

# “Dubula ibhunu” (shoot the boer): A psycho-political analysis of farm attacks in South Africa

## Abstract

*Post-colonial archetypes in the collective unconscious of South African society have actualised themselves powerfully in the discourses that have usurped the framing of what has come to be called “farm attacks” in South Africa. These attacks are often a grotesque enactment of a violent script that blurs crime and post-apartheid comeuppance on the farm as mythical representation of the post-apartheid state. Framing these attacks as a Boer Genocide or justifying them as a form of colonial struggle / restitution remains rooted in totalising Afrikaner and black nationalisms respectively that not only renders the potential for addressing / redressing this violence barren, but actually inform it. Post-colonial psychology offers a lens to analyse the psycho-political underpinnings of this violence and its framing.*

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## A damn fine horse

On 4 April 2010 my father woke me with the words: “They killed Eugene Terre’Blanche.” I was visiting him in the farming village where he lives. The Soccer World Cup, where South Africans faced the gaze of the rest of the world, was a month away. Will reason prevail among the fundamentally racially-minded in the country? Here I mean people who construct their existential fears and wants in win-lose racial terms and understand the major ills of their world through the racialisation of the phenotypical marker of skin colour. A construction that is closely linked to South African history in particular and its dialectic with more general world historical processes (slavery, colonialism, independence struggles) (Wade, 2002). For the rest of the morning my father and I watched images of Terre’Blanche leading his cohort of khaki clad *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* (Afrikaner Resistance Movement - AWB) members on horseback with their red, white and black insignia resembling the Nazi swastika. eTV, the South African news and entertainment channel, alternated these images with footage of white police officers with snarling dogs and batons beating up black protesters during the 1970s and 80s.

My Afrikaner father grew up on my grandfather’s farm, a piece of land bought from the state on which they eked out a living.

Like many of their generation my grandparents constituted part of the “*arm blankevraagstuk*” (or poor white problem) studied by the Carnegie Commission and documented in its report of 1932. My father worked in khaki as a farm manager on other Afrikaners’ farms for most of his life. By lunch-time he drew a line under his engagement with Terre’Blanche’s murder with the words: “They can say what they want, but he had a damn fine horse. Now let’s go fishing.” I start this article with a personal “where were you when Eugene Terre’Blanche died?” story to declare my subjectivity and also to show different responses to the murder. For most South Africans, like my father, the murder was momentarily an interesting news story, but life went on as usual.

## Remain calm

My concern that Terre’Blanche’s murder would spark racial conflict in the form of spiralling retribution violence between the “fundamentally racially minded” was shared by the Zuma Presidency, who issued a statement: “I call upon our people, black and white to remain calm, and allow police and other organs of state to do their work ... It is the time for us to unite ... black and white and put the nation and the country first ... Leaders and organisations must not use Mr. Terre’Blanche’s death to score political points” (TimesLive, 2010). Despite oratorical excesses the call for calm was echoed at Terre’Blanche’s funeral in a passionate speech by a popular Afrikaans singer, Steve Hofmeyr, self-appointed spokesperson for the conservation of the Afrikaans language and culture: “No nation’s patience is unconditional. Our anger, our pain, our patience are being tested today, because today...you will pass someone who laughs at the death of a man whose love for his country and his faith in his God have never been in doubt...That [is] not an insult we have to respond to...the perpetrators of this despicable murder have already been arrested. The eyes of the world are today on us Afrikaners. When we go out today with quiet dignity, we will show that watching eye something else than what they came to see” [my translation] (Hofmeyr, 2010).

Calm was also urged by the most vocal civil society organisations defending Afrikaner causes, namely Solidarity, an Afrikaner trade union, and its affiliate organisation, AfriForum. Along with the Transvaal Agricultural Union (TAU), these organisations succeeded in getting the courts to declare the public singing of the liberation song *Dubula Ibhunu* hate speech in 2011 (cf Modiri, 2013).

## *Dubula ibhunu*

Less than a month before Terre’Blanche’s murder Julius Malema, the then president of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) and since turned leader of the new political party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), sang the song “*Dubula Ibhunu*” at a public meeting. The following lines reflect the essence of the song: “*Dubul’ ibhunu* (Shoot the boer) ... *Mama, ndiyekendi Dubul’ ibhunu* (Ma, let me shoot the Boer)... *Ziyareypalezinja* (These dogs rape).”

Often sung by comrades of all races to articulate the struggle against white oppression in South Africa during apartheid, the ANC secretary-general, Gwede Mantashe explains that “*ibhunu*” is a metaphor for oppressor: “When we talk (about) *amabhunu*, we were not talking (about) whites, we were talking about the system (of apartheid) ... The biggest problem I have is when journalists interpret (*Dubula Ibhunu*) as ‘Kill the boer, kill the farmer’, which is a vulgarised interpretation of the song” (quoted in Bloom, 2010). Peter Mokaba, a former ANCYL president, had first chanted the slogan “Kill the boer, kill the farmer!” in 1993 at a memorial service for Chris Hanu, an ANC stalwart assassinated by a far-right Polish immigrant. “On that day Mokaba ... galvanised his organisation’s deep anger at Hanu’s murder into something concrete: a song that perfectly (and terrifyingly) expressed the anger,” writes the journalist Kevin Bloom (2010). Malema’s singing of *Dubula Ibhunu* is interpreted by Bloom as re-invoking Mokaba.

This ambiguity of the word *ibhunu* (*boer*) makes the song controversial. *Boer*, literally, means farmer, but it could also mean Afrikaner (as in Anglo-Boer War). Ampie Coetzee (2000:10) writes: “Since the institutionalisation of apartheid by the Afrikaner government, *boer* became *Boer* and got definite ideological connotations with police, military and power” (my translation). Sesanti (2011) also recognises the ambiguity of the term: *Ibhunu* “was both literal and symbolic, synonymously. [It] refers to whites as whites and as symbol of oppression.” Civil society organisations claiming to represent the interests of Afrikaners and farmers after 1994 found the song offensive in the post-apartheid context, especially given the spike since 1990 in robberies on farms, often accompanied by the brutal assault and murders of farmers, their family members and farm workers. These organisations, along with Afrikaans musicians, like Hofmeyr, are engaged in a number of campaigns against “farm attacks” in South Africa. The Terre’Blanche murder fits what is considered a farm attack.

## Farm attacks

In 1998 farm attacks were declared a “priority crime” by the South African Police Service (SAPS) and defined in a 2003 **SAPS Report of a special committee of inquiry into farm attacks** as “... acts aimed at the person of residents, workers and visitors to farms and smallholdings, whether with the intent to murder, rape, rob or inflict bodily harm. In addition, all actions aimed at disrupting farming activities as a commercial concern, whether for motives related to ideology, labour disputes, land issues, revenge, grievances, racist concerns or intimidation, should be included” (SAPS, 2003: 417). Since 2007 efforts to draw a conceptual boundary around this form of crime and labelling it a priority have been reversed in favour of a broader rural safety approach. Although still common in everyday language and the media with the term “farm murders”, the SAPS stopped releasing statistics on “farm attacks” as such in 2007 and the Minister of Police noted: “farm murders ... are listed under the category of murders *as a murder is a murder no matter where it occurs*” (emphases added) (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2010).

Accurate statistics on farm attacks are as a result hard to come by and contested. The South African Institute for Race Relations and the Institute for Security Studies use statistics collected by the Transvaal Agricultural Union (TAU), coming to the conclusion that farmers are 2 to 3 times more likely to be murdered than other members of society (Cronje et al, 2012). Moreover, victims of farm attacks are often tied up, burned, beaten, stabbed, shot, sometimes even tortured for lengthy periods before being killed or left for dead.

The **SAPS Report** (2003: 446) concluded that: “By far the greater majority of cases are motivated by a desire to rob or steal. Very few cases have political overtones.” However, it also found that farm robberies were more violent than urban robberies and “that there is a considerably higher risk of a white victim of farm attacks being killed or injured than a black victim” (ibid: 446). The Committee noted that, except for individual cases, it could not find a general underlying racial motive for this discrepancy.

## Boer genocide

There seems to be a correlation to the intensity of efforts to paint farm attacks not only as “political”, but “genocidal”, and the government’s claims that the attacks are “just crime”, not priority crime, and not earmarked for special statistical collection. Since 2007 websites that describe and protest farm attacks including labelling them genocide have multiplied.

The narrative of a *Boer* Genocide usually starts by noting campaigns on farms by *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) and the Azanian People’s Liberation Army (APLA), the liberation armies of respectively

the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) during apartheid when white farmers were declared legitimate targets in the armed struggle against apartheid (cf Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1997). Farm attacks are seen as the continuation of an ANC led communist revolution. Veteran MK and APLA members, as well as newly trained “black militias”, are perceived to be involved in these attacks. There is a notion that attacks are carried out with “military precision” and that hit lists exist, sanctioned or drawn up by some in the ANC and/or ANCYL. On CNN’s iReport (2013) website, where people can post their stories, the author known under the pseudonym Boervrou58 captures a typical example of the narrative under the title, “What is the difference between South African crime and Boer, white man’s genocide”.

In a documentary film on farm attacks, entitled **War of the flea**, the narrator hauntingly quotes from Robert Taber’s (1965: 28) book **The war of the flea: A study of guerrilla warfare theory and practice** to frame the violence documented in the film: “The guerrilla fights the war of the flea and his military enemy suffers the dog’s disadvantage. Too much to defend, too small and agile an enemy to come to grips with. If the war continues long enough the dog succumbs to exhaustion and anemia without ever having found anything on which to close its jaws or to rake with its claws.”

The musician, Hofmeyr, participates in the production of this narrative: “I don’t care if other tribes don’t care how many of their people are murdered. I care how many of my people are murdered. I happen to be a minority. It’s very easy to get rid of my group. They’re so small. Genocide for me is a very small amount of people to lose. If your nation is five people strong and I take away two, it is genocide. You can’t tell me two is not genocide. In this case two is genocide” (**War of the flea**, 2011).

The narrative draws selectively from the reports of GenocideWatch, an international organization, which has “rated” South Africa at stage 6 of the genocide ladder. This stage is the “preparation for genocide” phase. The reason for the rating was given as Julius Malema’s statements that “whites stole the land” and should be “treated like criminals”, and the ANC’s silences to Malema’s statements (Laing, 2011). Stage 7 is extermination, that is the mass killing of victims not considered human by their killers. One of the *Boer* Genocide websites notes: “Stage 8 is the denial of the genocide which in South Africa already staged much earlier with the ANC-regime’s denial of its genocidal attacks against Boer farmers and its attempts to hide these facts by stopping recording these attacks in separate [sic] categories on the official police statistics site” (Mare, 2011). GenocideWatch downgraded South Africa to stage 5, “polarization”, when Malema was suspended from the ANC and the public singing of *Dubula Ibhunu* was banned (GenocideWatch, 2012).

The majority of survivors of farm attacks interviewed in the 2003 SAPS Inquiry into farm attacks did not think the attack that they were involved in was particularly “political”, but when asked whether they thought farm murders in general were, they answered in the affirmative. In addition, some victims noted that they could probably have reduced the level of violence by being more cooperative during the incident. This was also the view of some of the perpetrators who were interviewed. This uncanny discrepancy between interpretation of the individual event and farm attacks as a social phenomenon suggests that there is excess meaning beyond interpellation that is not accounted for in the perpetration of this violence and discursive responses to it. Post-colonial psychology offers a lens to analyze the excess meaning of farm attacks and their genocidal framing.

## **Post-colonial psychology**

During apartheid, security as a state project was entwined with race. The “swart gevaar” (black threat) with its communist support was engaged in a “total onslaught” from inside and outside

the country and government embedded society in the war machine. Socialisation into this race-security episteme started early with children practicing responses to ANC “terrorist attacks” at school. The political change experienced in the early 1990s has been called the “post-apartheid moment”, arguably starting with F W de Klerk’s presidency and policy reforms. The phrase non-racial society, rainbow nation and multiculturalism spelled the aim to dismantle discourses built on racism and white supremacy. Seen as a crucial dimension of this bigger aim were two state projects: desecuritisng society and deracialising security architecture through security sector reform and professionalization of the defence force. The aim here is not to detail their success or failure, but to argue that they hardly scratched the surface. Moreover, “the surface” or collective conscious of South Africans is merely one dimension of the security imaginary where a tenacious race-security episteme persists (Pretorius, 2008). The Terre’Blanche murder is significant for the article, because the psychological / psychoanalytical questions underpinning the construction and fuelling of farm violence are so explicit in this case. It reveals the possibility of investigating archetypal meanings that actualise themselves on farms as mythical spaces, through farm violence and in the discursive responses to farm attacks; meanings that are empowered by the repressed link between race and security that still exists in the South African epistemological and cultural unconscious.

James Donald (1991: 3) offers a foundational question for this investigation, namely “how do you analyse the dynamics of culture differently once you recognise the centrality of the unconscious?” This does not lead to a psychoanalytical reading of farm attacks and the responses (as cultural forms) they have extracted. Nor does it suggest collapsing psychoanalysis and cultural studies. Rather of importance here is how questions raised by psychology can provoke insights in the realm of the cultural, which fits the aim of the embryonic field of postcolonial psychology (Kessi, 2012). Derek Hook (2005: 475) argues that “a critical psychology of the postcolonial” offers “the retrieval of a ‘psychopolitics’ in which we not only place the psychological within the register of the political, but - perhaps more challenging - in which the political is also, strategically, approached through the register of the psychological”. Hook (2005) highlights in particular two figures in post-colonial studies whose writings and political objectives were explicitly, powerfully and strategically psychological in nature, namely Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko. I will mention Biko in passing, drawing mostly on Fanon.

Such an analysis is not without limitations or tensions. It aims as a first step to make conscious the race-security episteme, but does so by using a lens premised itself on the “dialectic of experience” (following Sekyi-Otu, 1997) of Fanon and Biko of racial othering. This analysis is later extended via C G Jung’s notion of the fear of “going native” to Afrikaners’ fear of “not belonging” and having to give up their identity to remain in Africa, employing the literary works of Afrikaner authors (Rian Malan, Antjie Krog and J M Coetzee). The call for a reading of farm violence from outside the security-race lens can easily be seen to be undermined by an analysis that relies on exactly such a reading in the article! I beg the reader’s indulgence of this limitation as a necessary and “controlled” slippage with the aim of bringing to consciousness as a first step to arresting the archetypal nature of the race-security episteme, how it is triggered in the South African imaginary and how it infuses farm violence as well as its genocidal framing.

A psycho-political analysis presents a second limitation, namely its scope. In my analysis it is bound to the farm, but can it be applied to other forms of brutal violence peculiar to South Africa’s political space? The latter is implied in the article by also citing cases of othering and violence beyond the farm. However, my analysis of the representation of land in the South African imaginary lends to the analysis a focus that makes possible an understanding of the framing of farm attacks. For

an application of a psycho-political lens to for example violent service delivery protests, insights specific to this site in the post-colonial condition need to be engaged.

## Violence as cleansing

Both Fanon and Biko impress on us the violence of the colonial (and apartheid) encounter for the oppressed, the latter perhaps especially through his death at the hands of apartheid police. Both insist that this violence is not simply physical, but deeply psychological. Following Fanon and Biko, Kessi (2012) outlines two psychological processes at work: internalisation and projection. Internalisation (or “epidermalization” for Fanon) of the subordinating and degrading relational position of black people in a racialised society is summarised by Hook (2005: 479) as: “the debilitating personality and identity effects of trying to understand oneself, as a black subject within the system of white or European culture – the phenomena of a ‘white mask psychology’ such as socially induced ‘inferiority complexes’, lactification, the neurotic compulsion to be white.” It also results in the double consciousness problematique “of being the subject of cultural oppression/racism in which one is incessantly fed with cultural values and understandings which are hostile, devaluating of myself and my culture” (Hook 2005: 479). Projection of socially created inferiority onto others often results in violence against members of the same community in the form of fratricide or domestic violence. Fanon (2001: 42) explains how this projection of inferiority is a form of “collective auto-destruction [that] in a very concrete form is one of the ways in which the muscular tension is set free”.

The “muscular tension” of the oppressed is the psychosomatic result of the colonist-colonised/settler-native relationship. The two live in separate worlds. The colonist’s world entails a high standard of living, good infrastructure, jobs, *et cetera*. The colonised’s world is wretched, characterised by death, degradation and envy. The colonised enters the colonist’s world as an object (like a cog) to make this world function smoothly. In this binary (or more appropriately “bind”), the colonist and colonised are locked in by a force pulling in opposite directions. In Fanon’s view the native bears the excruciating brunt of this tensed relationship, a tension the native can only “relax” through submission, itself a painful psychological process as illustrated by Biko’s description of the self-image that subjugation to apartheid inflicted: “The type of black man that we have today has lost his manhood...He looks with awe at the white power structure and accepts what he regards as the ‘inevitable position’ ... In the privacy of his toilet his face twists in silent condemnation of white society but brightens up in sheepish obedience as he comes out hurrying in response to his master’s impatient call ... All in all the black man has become a shell, a shadow of a man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity” (quoted in Frueh, 2003: 43).

The native has to submit, because the settler is an exhibitionist; he subjugates with brute force, reminding the native that he alone is master. But, says Fanon (2001), the settler can only achieve pseudo-petrification inside the native. The settler’s efforts keep alive in the native an anger that is deprived of outlet.

What is regarded as Fanon’s prescription to cure the native’s predicament is to turn the colonist’s violence back on him/herself: “The violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life, that same violence will be claimed and taken over by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into the forbidden quarters. To wreck the colonial is

henceforward a mental picture of action which is very clear, very easy to understand and which may be assumed by each one of the individuals which constitute the colonized people” (Fanon, 2001: 31). To escape the colonist-colonised bind the colonised must expunge the colonist materially (bodily). Fanon (2001:31) states: “The destruction of the colonial world is no more and no less than the abolition of one zone, its burial in the depths of the earth or its expulsion from the country.”

Fanon still receives criticism for this call to violence. Robert Fulford (2002) labels him a “poisonous thinker who refuses to die”, “a blamer who taught others to blame”, “a psychiatrist who romanticised murder”. Fulford (2002) puts at least some of post-independence Algeria’s woes at the door of Fanon, noting “the wretched of the Earth became even more wretched”. Hannah Arendt (1970: 20) in turn avers that if violence can heal the wounds it has inflicted, as Sartre in his preface to **The wretched of the earth** claims, “revenge would be the cure-all for our ills”, but for her this is abstract myth, rhetorical excess by Fanon and Sartre. Arendt (1970: 20) contends that history has shown the oppressed have rarely risen up and when they did “it was precisely ‘mad fury’ that turned dreams into nightmares for everybody.” Arendt’s critique of violence as a cure to the colonial condition is a starting point to psycho-political analysis of farm attacks. With his activist beret on, Fanon’s is a call to armed resistance, but with his white psychiatrist coat on Fanon is not prescribing violence, but diagnosing it. He states: “At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect” (Fanon 2001: 74). David Austin (2011) proffers: “At a cursory reading the passage appears to be the promotion of violence as cathartic release. But at close reading, Fanon’s language is very specific. The words ‘At the level of individuals’ are crucial; Fanon is sharing his firsthand observations as a clinical psychiatrist.” In a chapter titled “Colonial war and mental disorders” (in **The wretched of the earth**), Fanon discusses several cases of random violence that he had treated. Fanon did not endorse this violence, but could explain it as symptomatic of the colonial condition. I contend that at least some farm attacks in South Africa bear the characteristics not of the kind of violence that Fanon *prescribes*, but instead the kind that he *diagnoses*.

### **Farm attacks, mental and societal disorders**

In Rian Malan’s **My traitor’s heart**, he narrates the “true” story of Simon Mpungose, “the Hammer Man”, a serial killer in the 1980s, who killed white adults by bludgeons to the skull. Having turned himself in and led his own defence, a story unfolds that reads like one of Fanon’s cases. It starts with a black man’s struggle to survive under apartheid, driven to theft, imprisoned, humiliated, and dehumanised. In prison, he dreams that he grows into a giant and kills his mighty persecutor whose faceless head is like the white rocks he had been quarrying in prison. The dream ends when he returns to normal size, is caught and put to death ... “and [I] had freedom from torment?”. For Mpungose, who interpreted the dream in the context of his Zulu culture, this was a message from his sacred ancestors, his destiny. Nevertheless, he tried to escape from it through failed suicide attempts, a request to be deported from South Africa and offering to work on Johannesburg’s mines to avoid contact with whites. To no avail; he ended back close to his hometown. His passbook (without which blacks could not travel or work) was torn up by his employer when he complained about low wages. A banal act of white contempt was the last straw that drove him to fulfil his destiny. He testified: “I once feared a white person ... respected a white person and liked a white person...in the whole of my life before, I had never resorted to violence on another person...But when I got to the stage where I developed the disliking of the white person, it was then that I decided that I should shed blood – that is the blood of white people ... I might state quite bluntly that I am not sorry for all what I did. In fact, my heart is free, I feel relieved ... White people kill black people in various ways. Once that white person is brought to court ... he has instructed an advocate to defend him or her,

so that his life ... is saved. ... In my life, I have noticed there is no fairness on this earth ... So, I must die ...” (quoted in Malan, 1990: 166-167).

Mpongose’s story fits Fanon’s diagnosis of violence, because 1980s’ South Africa fitted the colonial condition from whence Fanon writes. Is it fair, though, to assume Fanon’s post-apartheid relevance? The age group perpetrating farm attacks is between 10 and 36 (the majority is younger than 25) and can hardly have similar life experiences or recollections of apartheid since the ANC took over governing the country in 1994 (cf Mistry & Dhlamini, 2001). Fanon (1967: 10) himself historicises his thought: “I belong irreducibly to my time. And it is for my own time that I should live.” But, Fanon (and Biko) are present in much of post-apartheid’s security imaginary in two ways. Firstly, in many spaces, apartheid persists *de facto* if not *de jure*. Whiteness still represents a colonist mentality, epitomised by Julius Malema’s notion of “white tendencies” (cf Smith, 2010). Secondly, Fanon’s (1967: 12) painful conclusion that “[f]or the black man there is only one destiny. And that is white,” seems also an apt diagnosis for the continued experience of a colonial-colonist bind where a black elite joins in playing the oppressor’s role. Sesanti (2011) writes: “... after the liberation, those comrades who were seen to have ditched the masses in pursuit of self-aggrandisement, were seen as *amaBhunu*, to an extent that in some protest marches, black people sing ‘*amaBhul’amnyama asenz’iworry*’ (black Boers cause us misery).”

Four years after democracy Thabo Mbeki held pretty much the same Manichean view of South Africa as Fanon had of the colony – two nations: one white and rich and one black and poor, warning of the “rage” that this state of affairs is creating (Mullholland, 1998). Addressing Parliament as deputy president in 1998, Mbeki (quoted in Barbarin et al, 2001: 16) even invokes Fanon: “The statistics present a scale of human suffering and *wretchedness* which by any standard is impermissible [emphasis added].” Simphiwe Sesanti (2011), in an article on Black Consciousness, relates an experience he had as a university lecturer with a senior white academic who “had done a demolition job” on his attempt to explain Africanness from an Afrocentric perspective. Sesanti describes “feeling an intense hatred rising in me for white people, because at the time the white academic was nullifying my articulation of African culture – of which he had no experience.” He continues: “The experience re-opened old wounds inflicted by the apartheid system ... he was trying to nullify my identity, a very powerful act that was carried out by colonialists ... 17 years after the first democratic elections, black people express a feeling of hatred towards white people, I understand, even though I do not encourage such. That is because in this country some (not all) white people continue to treat black people with contempt. So on that basis Malema’s song [*Dubula Ibhunu*] has an appeal to black people.” Seemingly minor, banal and non-physical forms of personal or public racism (or perceived racism) can unexpectedly trigger the collective memory of apartheid trauma. Writing about black nationalism and the politics of nativism in post-apartheid South Africa, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2007) questions the foundational myth of the “new South Africa” and the “rainbow nation”, emphasising “that the triumphant non-racial ideology became the accepted public transcript, forcing the populist Afro-radical thinking to take a dangerous form of hidden transcript always ready to re-emerge as public transcript.” He further notes that into the second decade of South Africa’s democracy there is a popular sense of betrayal that answers to populist and emotive politics.

The farm (or land) is a particular post-colonial space, almost mythical in its representation of political struggle for freedom in South African security imaginaries. In dream symbolism “land” symbolises the ego. If we understand ego as the self, the I, or, consciousness, then land represents in political struggle, a struggle for identity, recognition, civilisation. Fanon (2001: 34) states: “For



a colonised people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land that will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.” Malema (2011) confirms Fanon: “Without land we are nothing. Without land we have nothing to show that this South Africa belongs to us ...There is no way you can be diplomatic about the issue of land. Willing buyer, willing seller has failed. We must find an alternative. You have not come with an alternative. We are giving you an alternative. We must take the land without payment.” The *Boer* Genocide framing of farm attacks certainly fits this interpretation of Fanon and Malema. The farm is representative of post-apartheid South Africa, but most commercial farmers are still white. Moreover, the situation of farm workers is often still starkly reflective of the colonist-colonised bind necessitating expunging violence from the oppressed.

Apart from the visible (colonial-type) hierarchy on most farms, there also remain paternalist mentalities of racism. In the documentary film **War of the flea** (2011), a farmer describes how his gardener died in a farm attack that also claimed the life of the farmer’s mother. He notes that the “garden boy” put up quite a fight, while the subtitles indicate the gardener’s age as 68. He continues to describe the shock experience by the “kitchen girl’s” son. The “kitchen girl” is 34. The farmer comes across as caring deeply for his workers; he even notes that he brought up his children to be “colour blind”, but it is he who is blind to paternalist racism that persists in the banalities of everyday life on the farm. In the voice of a farmer in the Ventersdorp area (where Terre’Blanche’s farm was): “You might give him [farm worker] a smack or two, but an assault, never. I know of nothing like that. On the contrary, I reprimand my children in the same way” (quoted in Scholtz, 2010). And, in the voice of a farm worker again in the Ventersdorp area: “My baas [master/employer] gives me R1600. On the R1600, then he says the spanners are missing. Then you get R600. That is the thing that gives me a heartache, because you work hard, but you don’t get paid. If you need something on the farm and you ask for help, then you get help. At the end of the month, when they have to tell you about the debt you made, you don’t even get a paper to tell you how much you owe. What if I die and I have nothing for the children?” (quoted in Scholtz, 2010).

The brutality seen in farm attacks in many cases seem to be triggered (or at least justified) by the same banality; viewed in isolation these “triggering” incidents would seem minor, disproportional to the crime, which is “gratuitous”, a favoured word used to describe violence visited on white farmers. But, viewed in the continued racialised collective and individual psyche of South Africans it is explicable. In the Terre’Blanche case the two accused, a then 28 year old man, who has since been convicted of the murder, and a boy of 15 at the time, who could not forensically be linked to the murder, but was convicted of house-breaking, walked quite a distance after the murder to phone the police and confess. In these confessions they explained that Terre’Blanche demanded that they return cows that had wandered off before he would pay them. They returned the cows, but Terre’Blanche still did not want to pay them. They subsequently found an iron rod and panga, entered Terre’Blanche’s home, found him lying on his bed and beat him to death. “Mahlangu (the older man) said he pulled Terre’Blanche’s pants down and exposed his genitals. His intention was to dismember Terre’Blanche. But he decided against it”, the police inspector testified (Moeng, 2012). Mahlangu subsequently changed his version of events, saying that they went to Terre’Blanche’s home to get his (Mahlangu’s) suitcase (the only thing of value Mahlangu owned) upon which Terre’Blanche attacked them and sodomised Mahlangu. He killed Terre’Blanche in self-defence (Vermaak, 2012). The judge found no evidence for the latter version. He also dismissed that Terre’Blanche was killed because of his political views: “There was no conspiracy, no political intrigue, no racial undertones and no hidden agenda” (quoted in Laing, 2012). It was a dispute over wages that led to the murder, but this hardly explains the disproportionality of the crime, the brutality and the sexual symbolism

that Mahlangu's two versions offer. If we understand violence as "performative", is Mahlangu telling us that he felt his manhood violated (raped) by Terre'Blanche and he wanted to disempower Terre'Blanche in the same way? The investigative officer also testified that Mahlangu told other farm workers that he is now their boss, because he had killed Terre'Blanche. It seems obvious that the motive goes beyond wages, that it was political, but psycho-political in the Fanonian sense.

Similar examples abound. In a farm attack documented by the **SAPS Report on farm attacks** (2003), perpetrators explained that they decided to kill the farmer after their first encounter with him: "Their main intention was to steal money and firearms and then to kill the owners - particularly the husband, because when they had been doing their reconnaissance a week before the attack, he had harassed them. They had gone to the farm pretending to be interested in buying livestock, but the farmer *had not listened to them and had chased them away*. This attitude had *angered* them [emphases added]." A perpetrator of an attack in KwaZulu/Natal states: "The farmer was seen by the community as a troublesome person because he was not prepared to assist people with matters seen by the community as important. For example, people wanted a thoroughfare through the farm so that they could get to the clinic and they also asked for a school to be built, but he was not prepared to assist in any way" (SAPS, 2003). In yet another case, a farmer's house of R3 million burned down, and a letter was found stating that the farmer will be killed like Terre'Blanche. The author(s) demanded better wages (R1 800) and work conditions, and complained about the farmer's employment of Zimbabweans and Mozambicans. A big lettered "YOU NEXT GO OR CHANGE" ends the letter (Viljoen, 2010).

The discussion above is not justification for farm attacks; rather the goal is to demystify this violence by putting the attacks in a psycho-political context. This is Fanon's directive, to thwart the idea that violence can be attributed to the "aggressive instincts of the native" and rather to put the problem of criminality and violence in the register of colonial history (Fanon, 2001: 243). Here, violence and criminality is looked at through post-colonial lenses. Such demystification is especially necessary in the discourses that have been brewing around farm attacks (for an example of an analysis that meets the "demystification" criteria, see the analysis by Steinberg [2002] of a single farm murder in his acclaimed book **Midlands**).

### **Boer genocide: Black phobogenesis?**

"The Negro is a phobogenic object, a stimulus to anxiety," writes Fanon (1967: 151). The *Boer* Genocide narrative can be framed in terms of phobia, defined as "neurosis characterised by the anxious fear of an object ... or ... a situation" (Fanon 1967: 154). A phobic object arouses both fear and revulsion, which sets the scene for a dual (but related) interpretation of Fanon's statement in the context of farm attacks. The *Boer* Genocide narrative benefits from the leftover apartheid rhetoric of "swart gevaar". Categories and labels of insurgency, border wars, ANC terrorists, and the Afrikaner as victim of a larger enemy populate this dimension of the South African imaginary, providing the raw material for the construction of this narrative. However, beyond the constructivist (cultural/historical) determinants of how this discourse manifests lay its psycho-political underpinnings.

In an insightful ethnographic study of a middle class white farming community in the Western Cape during the 1980s entitled **Waiting: The whites of South Africa**, Vincent Crapanzano (1986: 42) repeats what an interviewee had said: "I left South Africa because I couldn't stand the waiting any longer for something, anything, to happen." Crapanzano continues to relate how "waiting for something, anything, to happen" became thematic in most of what he read, heard and observed in white spaces. Poking the meaning of waiting, he notes that to wait for something that

is undetermined is a terrible kind of waiting, worse in terms of fear and anxiety than to wait for something specific. To make waiting more specific, those who wait can postulate a symbolic object to reduce anxiety, but they risk “sacrificing ‘reality’ to psychic need” (Ibid: 46, 47).

The genocidal framing of farm attacks can be interpreted as that symbolic postulating of what the *Boer* is waiting for. There seems to be an unwillingness to believe that life for whites has generally stayed the same or improved under a “black” government. Antjie Krog (2009: 206), the Afrikaner journalist, poet and author of **Country of my skull** that documents her experience covering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s proceedings, explains: “White people were prepared for the worst at the hands of a black government. What they weren’t prepared for was to be forgiven. It made and still makes whites deeply uncomfortable: we respect fury, we understand hatred and, at its deepest level, we admire revenge.” This incredulity is followed with a displacement of historic fears of post-apartheid come-uppance onto a symbolic object – crime in general and farm attacks specifically. Crime and farm attacks are produced in discourses as a way for blacks to make whites pay for apartheid, something blacks were denied the chance to do by the formal negotiation and TRC process (Frueh, 2003). The racial sub-text (that crime is mostly committed by blacks) seems to be coded to express these repressed fears in a public space where racism is not permitted. This is a plausible interpretation of the *Boer* Genocide narrative, but there is more to the sense of siege, insecurity and extermination mired in racist sub-text.

Crapananzo (1986: 20) asserts: “to be dominant in the system is not to dominate the system. Both the dominant and the dominated are equally caught in it.” Rhetoric of domination and subordination leaves little room to acknowledge that the oppressor also lives in social, cultural, psychological (and even economic) constraints. Fanon, the revolutionary, only speaks of the internalisation of discrimination by the native, but Fanon, the psychiatrist, also outlines what psycho-pathological effects colonial violence have on the oppressor. Here the question is what effects do the black-white bind have on the Afrikaner/*Boer*. The *Boer* Genocide narrative reflects the actualisation of an archetypal fear of being savage/uncivilised (whatever that means in one’s cultural environment); in this instance, manifesting as a projection by whites of their own “shadow” onto black people (Adams, 1996). This is akin to Jung’s interpretation of white experiences of blackness developed from his visits to Africa and the United States. Putting Fanon in conversation with Jung is controversial, however. Fanon (1967: 187) disputes the existence of a universal collective unconscious populated with archetypes, especially archetypes as: “bad instincts, of darkness inherent in every ego, of the uncivilized savage, the Negro who slumbers in every white man.” For him, the collective unconscious “is purely and simply the sum of prejudice, myths, collective attitudes of a given group ... the collective unconscious is culture, which means acquired” (1967: 188).

Fanon is correct that fear of an inner black-skinned savage is a cultural (learned) imago mostly in the unconscious of whites who have had colonial type encounters with black people. However, Jung’s idea of the shadow archetype precedes the historical/cultural and is not antithetical to Fanon’s own interpretations of white anxiety projected onto black people. Fanon is referring to the cultural or epistemological unconscious – the layer between the collective and individual unconscious that “translates archetypes into the language of the present” (Kast, 2009: 4; cf also Foucault, 2002). Jung (1968: 5) writes for example: “The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear.” Archetypes are not images filled with content, “but forms without content, representing merely the possibility of a certain type of perception and action. When a situation occurs which corresponds to a given archetype,

that archetype becomes activated and a compulsiveness appears, which like an instinctual drive, gains its way against all reason and will, or else produces a conflict of pathological dimensions ..." (Jung 1968: 47, 48). Jung explains that some situations bring into motion explosive and dangerous forces hidden in archetypes sometimes with unpredictable consequences. An archetype's activation and manifestation is determined by cultural context, but it does not mean the archetype is not universal. The feared savage in the white psyche happens to be black in the Afrikaner security imaginary for historical reasons, but the same archetype (as a pattern of psychological behaviour) may manifest itself in a protestant Irish as a savage Catholic or in the Hutu imaginary as the Tutsi.

My application of Jung's notion of archetypes to farm attacks relates to the trans-cultural propensity of social groups to "othering" in order to establish the own group's integrity, identity and sense of belonging, especially after a spell of inhumane treatment that has been internalised and causes the psychological effects of inferiority in the Fanonian sense. The image of the "barbaric savage" is symbolic of the "other": primitive, uncivilized, ugly, "genital" (for Fanon), and evil. The Afrikaner knows culturally what it means to be demeaned like this. The word *boer* itself connotes among other meanings, to be "boor-ish", uncouth, uncivilised, in opposition to those (gentiles) in towns or cities (Coetzee, 2000: 9). The Great Trek of the 1830s and 40s was about escaping the oppressor's gaze as much as for reasons of political self-determination. Getting "own" land where *boers* could be "themselves" (note again the symbolism of land as ego, identity, civilisation) and not lesser humans, became an originating myth of Afrikaners (Giliomee, 2003). The myth is strengthened again in Afrikaner memory by linking the dehumanising of Afrikaners in concentration camps under the scorched earth policy of destroying *boer* farms during the Anglo-Boer War and the severe hardship that ensued when they returned to rebuild their farms (cf Swart, 2009). Could it be that the inferiority complex of the Afrikaners triggered/triggers the racist "othering", the projection of the Afrikaner shadow onto black people, the banal, habitual demeaning of the "other" as proof of the "own" civility?

Jung argues that whenever a person is in a savage rage with something external to him, it is indeed his own unconscious self that he wants to be savaged to (Adams, 1996). Jung also gives us some insight in how this projection turns on the own unconscious: "The savage inhabitants of a country have to be mastered. In the attempt to master, brutality rises in the master. He must be ruthless. He must sacrifice everything soft and fine for the sake of mastering savages. Their influence is very great; the more surely they are dominated, the more savage the master must become" (Adams, 1996: 115). J M Coetzee conjures up a similar scene in the novel **Disgrace** (2000: 206), when the white protagonist encounters the black teenage farm attacker, who raped his daughter: "The word still rings in the air: *Swine!* Never has he felt such elemental rage. He would like to give the boy what he deserves: a sound thrashing. Words that all his life he has avoided seem suddenly just and right: *Teach him a lesson, Show him his place.* So this is what it is like, he thinks! This is what it is like to be a savage!" The vanity (or futility of this narcissism) to purify the own collective unconscious effects a kind of despondency, alienation or even melancholia in whites described by Crapanzano (1986: 27): "The life of those white South Africans with whom I talked ... impressed me as somehow truncated. I found signs of anxiety, helplessness, vulnerability, and rage that were not very far from the surface. Their experience was not open-ended, expansive, and adventurous. It did not elicit optimism and positive excitement. It was limited. Their present seemed devoid of the vitality that I associate with leading a fulfilling life. It seemed mechanical, numb, and muted. *Dead* would be an exaggeration. It was infused with uncertainty or at times what appeared to me to be a compensatory over-certainty, a stubborn and harsh pragmatism."

## What does the Afrikaner want?<sup>1</sup>

Annalet Steenkamp, whose documentary film **I, Afrikaner** (2014) explores four generations of her Afrikaner family living on farms, states: “Struggling to retain and yet redefine their identity, today’s Afrikaners must come to terms with the past and adapt to an uncertain future.”<sup>2</sup> Above the *Boer* Genocide narrative is framed as an unconscious projection of apartheid guilt and the Afrikaner shadow onto black people. This interpretation can be pushed even further in psycho-political terms. The *Boer* Genocide narrative may well represent a death drive of the Afrikaner (ego, self, identity). Again, Crapanzano (1986: 21): “... I came to understand something about [white] South African society. Fear is pervasive ... it is not ... the fear of change: the loss of power, status, and wealth, ‘the good life’ as many South Africans put it. It is, I believe, a much more primordial fear that comes from the absence of any possibility of a vital relationship with most of the people around one. It is unspoken, pervasive fear that has its source in the apartheid and that maintains the apartheid in all its virulence.”

Land not only has mythical connections of political struggle and identity for black people in South Africa, but also for the settler. Hofmeyr (2010) stated at Terre’Blanche’s funeral: “Eugene Terre’Blanche spoke about land and blood as others speak about money and bloodletting ... (his) words would have built on Paul Kruger’s who would give all for the self-determination of a nation and as usual against an opponent much larger than himself. Eugene’s ... praise was reserved for a small Christian tribe here in Africa that gave up more of its people for its property than any other South African nation. You must understand that to understand the Afrikaner.”

For the Afrikaner, there is an organic (blood) link to the land; it has as much autochthonous value as for any other “native” community in South Africa. Coetzee (2000:10), in his study of the “*Plaasroman*” (or Farm novel) in Afrikaans literature, notes the close connection between identity and the land for the Afrikaner, quoting the South African Nobel Laureate, J M Coetzee, who states that the Afrikaner will cease to exist when they don’t own land anymore. The claim that whites stole the land from blacks, continues to be countered in political debate with a widely held belief of the “empty land myth” (*terra nullius*), that Shaka Zulu had chased most of the tribes across the Limpopo river (today’s Zimbabwe) when the Voortrekkers moved upwards in search of freedom, self-determination and land (Pillay, 2012). The land was thus given by God to the Voortrekkers, and, where they had to, they “bought” the land either with money or with their blood. The farm is ancestral. As an elderly woman, who lost part of her face in a farm attack and attempt on her life, proclaimed: “I want to stay here, I will die here. I will die here. They will not get me off my ancestral land. I will not run away from them. They will probably kill me here, but I will not run away” (**War of the flea**, 2012). Here is a claim of a settler to be recognised as a native, a daughter of the soil, a claim to ethnic citizenship (Mamdani, 1998). Hofmeyr makes the same claim when he talks of “my tribe” – the Afrikaner is like the Xhosa or the Zulu, another African tribe. But as a “white tribe” with its roots so obviously in Europe, colonialism and apartheid Afrikaners’ claim to ethnic citizenship is empty and ridiculed. More so, it is empty at the deeper level of the epistemological or cultural unconscious.

Fanon vividly illustrates from own experience what it means to be a phobic object in the white gaze. Macey (2000) highlights several moments of what he calls the “Look, a Negro!” scenario in Fanon’s life, but an encounter in Lyon stands out when a child tells its mother: “Mama, see the

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<sup>1</sup> The question is a play on Fanon’s (1967:8) question “What does the black man want?”

<sup>2</sup> Private conversation with Steenkamp, 2011, Cape Town.

Negro. I'm frightened! Frightened! Frightened!" (Fanon 1967: 112). Laughing off the child's remark is impossible. Fanon (1967: 112) reflects: "Now they were beginning to be afraid of me" and describes being objectified in this way as: "an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my body with black blood" (Fanon 1967: 112). The child's fear is internalised by Fanon and inflicts great psychological pain. Could the primal fear in white South Africans that Crapanzano sensed have something to do with their internalisation of being phobic and foreign objects in a black world?

I propose that the Boer Genocide narrative is a death wish in the same way that Jung (1968: 118) writes about "going native" or "black under the skin". The Afrikaner wants to belong, wants to be accepted, is "begging to be black" in Antjie Krog's (2009) words. The only way to do that is through an imaginary sacrifice of the Afrikaner identity – a Boer Genocide – a cleansing of the unconscious of the savage master that the Afrikaner had become, to expunge the whiteness in the Afrikaner unconscious that is withholding it from belonging to the continent that they call home. J M Coetzee's **Disgrace** (2000) expresses this death wish of the Afrikaner as a submission to connect with the community that surrounds her; the acceptance that I exist, because this community exists ("*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" – or the *ubuntu* principle). In **Disgrace** a farmer and her father are victims of a farm attack. She is raped and impregnated by the cousin of a farm worker, who lives on land adjacent to her farm. The farm worker offers to marry her. She accepts and as such secures the protection of the community the farm worker belongs to, but in the process releases her land to the farm worker. Her father does not understand her choice. The two represent the conflicting elements in the Afrikaner collective unconscious that the Boer Genocide narrative wants to resolve. Unconsciously, the Afrikaner knows that she must die (submit to "blackness") to stay on the land, but there is a conscious and unconscious sense that going native is a disgrace. Krog (2009: 266) goes beyond moral uncertainty to express the deep uncertainty when the cultural mirror image is supplanted: "... how does one form a moral self within such interconnected community?" She earlier states: "black people have allowed whites to move in assuming that they would interconnect" (Krog 2009: 266). Even more relevant: "how can people's imaginings of what kind of society they want function when the rites, rituals and stories that sustained their belief systems no longer have a place?" (Krog 2009: 266).

### ***Toe-sig*: "The eye is blind that will not see"<sup>3</sup>**

In one of the farm attacks documented in the 2003 **SAPS Report**, two men decided to hi-jack a young doctor who lived with her parents on a farm. They stopped her on her way to work. Although they had agreed that they would not kill her, but tie her to a tree and leave her there, when one perpetrator turned around to his surprise his accomplice had strangled the doctor and gouged out her eyes. The Report (2003) states: "When he asked his friend why he had killed her, he replied that he had been afraid that she would have been able to identify them. His reason for gouging out her eyes in addition, was that he was afraid he would always see her image before him."

This bizarre act of blinding the dead so that the living won't see as a way to deal with guilt is apt to introduce, finally, the notion of *toe-sig*. The use of the word *toe-sig* is adapted from a conversation with the Afrikaner director, Annalet Steenkamp<sup>4</sup>. As suggested in the section title, I place this word in the context of Credo Mutwa's **Indaba, my children** where he decries the indifference of white South Africans to learn about and from the communities in which they live. Despite Mutwa's controversial reputation in South Africa, I still find this notion useful to suggest

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<sup>3</sup> Mutwa, 1998: 223

<sup>4</sup> Private conversation with Steenkamp, 2011, Cape Town.

how the race-security episteme acts as a trigger of the shadow archetype, especially in relation to “othering”, which exerts itself powerfully in the brutality of farm violence as well as the *Boer* Genocide framing of farm attacks. In Afrikaans *toe* means closed and *sig* means sight, but written as one word, *toesig* means to invigilate, guard or supervise. Hyphenated, *toe-sig* signifies both meanings, how the discourse around land, identity, race and farm violence enforces denial of certain unpleasant realities. It cuts off avenues for alternative ways of seeing the violence that recognise the human and humane despite race, which could well lead to more helpful ways of addressing / redressing the violence that plays out on farms.

White farmers have all kinds of strategies to justify their continued (disproportional) ownership of land. They claim civic rights, referring to the reconciliatory constitutions of 1994 and 1996 and the assurance given to security of person and property, as well as minority rights. Another strategy is to emphasise their functionality as commercial farmers. The government is regularly reminded that farm attacks threaten the country’s food security, because white commercial farmers are food producers and earners of foreign revenue through agricultural exports. Agricultural unions also regularly point to the inadequacy of black communities to farm commercially where land has been returned or redistributed. Therefore it is not only farm attacks that threaten food security, but the government’s land reforms. Those who pursue the *Boer* Genocide narrative also appeals to the international community and uses farm attacks to justify campaigns for Afrikaner self-determination.

Of course there is contestation beyond the symbolic realm about the material value of land, its productivity and the sustainability of land ownership and farming models, which lies beyond the scope of a psycho-political analysis of farm violence. The point here is how these material claims are employed to avoid recognising the unequal state of affairs when it comes to land, the situation of farm workers and the psycho-political drivers of farm attacks. The *Boer* Genocide narrative is a disciplining tool to keep farmers from asking themselves tough questions. Adriaan Basson (2011) highlights the implicit and explicit enforcement of denial of the farm attack discourse in an open letter to AfriForum, entitled: “White first, African second”, starting with a quote from Nadine Gordimer: “If one will always have to feel white first, and African second, it would be better not to stay on in Africa. It would not be worth it for this”.

On the other hand, the discourse that “whites stole the land” and that this justifies expropriation without compensation is an equally effective disciplining tool to deny realities that go beyond a racialised narrative. It is not only the willing buyer, willing seller policy that has failed, but government’s slow pace of implementing land reform including distributing land belonging to the state to landless people. Post-apartheid liberalisation policies have decreased the number of farming units and have increased inequality within commercial farming. Hall (2009) shows how agribusinesses have been empowered at the expense of poorer and smaller farmers, with new alliances between these businesses and white and black established farmers and commercial banks forged through Mbeki’s Presidential Working Group on Agriculture. Moreover, the racialised discourse around land negate that few in the urbanised black majority want agricultural land; they want jobs and better living standards (du Preez, 2014). Almost half of blacks who indicated in a survey that they want land want one hectare or less (Aliber et al, 2006). 30% of land bought for black ownership has been sold back to whites (often to previous owners) (**News24**, 2011).

Prince Mashele, a political analyst, outlines the problem of *toe-sig* in the context of farm attacks: “We are running in different directions. So farmers see themselves as an interest group. They must

organise themselves and defend themselves. Black workers see themselves as a group. They are exploited by these bad people. And then you find people in government and in unions who say this [farm attacks] is happening because farmers are exploiting their workers. So you have this situation where we are running in different directions. We are not a united nation that sees the problem as our collective problem” (**War of the flea**, 2012).

## Conclusion

James Gibson (2009) writes that the issue of land reconciliation is nowhere more salient than in South Africa, where the country’s past (of expropriating land for the use of a white minority) is now colliding with its present (intensified demands for land reform). This collision is not simply political or economic; it is deeply emotive and representative of larger post-apartheid claims for equality, dignity and identity for both black and white. Making sense of farm attacks demands recognition of certain psycho-political underpinnings. Internalized and projected images of the savage self / other triggers the archetypal violence that is often present in farm attacks. Currently responses to this violence are polarized along a farcical and dangerous dichotomy of “just crime” and “genocide”. The construction of the *Boer* Genocide narrative is layered with racist myth from the haunting history of Afrikaners. However, the perception that farm attacks constitute genocide goes beyond black phobogenesis, to the projection of the apartheid shadow onto “the other”, and even further to a deeply uncomfortable sense of dissonance as the Afrikaner wrestles with assimilating to a post-apartheid order. Introducing the concept *toe-sig*, the article warns against narratives that draw psycho-political currency from the race-security episteme, which still needs to be arrested and reversed in the South African imaginary.

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