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'I am on Guard': The Making of Race, Gender and Affect in Human-Dog Relations in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This article will analyse human-dog relations in the post-apartheid White South African suburbs to show how they operate in the production of racial and gendered difference. The analysis draws primarily on my experience as a White woman growing up in the suburbs and my work as a dog walker, as well as interviews with the owners of two dog day-cares in Cape Town. Given this locatedness, the article tracks the affective and biopolitical effects of human-dog relationality to consider how they work in the socio-spatial structuring of the White suburbs. To begin, it uses Donna Haraway's understanding of relation across difference in interspecies 'becoming', augmenting this with Harlan Weaver and Sarah Ahmed's respective theorisations of the work of affect between bodies. It outlines White discourses of fear around crime and security and describes the spatial organisation of the suburb, which informs dogs' socialisation/enculturation with White people, and their hostility towards Black people. As such, suburban dogs become part of a racialised species kinship, in which they are cast as White people's companions, while protecting private property and White bodies. Drawing on Ahmed and Fanon's work on phenomenology, the paper considers how dogs reproduce the historico-racial schema so that Black subjects are made to feel vulnerable in White space. Finally, it looks at gendered racialised narratives of threat and the construction of White women as objects of protection in relation to the imagined threat of Black men. By analysing these modes of relation, this paper hopes to show how interconnectedness yields an ethical responsibility towards others, across differences of race and species.

Keywords: race, affect, animals, decolonisation, South Africa, whiteness studies

INTRODUCTION

I am what people, in the White Western culture, call 'a dog person': seeing a dog, I experience a strange compulsion to be close to it, to meet its eyes and have it press its nose or body into my hand. This feeling is neither exclusive to Whiteness nor Westernness, but is certainly facilitated by my position as a White person in post-apartheid South Africa. My family's first dog, Bijoux, a big black Bouvier, was considered, according to the logics of our racialised interspecies kinship, part of our family. Bijoux was a family dog, but also a guard dog. She let us pull on her fur and lie with our heads on her belly, but she had a big, deep bark and we had a sign on the gate saying 'Beware of the Dog'. This sign could be seen to address anyone, but it forms part of a long history in South Africa of dogs being used to police Black subjects:[1] by White settlers to protect their property, and by the apartheid police to quell protests. Historian Sandra Swart observes that the national psyche is haunted by this history: 'Nothing remains as strong in the public's imagination as the snarling German shepherd straining at the end of the apartheid policeman's leash' (Swart, 2022). The enduring violence of this is evident in a video that was leaked in 2000, of an event two years prior: in January 1998, five members of South African Police Services' (SAPS) Benoni Dog Unit recorded themselves setting police dogs on Gabriel Pedro Timane, Alexandre Pedro Timane, and Sylvester Cose, three Black undocumented migrants from Mozambique. The detainees were brought to an abandoned field near the mine dumps, where the policemen initiated a 'Dog exercise': using two old police dogs

[1] I capitalise Black and White, not to reify them as racial categories, but to acknowledge their meaning beyond descriptors, speaking to a mode of being, an identity and a culture, but also (crucially) to historical and ongoing structures of power or subjugation, which shape how that being is experienced. When quoting I have left the author's original orthography.

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to illustrate to younger dogs how to attack a 'human target' (SABC News, 2014). Cheered on by the policemen, the dogs chased down and mauled one man at a time. The men are heard screaming and pleading for the police to call the dogs off. The gratuitous brutality of this event reflects how dogs have been used by Whiteness for the control and violation of Black subjects.

The above vignette illustrates the kinds of intimacies and separations that characterize dog-human relations. Literary and postcolonial theorist Sakiru Adebayo reflects that in South Africa, both police and citizens' dogs become socialised into anti-Black racism. As such, 'most ordinary Black South Africans (especially men) are exceedingly cynophobic' (Adebayo, 2021). In my work as a professional dog walker walking with dogs on the mountain or in the suburbs, I have witnessed Black people often responding to dogs with wariness or fear. Moreover, while their behaviours vary, dogs seem far more likely to bark or become aggressive if the person passing them is Black. A dog's presence thus significantly affects the parameters of movement and interaction between people, tipping power further in favour of hegemonic Whiteness. I come to this study from a position of trouble, from my love for dogs and the empathetic fracturing I feel when a being I have such positive relation and affect with and which brings me such joy, responds aggressively to another person, inspiring equally negative affect in them. I want to consider how these affective exchanges – of interspecies love, arising from a 'familial' closeness and of interspecies fear arising from a violent enforcing of otherness – function in the reproduction of systems of power and separation. Finally, if we accept that all human-dog relations are shaped by specific socio-cultural forces, then how and to what effect are certain forms of relation encouraged and legitimated – that is, established as 'right' or 'normal' – in the South African context?

First, it is necessary for me to position myself in relation to this research, as one who is implicated in the dynamics about which I write. I am struck by a duality: I wish to expose the production of power and oppression, but risk reproducing this by theorising from a place of Whiteness. Following decoloniality's emphasis on the role of subjectivity in knowledge production (Snyman, 2015: 269), I aim to use my position within Whiteness to consider its extent and workings. I draw on Gerrie Snyman's advocation of a hermeneutics of vulnerability as part of a decolonial approach to knowledge production. Here, hermeneutics refers not to modes of interpretation, but to 'the problem of understanding itself' (2015: 279). This means acknowledging the limits of what I can understand. I am aware that there are innumerable discourses around dogs that I have no access to, by virtue of my position, my inability to speak any indigenous language and social segregation. The picture I provide here is one, primarily, of race and species *within* hegemonic Whiteness.

In this article, I map out how human relations and human-dog relations are figured in constellations of physical and symbolic closeness or separation and how this results from and reproduces the biopolitical ordering of things. I outline White discourses of fear around crime and security and describe the spatial organisation of the suburb, which informs dogs' socialisation with White people and hostility towards Black people. Focusing on the White suburban street and the mountain or forest path, I analyse the affective exchanges between humans and dogs in these 'public' spaces. In these relations across race and species, I consider how affect moves between or arises from an encounter between bodies, yielding feelings of love and fear; security and threat. I track the work of racialisation here through movements that extend beyond the boundaries of human bodies to reproduce the 'strange(r)ness' of Black people in relation to normative Whiteness, while at the same time reinforcing the place of White women as objects of protection.

To structure this argument, I use Donna Haraway's understanding of relation across difference in interspecies 'becoming', augmenting this with Harlan Weaver's and Sarah Ahmed's respective theorisations of the work of affect between bodies. The auto-ethnographic elements of this paper are not only based on my growing up with dogs in the White suburbs, but also my adult work as a dog walker in similar spaces. I also draw on interviews that I conducted in March 2022 with two female owners of dog day-cares in Cape Town. The interviews were part of a project entitled 'Dog Economies: Race, Gender and Commodified Care in Human-Dog Relations in South Africa', which looked at social reproductive care in the dog day care industry in Cape Town. The interview questions focused on the interviewees' understandings of human-dog relationships – between dogs and the company's employees; dogs and owners; and dogs and other people they encountered on the daily walks – and how these relationships were differently mediated by race and class. The interviews were semi structured and each one-hour long. Both of the interlocutors are personal contacts of mine and have chosen pseudonyms: V and Mila. Mila is White and V is Indian. Mila estimates that 90% of her clients are White; V says 75% of hers. The clients are also upper class, given that daycare is a 'luxury service' (V, 2022). As such, the interviews offer insight into dogs' behaviour in certain contexts, but are also reflective of a particular cultural paradigm that I wish to interrogate.

To understand the racialised dynamics of dog-human relations, it is also necessary to understand the racial structure of South Africa. Apartheid legislation classified the population into four racial groups: White, Indian, Coloured and Black. This allowed not just for separation but for hierarchical organisation and the designation of different rights, spaces and resources. The spatial segregation of the notorious Group Areas Act of 1950 saw the eviction and forced relocation of people of colour to poorly resourced areas on the outskirts of cities. Black

people's presence in White space was permitted only for work: the Influx Control Act denied Black people political citizenship and required them to carry an identifying 'pass book' – called colloquially, subversively a *dompas* ('stupid pass' in Afrikaans) – which would be used to justify their presence (More, 2016: 130). Black people became workers, legitimised by White employers and Black townships 'serviced' the White city (More, 2016: 131). In this, the colonial imaging of Blackness as inferior was materially inscribed: race, space and class became inextricable. This exploitative labour system still exists today. Every day, taxis, buses and trains bring Black people to Cape Town's White neighbourhoods, to clean the houses and work in the gardens. The economic system enforces Black presence in White space, but with the understanding of Blackness as a foreign presence. It is this specifically racialised social-spatial context that this analysis will address.

A FRAMEWORK FOR DOG-HUMAN RELATIONS

In the *Companion Species Manifesto* (2008), Donna Haraway argues that dogs have 'co-evolved' with humans, proclaiming them to be 'constitutively companion species' (2008: 2). Haraway emphasises the fundamentally relational nature of companion species, who, evoking Deleuze, 'become-with' one another, 'mak[ing] each other up, in the flesh' (2008: 2-3). She describes this as an ever-shifting 'ontological choreography' (2008: 12) – an ongoing embodied interconnectedness which evades human fantasies of sovereign control and makes space for animal agency in mutual becoming. She laments people humanising their dogs, overlooking the dogs' agency and 'otherness', saying we should see dog-human relations as 'otherness-in-connection' (2008: 45). This is her foundation for ethics; she writes: 'All ethical relating, within or between species, is knit from the silk-strong thread of ongoing alertness to otherness-in-relating' (Haraway, 2008: 50). Her use of the term 'otherness' raises, for me, the question of how race and notions of otherness figure the becoming of human-dog relationships. However, I find an analysis of race absent from Haraway's work on dogs. While she says that dog-human relations are 'relentlessly historically specific' (Haraway, 2008: 16) her understanding of specific-difference-in-relation in *Companion Species* is insufficient. Indeed, in South Africa, human-dog relationality cannot be understood outside of race relations and the biopolitical history of race and species[2].

Harlan Weaver extends Haraway's work to conceptualise the biosocial nature of interspecies relation – that is, the interdependence of material bodies and the systems that shape them and ascribe them meaning – to illustrate how dogs can become 'racialized', through contacts and connectivities with humans, within racialised systems (2021: 13). Weaver uses the term *sensibility* to describe the embodied 'ways of knowing that are shared by and move between humans and non-human animals' (2021: 18). He emphasises, however, that sensibility must be extended into a larger *awareness* of the structural violences and biopolitics of interspecies intimacy.

I find Haraway's perhaps ambiguous use of the term 'otherness' useful when considering the perception and agency of dogs in racialised interspecies becomings. Indeed, it would be too simplistic to understand dogs merely as 'tools' of Whiteness. Max Hantel reflects that animals do not only respond to their conditions 'through genetic pre-prescription but through cognitive processes we cannot fully apprehend' (2018: 75) and offers the example of the elephants 'mourning' a member of their herd. Though we 'cannot claim to know what this *means* for the elephants', Hantel observes that the elephants respond to death with a collective practice that *signifies* something (2018: 75). In line with this, Weaver argues that dogs engage in processes of meaning-making that involve 'odors, movements, "body language" [and] bodily sensings' (2021: 44) as carriers of significance which shape their world. Canine scientist Gregory Berns observes that the differences between human brains and dog brains (size and olfactory capacity, amongst others) mean that even though dogs have certain cognitive and emotional skills in common with humans, their brains may instantiate them differently (2022: 173). What, then, does it mean for dogs to be made 'racist', as Adebayo (2021) contends? Rather than seeing dogs as 'nature' co-opted into 'culture', we might consider how their processes of meaning-making and relationality inform human culture, without their 'meaning' correlating to ours.

This opens a view on affective relations between species. For Weaver, 'affect' describes 'how feelings can travel between beings and shape bodily movements prior to their concretization in the language of emotions' (2021: 14). Thus, I suggest that dogs are sensitive to affects, rather than emotions. Here, I echo Hantel's reminder of the opacity of animals' experience to us and my limited understanding of animal neuroscience. However, I feel I have experienced what Haraway describes between herself and her dog – a connection and mutual inscription of bodies signifying 'that nasty developmental affliction called love' (2008: 3). While 'love' here is equivocal, a dog and owner can form a biological bond, mediated by the hormone oxytocin, just by looking at each other (Nagasawa *et al.*, 2015). In studies of canine brains under an fMRI scanner, Berns and others found that 86% of the participant dogs showed equal or greater caudate activation (which relates to cognition, memory and emotions) to expectation of human praise than to expectation of food reward (Cook *et al.*, 2016). They also found a 'stable neurobehavioral

[2] See for example Lance van Sittert and Sandra Swart's collection *Canis Africanis: A dog history of Southern Africa* (2008).

preference for owner over high value food' (Cook *et al.*, 2016). Berns believes that such 'positive affective states are qualitatively similar to those experienced by humans' (2022: 175).

Further, dogs and humans are subject to emotional contagion: 'an automatic response to perceiving another's emotional state through which a similar emotional response is triggered in the observer' (Sümegi *et al.*, 2014). This occurs in an affiliative relationship, say between family of the same species, but also in interspecies relationships, as in the case of co-habiting humans and dogs. In another fMRI study, dogs' brains indicated neural machinery dedicated to human facial recognition (previously thought to be active only in primates), explaining the sensitivity of dogs to human social cues (Dilks *et al.*, 2015). Multiple studies reveal that dogs can discern emotional cues expressed through body postures, facial expressions, vocalisations and odours and that these cues can influence their behaviour (Albuquerque and Resende, 2023). For example, in a study of the transmission of emotional information via chemosignals, findings suggest that dogs can smell the fear of their owners: in response to the owner's body odour, the dog's heart rate and stress behaviours increased. The authors conclude that 'interspecies emotional communication is facilitated by chemosignals' (D'Aniello *et al.*, 2017). The results of another study suggested that the owner's state of anxiety was contagious to their dog: the emotional contagion was evidenced in the measured changes in the dog's memory performance (Sümegi *et al.*, 2014). I outline this to show how interspecies becoming involves the consciousness, affect and agency of animals.

I contend that affect is key to dog-human relation. Weaver describes relating as the ongoing process of 'negotiating togetherness', quoting Rosi Braidotti's phrasing of it as 'an affect that flows' (2021: 50). My love for dogs appears in a broader cultural narrative of dogs as family members and indeed, this was how I came to experience my relationship with Bijoux. Yet my sense of self was formed not only through the enaction of cultural narrative – of White humanness in loving relation to my companion species – but in this affective interspecies relationship. Crucially, this positive attachment was met and returned, in some form, to become a relation. Affect involves an exchange of feeling between bodies and changes the choreography of bodily disposition. Much of Weaver's training with his rescue dog involves attempting to 'read' her body language, but when they are walking together he *feels* her fear and tension at the prospect of fearful encounters, such that they become his own (2021: 31). He describes this as 'a bodily travel of feeling' which 'disrupts the many divisions between us, including that mediated by the leash' (Weaver, 2021: 38).

Indeed, affect is central to 'the joint building of a sense of togetherness, a "we", and the kind of beings we become' (Weaver, 2021: 50). However, I suggest that affect in relational identification does not only generate a sense of togetherness, but also separation: to extend this, I draw on Sara Ahmed's work 'Affective Economies' (2004). Ahmed suggests that we need to think beyond emotion as an individual psychological disposition. She uses the concept of affective economy to describe the way in which emotion, rather than being located in one specific body, increases in its circulation between signs and bodies, creating an 'affective economy' (2004: 119). Ahmed emphasises the binding power of emotions, which 'mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective' (2004: 119) working 'to align some subjects with some others and against other others' (2004: 117). Importantly, emotions create the very figures or objects within which they become invested. Ahmed offers the example of hate in nationalist discourse, which outlines and aligns the hated figures, constituting them as a 'common' threat. Here, 'hate circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement' (Ahmed, 2004: 119). In the work of adherence – sticking certain affects and figures together – affective economies create coherence. I use this concept to consider the ways in which affective economies work in South Africa, to produce White fear and anxiety around Blackness and to institute certain relations with dogs.

The more affect circulates between particular signs, the more they are perceived as containing that affect (being *inherently* fearful, hateful, loveable) (Ahmed, 2004: 126). Ahmed draws on Fanon's writing to show how the association between signifiers – 'Negro, animal, bad, mean, ugly' – allows the object of fear, the Black man, to be generated in the present as animal, bad, mean, ugly (2004: 127). Thus, Blackness becomes attributed with emotional value that functions to support the coherence and supremacy of Whiteness. Because of historical accumulation, this becomes a 'sticky' attribution, which is then naturalised as inherent. I use this concept of affective economy to suggest that, in relation to White femininity, Blackness is invested with fear through the affectively laden symbol of the 'rapacious black man' (see Kim, 2015: 42; Kynoch, 2013: 428; Coetzee, 2022: 2); at the same time, Whiteness instates dogs as loveable companions. I suggest that interspecies becomings inform the generative relation between signification, bodies and affect, yielding different affective economies around dogs. For Black people, dogs belonging to White people often signify threat or violence and become invested with fear[3], whereas for White

[3] However, reducing the relationship between Black people and dogs to one consisting exclusively of fear and threat leaves no space for the love and companionship that many Black people do share with their own dogs. See for example, 'Animal likenesses: dogs and the boundary of the human in South Africa' (2016) by Gabeba Baderoon, which offers a genealogy to think through racial cultural narratives around dogs and consider how these narratives might be rescripted. Baderoon highlights how, in response to ex-President Jacob Zuma's assertion that buying, walking and caring for a dog 'belonged to

people, dogs often signify kinship and become invested love. The affective investment serves to outline the figure of the dog, preceding an encounter; a history with animals is also a history that 'sticks'.

Ahmed's concept works well with relational becomings because affect 'produces the "surfaces" of bodies' (2004: 126). Drawing on Fanon's phenomenological description of being fixed by the White gaze, in his encounter with a White child who recoils from him, Ahmed reflects: 'fear *does something*; it re-establishes distance between bodies whose difference is read off the surface, as a reading that produces the surface' (2004: 126). Affects such as fear work not only to differentiate between bodies, human and nonhuman, but to produce those bodies. Through interspecies becoming, I consider the dynamics of power and affect between: dogs and their owners; dogs and Black 'strangers' and White female owners and Black men.

KINSHIP AND MORALITY IN THE VALUE(S) OF WHITENESS

Both Blackness and Whiteness in South Africa have historically been constructed in relation to animals. In *On the Postcolony* (2001), Achille Mbembe argues that colonial power relied on creating Black people as animal. Mbembe writes: '[Africa] is almost always deployed in the framework (or in the fringes) of a meta-text about the animal—to be exact, about the *beast*…' (2001: 1). Whiteness was thus established as *human*, as the agent of progress and civilization, against that which was constructed as 'strange' and 'monstrous' (Mbembe, 2001: 1). This justified two projects: the dehumanisation of Black people towards exploitation; and 'domestication' towards civilisation (Mbembe, 2001: 182). Animality could be excised 'through processes of domestication and training' (Mbembe, 2001: 2); the act of colonising power comes from the coloniser's instantiation of himself as Subject freed of constraint, with the ability to control, create and destroy at will (Mbembe, 2001: 189).

In '"South Africa Is the Land of Pet Animals"; or, The Racializing Assemblages of Colonial Pet-Keeping' (2020), Anna Feuerstein considers how, in the context of Victorian empire in South Africa, the narratives of domestication and control which informed colonial pet keeping functioned within the broader colonial project of mastering non-human others. As '[t]he right to own is as much part of the question of personhood as the right not to be owned' (Boisseron in Feuerstein, 2020: 310), pet keeping functioned to support White liberal personhood as autonomous and masterful. Feuerstein draws on Mbembe's arguments around the 'domestication' of Black subjects: 'Through the relation of domestication, the master or mistress led the beast to an experience such that, at the end of the day, the animal, while remaining what he/ she was—that is, something other than a human being—nevertheless actually entered into the world for his/her master/mistress' (Mbembe, 2001: 26). This reflects a dynamic in which the 'petification' of the colonized enabled a different, though no less violent, form of relation. 'Domestication' also came with a particular affect: the process of 'grooming' allowed for greater sympathy or 'even "love"' for the colonised (Mbembe, 2001: 26). However, Feuerstein also observes that while pet animals could be characterised as 'mischievous' and 'delightful', Black servants were often cast in contrast as sullen or disobedient (2020: 329). A hierarchy of intimacy is created in which closeness with certain kinds of animals in the domestic sphere is embraced, while closeness with Black people is rejected. Thus pet keeping became marked as a White practice, which instituted the human as White, established the White woman as both carer and owner and placed animals above Black people (Feuerstein, 2020: 313).

The construction of race is also contingent on the construction of morality. Mbembe observes that part of the colonial ideological mission held that the colonized could be 'rais[ed] to the level of human being' through 'moral education' (Mbembe, 2001: 34). Whiteness extends benevolence as a mark of humanity, creating the virtuous concept of the humane. This concept is essential in establishing moral discourse and the value of different human and nonhuman lives. Reflecting on the phenomenon which initially inspired this paper – the aggression of dogs towards people of colour – dog day-care owner Mila draws on the notion of violent Black masculinity to narrate dogs' behaviour. She says:

> [D]ogs are much more afraid of men than women. I think we also get a lot of dogs that come from rescue centres here… and then in general, I think they were being abused by Black men. But some of them are like, pedigree dogs, and they also bark at Black men. (Mila, 2022)

Her reading of the dogs' reactions locates the main reason for aggression in the imagined action of Black men. This abuse appears as a human cruelty which is racialised and void of history. At the same time, she also acknowledges that the pattern of dog behaviour extends beyond 'rescue dogs'. Apartheid history is intimated by

white culture and was not the African way' (Baderoon, 2016: 349), many Black South Africans (who were mostly but not all middle-class) posted pictures of themselves with their dogs on Twitter. This public proclamation of intimacy with the animal 'which has most been used to malign Black South Africans' (349), suggests a productive potential for relations across differences that have been constructed through historical violence. Here, Haraway's conception of bodies-in-relation speaks to the emergence of a multitude of affective relationships that emerge between dogs and human.

the qualification that 'pedigree dogs' are also hostile towards Black men: their desirable pedigree suggests a wealthy (White) context, in which, it is implied, they would have no trauma or abuse; the dogs' reactions in this case are, I propose, a result of segregation and part of the exclusion of Black people from White space.

When the narrative of 'rescue' is deployed, dogs are figured through Whiteness: 'rescue' dogs become moral symbols, constructed as innocent victims of racialised human cruelty from which they must be protected by humane benevolence. This not only dictates goodness, but also which bodies can matter. Tears Animal Rescue in Cape Town reports donations go towards health care and rescue for animals in 'vulnerable communities' ('Your Impact') – communities in which people's basic needs are often not being met. Dead Animals Walking, also based in Cape Town, is less subtle: 'We mission our way through poor communities by tackling flea and tick ridden, manged, sick, injured, suffering and unsterilised domestic township animals' ('Projects'). Townships, which, given the legacy of spatial and economic segregation, are primarily home to people of colour, are the site for this colonial-style 'mission'. In the designation 'township animals' these animals are made signifiers of the space, a space of Blackness, from which they need to be evacuated. In the shift from 'township animal' to 'rescue dog' the dog is transformed by proximity to Whiteness: species is made to articulate with race towards a moral end. Weaver observes that in being rescued, dogs are effectively segregated from Blackness by being placed into domestic spaces presumed to be 'good' and, therefore, tacitly White (2021: 7). Dogs become absorbed into Whiteness and made to signify in the ongoing production of race.

To me this reflects a primary schema in which dogs are figured into upper-middle-class pet ownership in my home city, Cape Town: they are accepted as surrogate children. Here, they function as a site for projection and human identification; I suggest that through this they are drawn into Whiteness, as animals that are innocent like children. At the same time, dogs are attributed individuated consciousness, which contributes to notions of dog subjectivity and 'personalities'[4]. This operates flexibly with understandings of innocence: a dog with aggressive tendencies is more likely to be labelled a 'problem child', or said to have an abusive past, than to be said to have an aggressive personality. Between these discourses of innocence and personhood, they are understood as having capacity to act with intention, for example in interactions with their owners, but not the same capacity and self-awareness as humans, thus excusing any aggressive behaviour towards Black people. Thus they remain innocent of blame and are special because of their supportive role in White sociality.

Haraway decries canine infantilisation in Western culture (2008: 39), but this phenomenon has further implications in the context of South Africa. In our interview, V observed that work in the dog care industry is largely undertaken by White women who love dogs or by Coloured and Black South Africans and African immigrants who need work. She hypothesised that the high turnover of staff in the latter category is not only due to more general precarity, but also sometimes to an inability to 'connect' with the dogs[5], especially when these dogs are treated like children. She reflects: 'It's a difficult thing to overcome if you're like, "but it's not a child and I see children who look like me, who live next to me, in a much worse situation"' (V, 2022). In V's perception, there is a barrier to affective relation, stemming from the racial paradox of South Africa, where Black subjects' humanity has been historically denied; unaddressed human suffering and economic need remains immense; and human and nonhuman welfare is prioritised according to the requirements of Whiteness.

The above illustrates how the pet dog is part of a racialised hierarchy which produces notions of kinship, love, ownership and control. This has further resonance when in considering the way in which Whiteness shapes private spaces. In his chapter 'On Animal Mediators and Psychoanalytic Reading Practice', from the edited volume *Race, Memory and The Apartheid Archive* (2013), Derek Hook considers how White subjects make sense of the paradox of racial proximity under apartheid, in relation to Black domestic staff who cared for White children. Hook uses Mbembe's phrase 'disjunctive inclusions' to describe the ambiguous inclusions of Black subjects in apartheid's White spaces (Hook, 2013: 146). Notably, Mbembe refers particularly Black 'nannies' who were allowed (required) to live on White properties. Using the reflections of White contributors to the Apartheid Archive Project[6], who recall their childhoods, Hook notes how pet animals appear as symbolic and affective 'mediators' when the subject is faced with the ambiguous nature of their relationship with their Black caregiver, whom they loved. One narrator describes being rigid and distant with his carer when he grew older and became aware of the 'implicit rules of contact' – he reflects: 'Try as I might I cannot think of touching him [the carer], of any loving physical contact,

[4] This is exemplified in an event held by the aforementioned interviewee's doggy daycare. The daycare 'host[s] a lively graduation ceremony to celebrate the beloved PUPils… [in which] each pup is given an award in recognition of what makes them unique and highlights an attribute that we have come to cherish. In true Dogwarts fashion, the pups are also sorted into houses based on their personality types'.

[5] This remains a generalisation, as V observes that her one Black staff member is 'phenomenal with dogs'.

[6] Initiated in 2008, this is an ongoing collaborative research project focused on the collection of personal everyday narratives from ordinary South Africans about their experiences of racism during apartheid. According to the project's original research document, it aims to spotlight the enduring effects of apartheid on memory, relationality, subjectivity and identity, in the face of the country's national and social 'self-imposed' amnesia (cited in *Race, Memory and The Apartheid Archive*, 2013: 7).

although I am sure that there must have been' (2013: 147). Following this, he announces that his family decided to leave the country and that the dogs had to be re-homed, 'a particular focus of tears and disbelief' for him, but that the most awful moment was seeing his carer crying on the day they left and feeling that he could not hug him. Arguably, this reading of the Black carer in relation to a beloved pet merely extends a long-standing colonial trope in which Black person and animal are equated. But Hook suggests that the narrative merits further consideration. He argues that the dogs provided a recourse for the unconscious to assimilate this 'disjunctive inclusion' and the impossible relationship it entails, of meaningful attachment across racial difference. However, such a relation is also constituted through domination. While this love might well have been genuine, Hook observes that 'one can love quite sincerely in a fashion that consolidates a relation of condescension, as one loves a child, or indeed, an animal' (2013: 157). Further, notwithstanding the affective bond that might develop in acts of intimacy and care, the Black domestic worker is beholden to the White family.

The above example suggests how, in the context of Whiteness, interspecies relations are more naturalized than interracial relations. Further, it indicates how the pet animal seemingly allows for love without condition: requiring from the subject no reckoning with 'difference' or social responsibility. Such a study, which is focused on the subconscious of the White subject, does not account for the emotional attachment or agency a Black person has in this context. Instead it points to Whiteness in its position of ownership and agency, in relation to a Blackness that is intimately known and submissive – or understood as such. This stands in contrast to the figuring of Blackness as fearful and strange, which will be discussed in the following section.

WHITE SUBURBIA AND STRANGERNESS

I now consider how dogs are part of constructing space and relations in the suburbs, where they are folded into White systems of power, recognising some bodies as familiar and others as strange.

While interviewing Mila, I asked if she perceives a racial pattern in dogs' responses to other walkers. She responded with a definitive 'yes' and, as if stating the obvious, said 'this is South Africa' (Mila, 2022). She qualified:

> [O]bviously some dogs are completely neutral and don't mind at all. But like, in general, when there is an issue with someone else on the mountain they do tend to be... not White... and generally Black. Sometimes I'll have problems with like, an Indian person or a Coloured person but it's generally Black people. And, yeah (…) it's men too. (Mila, 2022)

Though she speaks matter-of-factly, her hesitancy in saying the word 'Black' here reflects a sense of discomfort around acknowledging the way dogs respond to Black people. I ask Mila why she thinks dogs behave this way and she explains that they respond to what they are used to in their environment: their aggression towards Black people indicates that they do not encounter Black people very often in their homes. There is an exception with labourers – domestic workers and gardeners – to whom, Mila says, the dogs 'acclimatise'. Nevertheless, Black people are rarely present in White homes in non-hierarchical social roles. V, who is a canine physio-therapist and behavioural specialist as well as a day-care owner, confirms this, saying that the primary reason for racial aggression is 'a lack of exposure' (V, 2022). Indeed, she has done consults for racially aggressive dogs and was told by one client that they were looking for a White trainer because having her would just 'add to the problem' (V, 2022). However, dogs also respond to the behaviour of people: V offers the example of owners tightening the leash when they pass a homeless person – who, as V points out, will 99% of the time be a person of colour – or pulling their dog away when they're passing a building site (inferring that people who do manual labour are also Black). In this way, V explains, dogs are socialised to be aggressive towards Black people, who they perceive as something to avoid and therefore as a threat.

Dogs themselves respond to social environments. Mila observes that dogs '[pick] up on energies' (2022) of the people they encounter, so that when a person is friendly and greets them, they are better behaved. V reflects that when Black people 'are coming into the home, it's the maid, the gardener… so people are there to do a job'. In contrast, 'if your friend comes over and [meets] your new puppy, the first thing they're doing is getting down, saying hi, that sort of thing' (2022). From this V observes:

> That socialisation is basically telling the dog, okay, when White people come over, it's because they're friendly, I say hi, they say hi back. And the reverse side of that is when Black people come over, they avoid me so I better avoid them. And for some dogs that turns into aggression where they're like, I've not been socialised with people of colour, so instead of me avoiding them, and they may come close to me, I'm gonna let them know from the get-go to stay back. (V, 2022)

Thus, dogs develop their own terms of relational signification, which are not only based on instinct, but are influenced by human social systems. Their hostile responses to Black people indicate the registering of human

difference, a process which, though conditioned through relations with humans, is not reducible to human systems of meaning. Further, White social-cultural practices around dogs – greeting and playing – facilitate a positive relation. If a Black person is wary or distant the dog in turn might perceive them as a potential threat. Dogs thus become normalised to the presence of White people and not only recognise but also enforce the strangeness of Black people in White space, typically responding with hostility or aggression. This appears not only as a manifestation of enduring racial spatial and social segregation, but as the result of certain affective investments and responses, which themselves, appear as the result of historically accumulated economies.

Dogs are thus part of sustaining the inherent otherness – or what Sarah Ahmed calls 'strangerness' – of Black people in White space and discourse. In 'A Phenomenology of Whiteness', Ahmed observes that over time, the power of Whiteness accumulates in spaces and bodies to the point where it appears as an ontological given (2007: 150). Ahmed observes: '[W]hiteness becomes worldly through the noticeability of the arrival of some bodies more than others' (2007:149). Thus, in their recognition of the strange(r)ness of Black people, dogs reproduce the normativity of Whiteness. Further, Whiteness constitutes itself in relation to Blackness as other: in *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* Ahmed proposes that individual and collective identity is constituted in encounters with 'strange' others (2000: 7). Here, bodies materialise in 'spatial relations to other bodies… that are recognised as *familiar, familial and friendly*, and those that are considered *strange*' (2000: 40, my emphasis). The 'I' is constituted in this moment of recognising the other as Stranger, as embodied difference (2000: 7). This contrasts with the disjunctive inclusion of Blackness (as it is understood by Whiteness) which is 'domestic' and familiar, to which dog and White subjects are 'acclimatised'.

At the same time, many Black people are systemically and economically required in South Africa to be in the White suburbs. During apartheid, their presence was monitored with pass laws and allowed only for work, but with the end of apartheid, the unidentifiable Black *stranger* could move about freely in White space. This threat of Blackness took on the moniker of 'crime', informing the primary affective economy in the White suburbs, in relation to race: fear. Gary Kynoch finds that 'for a considerable portion of the White population race remains the predominant factor when it comes to fear of violent crime' (2013: 427). This has historical roots, as Kynoch observes that the separations of apartheid were justified, in part, by White fear, mandating the containment of 'the physical threat posed by what was constantly portrayed as an uncivilised black majority' (2013: 429). According to available statistics, violent crime increased in the final years of apartheid and spiked dramatically in the first several years of democracy (Kynoch, 2013). This had an acute effect on the psyche of the White population, which, '[p]reviously insulated from the worst effects of violent crime… was shaken to the core by the robberies, hijackings and home invasions that introduced a horrifying new element into their lives' (Kynoch, 2013: 428). Here, I suggest that White anxiety, while not entirely manufactured, was both incredibly biased and ignorant to the violences of the oppressive and exploitative apartheid system, on which the protection and privilege of White subjects was established. Kynoch finds that, despite the statistics which reflect that impoverished Black people are the most subjected to violent crime, White people perceive themselves to be disproportionately threatened and victimised (Kynoch, 2013). Thus, the lessening of control of Black people's mobility at a time of intense racial tension and political instability fed White people's fear around Blackness.

In South Africa, Whiteness thus comes into being in relation to the Black stranger, who is always already invested with fear. As Ahmed argues: '[C]ertain lives become liveable as both safe and valuable insofar as they are *alive to* the danger of strangers' (2000: 33, original emphasis). With Whiteness's fear of Blackness comes discourses of 'security', defining the 'not me' or 'not us' (2000: 132), from which 'we' need to protect ourselves. After the fall of apartheid, the policing of Black bodies shifted to private security companies: indeed, South Africa's private security industry has more employees than the national police force (Wilkinson, 2015). These security forces identify potential 'threat' in the White suburbs, informed predominantly by racial profiling. Further, Kynoch observes that 'this robust protection force is staffed almost entirely by black men, paid to protect whites from other black men' (2013: 436). This is evident in my suburb's private security company, ADT. When the alarm goes off and ADT calls, the guard always ask me if the dogs are 'out' and won't go over the wall to check the property if they are: the dogs can't tell the difference between Black security and Black burglars. They are thus part of the fixing gaze of Whiteness, in which 'what one sees as the stranger is already structured by the knowledges that keep the stranger in a certain place' (Ahmed, 2000: 131): the stranger is necessarily out of place, alien and invested with fear. Dogs are not necessarily trained to be aggressive towards black people, but are sensitized to racial relations, recognising Black strange(r)ness in White space. In their making White space hostile to Black people, dogs reproduce the racialisation of the 'we' or 'not-we' in relation to which they act.

Affective economies of fear also yield interspecies kinship: Ahmed observes how '(f)ear mediated by love [produces] identification': 'The turning away from the object of fear here involves a turning toward home' (2004: 130). While Ahmed is talking about the nation here, I understand this in relation to community and family, in which dogs are necessarily part of 'us'. Ahmed's notion of 'the familial' being 'familiar' resonates when seeing how dogs are incorporated as 'part of the family' (2007: 154). Returning to Weaver's understanding of interspecies

becoming as an affective negotiation of 'togetherness' it becomes clear how 'the accumulation of affective value shapes the surfaces of bodies and worlds' (2004: 121), so that dogs and White subjects become together, through economies of fear and love. In this, interspecies relation allows Whiteness to experience itself as loved and loving. 'Love' is one of the primary rehabilitative invocations in dog-rescue discourses; in turn, I understand dogs' capacity for 'love', which is often taken to be 'unconditional', as allowing for an elision of ethical responsibility for others. This can offer a sense of reprieve, firstly from a sense of fear, and secondly, I believe, from the guilt and shame that come from recognising Whiteness's fundamental violence.

BIOPOLITICS: THE ORGANISATION OF LIFE

In her monograph *War in Worcester* (2013), Pamela Reynolds looks at the role of youth in the South African anti-apartheid struggle, foregrounding their narrated experiences of both harm and resistance. Broadly, she notes how rebellious communities faced massive intimidation, murder, torture and detention. One tactic employed by the police was to set trained dogs on crowds of people who were seen to be illegally gathering (2013: 31). This highlights how, in their use by the apartheid police, dogs became not merely a physical threat but part of the system of oppression: an obstacle to freedom and self-determination. Looking at the stories told in 1996 and 1997 at thirteen of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Human Rights Violation Committee hearings in the Western Cape, Reynolds considers the violent measures that children describe being used against them by security forces. This included 'hearing dogs bark and being told that they would be set on one's private parts' (2013: 93). Reynolds draws only on the accounts of those who were under eighteen-years-old when they suffered harm, and who did not identify as political activists, reflecting that 'their experiences represent those of thousands of children' (2013: 90). She focuses on these as bodily and sensory attacks, writing: 'I can only wonder how the harm changed the young people's perceptions of the qualities of the real world and how it affected their lives' (2013: 90). Her words suggest the physical imprint of such methods: the bark of a dog will always elicit fear. I outline this to show how the use of dogs by the racist state's security apparatus has had a significant and lasting impact on individual and social memory.

On a 2017 Facebook forum soliciting questions from Black South Africans about White South Africans, many comments referenced racial relations with dogs. Two comments are particularly illustrative of the dynamic between Black people and dogs owned by White people:

> Why y'all gotta leave the gate open after driving into your house, when you saw me about to walk past and you got 6 dogs. There are other ways of testing the limits of a black man's speed. (Mahlaba, 2017)

> And why do you say 'he/she doesn't bite' when your dog has teeth AND IS CHASING ME??? 🙄 (Dunywa, 2017)

The comments reflect overlapping issues: the first suggests the sense of threat a dog presents to the commenter, that is, the possibility of being chased and attacked; the second images the very real aggression of some dogs towards Black people, which is dismissed by White owners.

Affective economies around dogs thus function in biopolitical control: fear works to restrict some bodies through the movement or expansion of others, producing Whiteness as 'the body-at-home' (2007: 153). Dogs become part of how 'Whiteness… orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they "take up" space, and what they "can do"' (2007: 149). It is common to see signs hanging on the gates of houses in White neighbourhoods that say 'Beware of the dog/ *Pasop vir die hond*[7]/ *Qaphela Inja*[8]' or 'I am on Guard', with an image of a snarling German Shepherd or Rottweiler. Given the fear expressed by Black people in the comments above, I surmise that this threat of dogs would function as a violent reminder to Black people of their precarious presence in White space. In his description of the phenomenological violence of being 'fixed' by the White gaze, Fanon shows how Whiteness inhibits the development of the Black subject (1986: 87). Dogs, then, as they are historically imbricated in Whiteness, might too invoke an 'interruption' in bodily consciousness for Black people (Ahmed, 2007: 153). This links to Reynolds' suggestion that embodied fear mediates one's perception of reality and of being in the world in relation to others. As Emily Parker observes, affective exchange is part of the historico-racial schema: 'For Fanon, the corollary of his experience of *sensing* and *being sensed*, as a larger circuit… resides elsewhere than in Fanon himself' (Parker, 2018: 444, my emphasis). In relation to this, I offer Ahmed's concept of strangerness – as the figure which is over-determined and fixed from the outside as 'strange' – alongside Fanon's phenomenological sense of negation (I do so tentatively because I cannot make any claim to experience here). If the violent 'sense of

[7] Afrikaans
[8] isiZulu

otherness of Fanon's own body… becomes Fanon's lived experience' (Parker, 2018: 444), perhaps the barking dog at the gate elicits a similar experience? Most significantly, fear *does* something: it establishes boundaries between bodies and informs how those boundaries are experienced.

The following auto-ethnographic description suggests how these dynamics pre-figure an encounter between a Black person, a White person and a dog in White space.

> Walking my fourteen-year-old dog, Kodi, across a narrow pedestrian bridge in our neighbourhood, we encounter a Black woman walking towards us. Anticipating the woman's discomfort, I hold Kodi on a short leash, and nudge her to one side while we walk, so that my body is a barrier between her and the woman. Kodi, having grown placid with age, now rarely barks, but my body still tenses at the possibility. In turn, I hope my dog, showing white fur around her face and a noticeable limp, doesn't seem like too much of a threat. Still, I wish we had waited at the end of the bridge. My actions are a signal that the dog needs restraint and the woman presses herself against the edge of the bridge as we pass, so much so that her skirt hooks on the wire and tears as she tries to move forward. I apologise profusely and she turns away from me. (Rudolph, 21/03/2022, research diary)

Though my dog might show no signs of aggression, and though I am willing her not to, she acts as a barrier between myself and the woman because of a history of affective accumulation, which orients our bodies away from one another.

REIFYING COLONIAL GENDER RELATIONS

While it is clear that Blackness registers as strange for some dogs, I suggest their aggression might also relate to affective transmission between dogs and their owners. Indeed, dogs' hostile responses to and their threatening signification for Black people holds further racialised resonances. Mila says that she likes walking with a pack of dogs on the mountain and feeling safe, or – she pauses – 'saf*er*'. She describes the sense of freedom in having 'that silent moment on the mountain, kind of on your own, but have some form of protection around you' (Mila, 2022). It is not spoken, but implied that the 'danger' from whom the dogs will protect her is that of Black men.

Whiteness in South Africa also relies on the co-construction of race and gender: within the White imaginary Black men remain the threatening other and the predominant source of violent crime (Kynoch, 2013: 430). Azille Coetzee observes that the supposed advancement of Whiteness in the colonial context was evidenced in its gendered order, 'characterised by a strict heterosexual, monogamous and hierarchical binary; consisting of an active, rational masculinity set up against the foil of a passive and vulnerable femininity' (2022: 3). Conversely, the absence of this order was seen to connote the wildness and sexual 'primitivity' of Black colonised subjects. In the apartheid nationalist myth of *die swart gevaar* (Afrikaans for 'Black danger'), White women were seen as the hypervulnerable, 'virtuous' object in need of protection from sexual violation by Black men (Gqola, 2015: 11). Whiteness relied on the image and control of White female sexuality, as that which is pure, contained, and vulnerable to contamination; this legitimized White supremacy by necessitating '[the defense] of community, morality, and white male power' (Stoler in Coetzee, 2022: 4). This made imperative the separation of White women and Black men, for the future of Whiteness. This race-gender construct was pivotal to the establishment and maintenance of White solidarity and power (Coetzee, 2022: 4).

I shift my focus now to the moment of encounter between dogs, their White female owners and Black men. Indeed, upper-class dog ownership seems to reproduce, to some extent, White gender and heteronormativity. When Mila suggests that dogs fulfil a desire to 'be a mother', but without the same responsibilities, I ask if all her clients are women. She reflects: 'The single ones are women and then all couples. I don't think we have any clients like, just a single man and a dog' (Mila, 2022). Here, White femininity's instantiation through the role of carer, in an intimacy that is familial and domestic, echoes the colonial construction of White womanhood (Coetzee, 2022: 7). Corresponding to the model of gendered Whiteness that Azille Coetzee describes, these White women are deemed bodies in need of protection – a protection afforded by their dogs. This relates particularly to activities such walking or running in the suburbs, or in natural spaces like the forest and mountain. My father would always tell me to 'take the dogs' walking with me, and I felt safer with them. Dogs are thus part of the gendered-racialised rhetoric of safety: who needs to be protected, which areas are safe, and who can occupy them.

Given that majority of gender-based violence in South Africa is directed against women of colour[9], my sense of precarity is partly a response to the hypervisibilising of White female bodies and racialization of Black men as threatening. This reflects the vast affective accumulation of fear around Blackness. Ahmed writes that encounters

[9] According to Statistics South Africa, the percentage of Black women who *reported* having been sexually assaulted is two to three times greater than White women; see 'Quantitative Research Findings on Rape in South Africa' (2000).

with strangers '[open] up past histories that stick to the present' (2004: 126). Drawing on an interview with a young White South African woman, Azille Coetzee reflects that 'the fear of the Black man that [she] experiences has consequences for how she inhabits her body and how she moves within the world' (2022: 22). This speaks to the specific social location and power dynamics constituting White womanhood: vulnerability, as a White woman, is both biopolitical (used for social control) and experiential. This is not to say that vulnerability is equally distributed – indeed, as shown above, the protection of Whiteness is imperative – but that these vulnerabilities are part of a racialised social order, and human-dog becomings mediate these vulnerabilities. Walking with a dog makes me feel safer, because I know it will 'deter' threat (through inducing fear in another). This illustrates the co-production of affects by/with power and how these affective relations create race-species affinities and separations, towards the ongoing production of Whiteness.

How, then, can we think towards becoming otherwise? Coetzee suggests that White women might undermine the patriarchal imperative of Whiteness by refusing their role of victim; here, there is a responsibility 'to critically interrogate and reckon with her fear' (Coetzee, 2022: 11). She elaborates: if the White South African woman 'become[s] what she is' in relation to the Black man, conditioned by her sexual/gendered fear, she can become something else if she encounters him differently (Coetzee, 2022: 11). Coetzee acknowledges that it is difficult to know what such a transformative relation would look like. But, as Snyman writes, 'the focus falls on the one failing to understand that ethical moment when two persons meet face to face, i.e. the perpetrator of racism' (2015: 279). The above analysis comes from this position, firstly, from being a White person in the ethical moment where my dog makes another person vulnerable, and secondly from being a White woman in the ethical moment where I fail to see beyond my own fear to the history and structures of separation that produce it. I believe that dogs act as a barrier to interpersonal recognition or connection across racial boundaries. The separation which dogs enforce inhibits the ability to recognise the interconnectedness which Levinas observes as central to responsibility: 'a stranger who shares my humanity, exacts from me a certain responsibility to respect his dignity once I am aware of our interconnectedness' (in Snyman, 2015: 281). To reformulate Haraway, we might consider an ethics of otherness-in-relation where otherness is considered not only in interspecies relation, but also in the co-becoming of race and species, characterized by histories of kinship and segregation, violence and control. Here, an understanding of difference *and* interconnectedness yields an ethical responsibility towards the dignity of an-other[10].

I am aware that using the term 'otherness' here, as a provocation for questioning how difference is created, nonetheless reasserts Whiteness as the centre from which this differentiation occurs. I return to the paradoxical position of this critique, which is then less about interspecies relations or racial relations, and more about how Whiteness as a system (in)forms such relations. Here, I reiterate Ahmed's description of Whiteness as 'an ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they "take up" space, and what they "can do"' (2007: 149). As much as the above raises the ethical question for the White subject, tracing the intimacies and separations brought about through constructions of otherness is also necessary in order to keep open the force of the critique against the ongoing and unfinished history of Whiteness.

CONCLUSION

The constellations of relationality traced above reflect how affect works 'through signs and on bodies to materialize the surfaces and boundaries that are lived as worlds' (Ahmed, 2013: 191). It becomes clear that affective investments are integral to systems of power. I have suggested that the history of dogs in apartheid and colonial systems 'sticks' so that dogs pose a threat to Black people, yielding affective and biopolitical violence. Dogs, in turn, respond to and reproduce the systems of which they are a part, often acting aggressively towards Black people and thus functioning to make White spaces inimical to Black bodies. These dogs' registering of Blackness as a threatening otherness reflects the need for a deeper consideration of the affective movements and inscriptions of consciousness at work in our interspecies becoming. That such behaviour would become naturalised or taken for granted reflects an even more urgent need for re-imagining the way we become with dogs. Our current modes of relation not only perpetuate White domination and defensiveness, but also reinforce colonial racial-gendered systems. I believe that dogs act as barriers to interpersonal recognition; indeed, dog-human relations show how difference and fear are co-produced with power to create a violent social order. Foregrounding the relationality through which we create the worlds we experience and share, addressing this order requires an awareness of ongoing and historical violence, and a recognition of our connectedness and responsibility.

[10] Addressing the violence of Whiteness that continues to shape the relations of human and non-human beings is only part of the broader social responsibility in the face of an enduring apartheid, in its economic, social and spatial inequalities.

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