's most prominent activists, agrees. On a previous campaign to prevent stretches of the Southern Cape coast from conversion into private golf estates, Booysen worked with white environmentalists. Once the campaign was won, white landowners resumed their opposition to land rights for people with whom they had recently stood "shoulder to shoulder against the golf estate."[7] For SCLC activists, fighting fracking is consistent with their opposition to colonial land appropriation and persistent injustice, even if they are forced to build alliances with landowners who only care about sustaining the "power that they unfortunately still have."[8]

When I meet TKAG CEO Jonathan Deal, he admits that when he started out he had a lot to learn about community organizing. He explains that his opposition to fracking was not underwritten by any constituency, least of all white landowners, and that it was love of the Karoo that motivated him.

> I have driven every single dirt road in the Karoo and I have been to every town. . . . So I think that out of people that would stand up to defend the Karoo I am well placed to understand how the culture works, the demographics, the way things are laid out, and the environment of the Karoo, sociopolitically, economically, from a tourism point of view.[9]

It is his cartographic, economic, and scientific knowledge of the land that underwrites Deal's authority to lead the campaign against fracking. In his attempts to forge broad alliances, he partnered with AfriForum,

which resulted in prominent figures in the environmental justice movement distancing themselves from him.

> That was a . . . bitter pill to swallow. . . . I've actually done much more for the poor and marginalized people and the farmworkers in the Karoo than I have for the landowners, because if fracking ever went ahead, and it created the type of disturbance that we anticipate that it would, farmworkers are going to be the first people to suffer.[10]

Deal thus considers his attempts to prevent fracking as long-term future wins for the farmworkers, which are more valuable than coalitions with land and environmental justice movements. This construction of the landless poor who labor on farms as benefiting from attempts to stop fossil fuel exploitation is also articulated by the president of the provincial agricultural union, who tells me that:

> The area they are targeting is particularly water scarce: the Karoo. Now how can we even think of going down that route, when we've had agriculture which has been sustained here for two hundred years plus? We've formed the economic backbone of rural communities for time immemorial.[11]

The "we" that forms the "economic backbone" is clearly not the Khoi herders or isiXhosa pastoralists who worked the land for hundreds of years before European colonization. The event two hundred years ago that made Western agriculture in the region profitable was the import of merino sheep by white farmers, and a boom in the price of wool. But it is water that connects the various narratives about how this backbone works. When the subject of land justice comes up in my conversation with Jonathan Deal, he says that he would sign over a few hectares to each of his three employees if it were not for the Land Tenure Act:

> The Land Tenure Act has got provisions along the lines that the entire family can immediately come. . . . And I could quite foreseeably after ten years be sitting with a few hundred people here. This land . . . can't sustain that type of thing, and the Karoo water is not designed to sustain that kind of people.[12]

A landscape emerges here, constituted by the string of people who possess and control it, who together form its "backbone" and are engaged in intimate forms of knowing, mapping, and measuring it. Its lifeblood is the water table—the subterranean quantity of water only true insiders can understand—which serves as the basis for prognostications about whether the landscape will remain habitable. Both fracking (as envisioned by the national government) and land justice (as envisioned by decolonial activists) threaten to sap the water and thus to break the backbone. Only the status quo can keep the land habitable: and the status quo is a land of locked gates and loaded shotguns, a xenophobic landscape where

outsiders are not welcome, where the land itself will reject and dehydrate interlopers. The effect of these discourses is to protect the Karoo as a white heartland, which is in turn produced as orderly, inhabitable, and sustainable in ways that make external influxes—whether from fossil fuel companies, or rapidly multiplying family members—threats against which gates must be locked, and shotguns loaded.

Conclusion: Into the Abyss

An outline emerges of something ever present, dark and monstrous, threatening to wipe the traces of white "civilization" from the map. Appearing as it does in the cultural production of (by their own account) progressive "Rainbow Nation" white South Africans, this figure is clearly entangled in complex postapartheid (re)negotiations of belonging. In order to construct the "unassailable totem" of rights to name, imagine, and occupy Africa, white settlers historically had to recognize themselves in the land—to belong there, so that the land might belong to them. As has been noted in a variety of settler-colonial contexts, the descendants of these settlers developed their own autochthonic myths (Burnett 2019; Dominy 2001; Garbutt 2006). This evolving articulation of an ethnic sense of place is not the denial of the sentience of the landscape but rather the remobilization of the sentient landscape as a tactic to shore up their property claim in the face of postcolonial calls for redistribution (see Dominy 2001).

Boaventura de Sousa Santos has suggested that the epistemological commitments of Western modernity that emerged in Europe during the Renaissance constitute "abyssal thinking" (2007). Beneath the metropolitan dichotomies and distinctions that uphold the rightness or wrongness of propositions, or make actions moral or immoral, legal or illegal, there is an invisible line beyond which "there is only nonexistence, invisibility, nondialectical absence" (2007: 2). This line is an epistemological cordon marking the border of the colony, a place in which such distinctions become unthinkable. Without an "abyss" between that side of the line and this, the universality of modern science and law would be fatally undermined. Whereas metropolitan sociopolitical contests play out between regulation and emancipation, in the colony there is only appropriation and violence—and it is the abyss between these worlds that enables the metropolitan distinction to function. Indigenous knowledges "vanish as relevant or commensurable knowledges" (Santos 2007: 4): their adherents are neither right nor wrong, as their knowledges are the raw materials for inquiry, not inquiry itself. The philosophical building blocks of the modern political order were by philosophers who situated the state of na-

ture in the colonial peripheries, and who identified the emergence of civil society as abandoning this state to join European modernity. Before this modernity, there was nothing: their lands were *terra nullius*; their souls were *anima nullius* (Santos 2007: 8).

The polemical distinctions offered by Santos are complicated by the kind of (post)colonial settler-descendant cultural production analyzed in this chapter. European settler populations in Africa imagined themselves as bastions of modernity, while building their material foundations in the barbarous negation of Black humanity, constructed as perpetually in need of white guidance and "development" (Mpofu, 2018). Settler-colonial societies were built *on the abyss*—and the anxieties of (post)colonial whiteness relate mostly to finally sliding into it, finally and climactically being sublimated into the Other. The analysis presented in this chapter suggests that this anxiety attaches to the landscape's agency as ally or accomplice of Adamastor, bound or unchained. In *T'kama-Adamastor* the land persists as a site of Adamic wish fulfilment, where the ethical and imaginative borders of the New South Africa might be drawn by a cadre of white male intellectuals. In the moment the artists understand themselves as mocking the original settlers, they reveal their own desires to decisively tame/castrate Adamastor. The antifrackers and AfriForum have their own, perhaps earthier version of the solution: maintain the communion of man and land, lock those gates and load those shotguns. Simpson's BBC report hinges on what happens if this project fails: the "lovely terrain" controlled by "pioneering" whites will become a "killing ground." Surveying the site of their suffering, Boer statues sadly bear witness to the results of Adamastor's curse.

Anxieties about nonbelonging, and about violence repaid for bloody historical conquests, are thus in part projected onto a sentient landscape, whose agency in deciding who belongs is appealed to. The fear that Adamastor shakes himself free of all that is "modern" and "scientific" clearly animates the power/knowledge projects discussed here: repressing the violence of colonialism with postmodern irony in *T'kama-Adamastor*; revealing the "ugly secret" of Black postapartheid revenge against whites on the BBC; and producing the land as only truly knowable by white landowners and lovers of the land, who are its "backbone." Adamastor is the product of white abyssal thinking, a cultural phantasm reawakened by increasing calls for decolonization, and the redistribution of land and wealth.

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Notes

1. Author's translation (emphasis added). The original reads: "Uit die blou van onse hemel, / Uit die diepte van ons see, / Oor ons ewige gebergtes" (Grové 1963: 72).
2. The original reads: "van ons geliefde, / Van ons land Suid-Afrika. / Ons sal antwoord op jou roepstem, / Ons sal offer wat jy vra" (Grové 1963: 72).
3. The original reads: "Deel geen ander land ons liefde" (Grové 1963: 72).
4. The insert and an explanatory article are available on the BBC website at https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-22554709. The related quotes that follow are from this video.
5. When Simpson was challenged in the South African media for the numerous misrepresentations and inaccuracies in his piece, he published a response (https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-22708507), which attributed the strong negative reaction to an offended self-image and vouched for his own nonracist intentions by referring to his joy when Nelson Mandela was elected president in 1994.
6. Quoted from coverage on http://karoospace.co.za/karoo-fracking-locked-gates-loaded-shotguns/.
7. Author's interview with Phumi Booysen, George, 1 December 2016.
8. Author's interview with Chriszanne Janse van Rensburg, George, 1 December 2016.
9. Author's interview with Jonathan Deal, Gecko Rock Private Nature Reserve, 2 December 2016
10. Author's interview with Jonathan Deal, Gecko Rock Private Nature Reserve, 2 December 2016
11. Author's interview with Dougie Stern, Graaff-Reinet, 29 November 2016
12. Author's interview with Jonathan Deal, Gecko Rock Private Nature Reserve, 2 December 2016

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