DRAFT ABSTRACT

The product of 350 years of endeavour, viticulture is pivotal in the geographies of the south-western Cape. Yet the farms where wine is made are particularly adept at disguising the violent processes of appropriation and contestation that created them. This thesis is concerned with exposing underlying forms of violence and also explores transformative initiatives on a specific wine farm. It asks how and in what ways viticulture frames colonialized and apartheid violence and then queries how this farm relates to the discourses and failures of South Africa’s contemporary reconciliation and recovery.

By applying insights of spatial and decolonial theories to the field of viticulture this thesis proposes a different way of looking at violence in South Africa. It shows that vineyards are carriers not only of plant material and morphological processes but also of various terms of historical violence which contrive to impact on current viticultural practices. Here, the linked influences of property and power are dominant and relate in complex ways to various modalities and experiences of belonging. These differences create fault-lines that are ultimately generative of repercussive forms of violence that break into the charged context of land reform in South Africa today.

This thesis thus extends existing empirical approaches to viticulture research into spaces of social and epistemic interactions. It proposes a move beyond conceptualizing violence as particular to any discrete political era and towards its understanding as a fluid, relational and dynamic intergenerational inheritance and haunting. Based on understandings derived from the circularity of wine, this thesis calls for a re-theorized approach to violence in a context in which the past survives in the specificities of farm space and its productive practices.