Children in Violent Spaces. Reinterpretation of the 1976 Soweto Uprising.

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Abstract

This article offers a reinterpretation of the Soweto uprising based on a spatial reading of well-known facts of violence in order to uncover some of the contradictory and many-layered relations of children, parents, and state which has remained enigmatic when conceptualized in terms of class, race or political history. The central question is the children as attackers: how could they force the strong and seemingly well-entrenched apartheid state to defend itself against *children*? The article analyses the town and township terrain, the five forms of struggle in the uprising, the frontline children, the minors in house space, the pupils in town space, and the blacks in ethnic space. I conclude that an answer to the question of the children's power may be found in the interlocking confrontations of the children with the state as *minors* in house space, *pupils* in town space, and *blacks* in ethnic space. When the parents could no longer control the children and rule in the schools suddenly broke down the state had to use gross means of rule, ultimately killing children. By doing this the state conferred adult status upon the children. This in turn gave the children enormous leverage in the family: ruling their parents the black children challenged white supremacy head on.

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An entire generation of South Africans sacrificed their youth in June 1976... As the government, we have declared June the month of the youth... By so doing, we shall have paid a fitting tribute to the June 16 martyrs. (Tokyo Sexwale in *Sunday Independent,* Johannesburg; June 16, 1996)

Speaking on the 20th anniversary of the Soweto uprising, Tokyo Sexwale, then Premier of Gauteng, himself a few years older than the children of 1976 and in exile a year before the uprising, remembered the children as the sacrificed youth and martyrs and not as actors, creative subjects of historical change. In the many anniversaries that have followed 1976 an idealised picture of the uprising has emerged hiding the children under layer after layer of adult patronising shame and political expediency. Yet, the fact remains, that the children, *as children*, somehow found a weak spot in the rule of apartheid and were able to attack the state so successfully that 1976 became the Stalingrad of Apartheid. The Nationalists would soldier on for almost two decades, but the polished surface of post-Rivonia apartheid was irrevocably shattered.

This article offers a reinterpretation of the Soweto uprising based on a spatial reading of the well-known facts of violence. What has to be explained is the children as attackers: what stuff was their power made of? How could they force the strong and seemingly well-entrenched apartheid state into defending itself against *children*? I suggest an answer may be located in the interlocking confrontations of the children with the state, as *minors* in house space, *pupils* in town space, and *blacks* in ethnic space.[1]

1. The agency of the children of Soweto

The children are indeed emblematic in all accounts of the uprising. Tom Lodge, for example, headlines his chapter on the Soweto uprising "Children of Soweto" (Lodge Black *Politics in South Africa since 1945*, pp. 321-361). At the same time, however, one can perhaps detect, below the moral outrage over police killings of children, a certain bewilderment on the role of the children. After all, how could children be so dangerous to the state, how could they ignite this fire when adult protest, like the widespread strikes a few years previously, had failed to do so? Conventional explanations, such as class and race, do not really capture *the children's* uprising, because how do you account for a generational conflict in terms of class or race?

In the many works documenting the Soweto uprising I have come across no studies on the children of Soweto in their own right.[2] Writers on the uprising have speculated about the children's *adult* leaders: it has been argued that they were inspired and led by workers and trade union groups (Hirson *Year of Fire*, 1979), ANC-sympathisers (Brooks and Brickhill *Whirlwind before the Storm*, 1980), or (older) Black Consciousness Movement students (Pityana and Ramphele *Bounds of Possibility*, 1991). But in fact very little planning and leadership at all seemed to have propelled the uprising.[3] Of course there are some truth to all these accounts, but as interpretations they are nevertheless basically inadequate, I think, because they silence the agency of the children and turn them into victims of an acting state. However, the power of the children was certainly much more than the moral power of the victim. The children of Soweto actually pushed back the armed state by violence, and only because of that did they gain power - and were killed.

Already on day one the events exploded in a way no-one controlled, neither the children, the political opposition groups, nor the government. Yet, if a pattern of the uprising cannot by plotted by a 'BCM', 'ANC' or workerist (or any other) master narrative, it does not mean that violence took place everywhere in a random, chaotic fashion. The uprising was a violent contest over structured space. Thus by reading the structure of that space we may gain new insight into the South African uprising of 1976. Let me by way of introduction summarise the argument of the article.

2. The argument of the three spaces: children as minors, pupils, and   blacks

The children of Soweto met the state in three clearly defined but overlapping spaces:

(a) Minors

First, the children met the state as *minors* when the state ruled the house through the fathers. Family life defined by decent, conjugality and patriarchal authority (sometimes vested in a female) had carved out and preserved a private space different from public space; I term this space 'house space'. By its laws and practices the South African state recognized house space to be beyond its direct reach: as *minors* the children were the responsibility of the father and not directly of the state. The state possessed no instruments to rule children as children: if parental rule broke down the state could in an emergency only treat the children as adults.

(b) Pupils

Secondly, the children met the state as *pupils* in the schools, that is in the functionally defined town space. In school the children were confronted with state rule implemented by the teacher. Here they were no longer ruled as daughters or sons of the father but as 'pupils', that is determined by their function in the educational-occupational system. The work of the pupils had a clear functional rationality as they learned whatever the state thought necessary for fulfilling future functions, but also to themselves as a move towards jobs, and exactly this function was threatened by the imposition of Afrikaans as medium of instruction: it made it impossible to pass exams and harder to get jobs.

(c) Blacks

Finally, the children met the South African state as *blacks* at the frontiers of the ethnic-racial space. On the streets the state confronted the children in the figure of the policeman (and even the soldier) enforcing ethnic segregation.

Now, common to all three fronts was a generational conflict. In all three instances the structure of rule pitted children against adults; but not the same adults. My argument is that the three children-adult structures of rule relied upon and supported each other - and when one collapsed the others would become extremely vulnerable. The intricate interlocking of the generational conflict of patriarchs versus minors with the functional conflict of pupils versus teachers, and the racist (ethnic) conflict of blacks versus policemen produced the explosion of June 16.

Before investigating the three conflictual spaces more closely let me briefly recount what happened during the uprising.

3. What happened?

The initial spark to six months of almost non-stop nation-wide insurrection was provided by police over-reaction to a street procession of secondary school pupils. They were marching to Orlando stadium in central Soweto to protest against the recent insistence by the educational authorities that arithmetic and social studies be taught in Afrikaans. Police shot into a crowd of 15.000, killed two and injured many; one of the children killed was 13-year old Hector Petersen (Lodge *Black Politics,* p. 328). The image of the schoolboy being carried away by a crying friend quickly became the famous icon of Soweto. Twenty years later it was reproduced in giant-size on the stone walls of the Castle in Cape Town, the cradle of white rule in South Africa, now with a new flag flying over the ramparts and June 16 inaugurated as a national holiday.

The official, conservative estimate was at least 575 dead (including only 2 whites) and 2389 wounded (ibid. p.330). Brickhill estimates that more than a thousand may have been killed and five thousand wounded. (Brickhill *Whirlwind*, p. 256) It is doubtful whether more accurate figures can be collected today. Some of the police data from 1976 are in Pretoria, but most are scattered in the 'archives' of more than 1400 local police stations, in varying states of completeness both as to the original reporting

and the subsequent filing. Death registers are highly incomplete in part because of secret burials and clandestine emigration.

The weapons used by the attackers in 1976 were household weapons only, a fact repeated again and again in the newspaper reports.

> Stoning, looting, and burning... Marauding bands of stone-throwers... Stone and brick-throwing Africans... Gangs had set up road blocks and were demanding money from motorists... Gangs of youth were demanding petrol from motorists and paraffin from shops to set fire to buildings... A hysterical mob burnt public buildings and set fire to six buses... Rioters stoned passing cars. (Cape Times, June 19, 1976)

Not a single firearm was reported used by the state-attackers while the state used all available forces to suppress the uprising. Police and other armed units fired teargas and 16.433 rounds of ammunition in Soweto, 17.000 rounds in East Rand, 2.815 in Mamelodi (Pretoria) and 4522 rounds in Western Cape. (Cilliers commission, cit. in Brickhill *Whirlwind*, p. 255).

The sheer volume of violent events is overwhelming; schools were burned down, state-offices gutted, people shot and funerals held almost continuously for six months across the country.[4] However, what is central to my argument is not so much the sequence of events as their spatiality. Rioting almost exclusively took place in *townships*, with Soweto and the other Witwatersrand townships ahead of Cape Town, and Port Elizabeth far behind Cape Town. Durban was quiet, a strange fact which may, paradoxically, help us later in interpreting the violence of Johannesburg and Cape Town. In order to map the attack on the state the spatiality of violence within each township is more important than the national distribution of flash points because the battle in one township in many ways resembled battles in other townships without being segments of a coherent front. Children in each township rioted with hardly any co-ordination except for the encouragement in knowing that fellow children were on the streets all over the country.

4. The township terrain

All South African townships were racially segregated municipal housing established if at all possible at some distance from 'white' cities. To defend the white town against the threat of huge concentrations of poor, oppressed, black people the state went to great lengths to segregate the townships spatially from the rest of the city, walling them in using physical barriers like highways, railroads, and industrial areas. Often the township would get an African name hiding discursively their true functional integration into the 'white' town.[5]

Driving into Johannesburg in 1976 from the west along the R41 you would follow the mountainous slag-heap of *eGoli*, the town of gold: Durban Roodeport Deep Gold Mine, Rand Leases Goudmyn, Main Reef Gold Mine, and Crown Mines separating the white town inside the enormous ramparts from the black township outside the ramparts. Soweto (South Western Townships) was established in the 1930s by the white municipality on the high-*veld* ten kilometres outside Johannesburg and quickly grew to be the largest cluster of townships in South Africa, a sprawling area of more than a hundred square kilometres, some fifteen kilometres long and ten kilometres wide and home to one and a half million black people in 1976. This vast area was separated to the west and South from rural Transvaal and the Coloured townships of Eldorado Park and the Indian township of Lenasia by the railroad and the Kliprivier-swamps. Soweto was cut off completely from white Johannesburg to the north and east by the barrier of slag heaps and vast slimes dams of the gold mines.

The whole twenty kilometre-long zone separating the white and black parts of metropolitan Johannesburg was only traversed by one railroad, one expressway, and two highways. There was no urban built-up connection whatsoever between Soweto and Johannesburg. This extreme town planning forced all interaction with the city to go through a few easy-to-control entry-points (bus-terminals and train-stations; in 1976 taxi-ranks were not yet important). To go to town the people of Soweto had to exit via

one of these gates. As very few blacks owned cars the roads were mainly used by the police and commercial deliveries; indeed not a single road-sign on the highways from Johannesburg read "Soweto". The South Western Townships was a non-place for whites, where their black labourers would disappear in the evening on overcrowded trains.

Apartheid laws forced black people to live in Soweto. Every town in South Africa was segregated by the infamous Group Areas Act into areas for the four official races, black, white, coloured and Indian. The Urban (Bantu Areas) law forbade black people to own property; they were forced to lease sites from the municipality and build one of the ubiquitous twenty-five square-metre matchbox houses after a standard municipal blueprint. Row after row of identical houses most lacking electricity and piped water along unpaved streets (stones everywhere and wide enough for armoured personnel carriers to operate) with the smoke of coal braziers hanging in the cold morning air was a picture often given of Soweto. State proclamations divided township space into four portions: demarcated and beaconed sites for dwellings; public space such as sports fields and graveyards; streets, roads and other public thoroughfares; and commonage, unused open land; in no way did a township constitute an urban area in its own right.[6]

There was no industry and few shops in the township, but many municipal beerhalls and bottleshops. White tax-payers did not contribute financially to the upkeep of the townships as a system was invented long ago in Durban (the Native Beer Law of 1908) whereby Native Townships had to be funded solely by income from the municipal sale of beer and liquor to the township population. Except for schools, police stations and small offices for the local white administration of the township (in 1972 removed from local municipal control to central state administration by BAAB, Bantu Affairs Administration Boards), and the despised black councils set up by the apartheid state (UBC, Urban Black Councils, nicknamed Useless Boys' Club, United Black Crooks, etc.), all other urban functions were in the 'white' town: department stores, industry, offices, and public institutions from universities to jails. The township lacked focal public space, such as town squares, parks, main avenues or a city centre.

As I will attempt to show below, the peculiar terrain of the township generated a highly specific mixture of violence. Five forms of violence, all created by the children in response to the different terrains and adversaries they encountered may be distinguished: fighting inside the township; contesting the township border; enforcing stay-aways from the white town; attacking the white town; and ruling the parents.

(a) Fighting inside the township

Like Pallas Athena the uprising sprang to life on the very first day in the fully formed shape of street battles. Children marched non-violently with placards; they threw stones, bricks, and bottles at the police; and they stoned and burned all cars and commercial vehicles encountered in the township.[7] Police and border-troops batoncharged, teargassed, shot and killed; they deployed armoured personnel carriers (Hippos) to contest control over Soweto streets and helicopters to ship in weapons and throw tear-gas at rioters. In the evening of June 16 they had already reached the maximum level of force sustained during the next months. This was a testimony both to the simplicity of this battle-form and to the universality of explosive discontent. By spontaneous repetition of the children's battles in Soweto, children across the nation set alight townships and locations in Cape Town, Pretoria, East Rand, The Free State, Bophuthatswana, and Natal within a week. Yet, after countless battles throughout this six month period a more advanced form of street-battle never emerged. Like Pallas Athena the street-battle did not grow older. But as we shall see, more elaborate forms of struggle were developed meeting the challenges of other sites of contest.

Also kick-started on the long day of June 16 was the first form of countering white control of schools: burning down of schools. During the following ten days fifty Transvaal schools were damaged by fire. Street fights between youths and police demanded a certain minimum town-size, while arson attacks on schools could and did spread to very small towns. School-burning became the primary transmitter of the uprising from metropolitan to rural areas, including the homelands, as in Ndwedwe north of Durban where 280 girls burned down a mission school on July 27. When the schools re-opened after the winter holiday on July 22 the other principal form of

resistance to Bantu education was launched with widespread boycott of classes. The school boycott became massive when police began raiding the schools to capture the leaders of the Soweto Students Representative Council, and the schools remained empty for the rest of the year (and the following year). Almost 100% boycott of examines was observed in Soweto by the end of term in November 1976.

Only a few hours into the uprising arson spread from schools to all other buildings associated with white rule in Soweto (Bantu Affairs Administration Boards and Urban Black Councils, post offices, beerhalls, and bottlestores). Very quickly state presence at township level began to break down: water supplies were attacked, BAAB officials stoned; shops and houses belonging to black people collaborating with the white state were looted and burnt down. During the first three months the following damage was reported in Soweto alone: 24 schools, 3 clinics, 9 post offices, 18 bottle stores, 18 beer halls, 14 private business premises, 3 libraries, 1 court building, 19 shops, 2 community halls, 19 houses, 42 West Rand Administration Board buildings, and at least 114 vehicles. (*SAIRR 1976*, p.85)

(b) Contesting the township border

As the street-battles pushed the armed and bureaucratic forces of the state out of the townships, the contest spread immediately from the public space inside the township to the border between the black and the white town. Within 24 hours of igniting the uprising youths had erected barricades in order to keep out the police and prevent commercial vehicles from entering Soweto; the state retaliated by stopping trains and busses going from Johannesburg to Soweto. The next day the police claimed to have sealed off Soweto. From July onwards buses going to town were firebombed by children. On August 5, pupils and adults demonstrating for the release of pupils detained in Johannesburg tried to walk on the city but was turned back at New Canada Station at the border of Soweto by police using automatic rifles. The next day residents of Soweto erected roadblocks and confronted the police; trains and busses were withdrawn and commercial deliveries to Soweto stopped. Violence escalated into running battles between demonstrators and police at the entry-points to Soweto on

August 9. Meanwhile, the epicentre of violence shifted for some time to the Cape where police used helicopters to reach barricaded state personnel violently defending themselves in the three black townships of Langa, Guguletu, and Nyanga on August 12. As the uprising petered out in December the police pushed back across the township border; for instance nearly 1000 police officers sealed off Guguletu in Cape Town on December 2-3 and searched house to house in the township. More than were 300 arrested.

(c) Enforcing stay-away from the white town

Stay-aways was the first major step beyond the street-battle, and introduced the first direct children-patriarch confrontation. On August 4, the pupils called for the first stay-away; they picketed stations and bus terminals, attempting to persuade adults to stay at home, "by a greater degree of coercion than was used by the inciters of any of its successors" (Lodge *Black Politics*, p.329). Children sabotaged railroad lines and signals; buses carrying workers to the city were stopped and burned. 60% of Johannesburg's black work-force stayed away from work that day (*SAIRR 1976*, p.66). On August 15, T.J. Makhaya from the Soweto Urban Black Council said at a meeting that children who stopped workers from going to work "should be killed" and during the following week workers wanting to go to work despite student blockades were allowed by the police to carry knobkerries and sticks (ibid. p. 66).

The second stay-away came on August 23. Brickhill claims the second stay-away was a greater success than the first (Brickhill *Whirlwind*, p.321), while Lodge claims fewer stayed away than on Aug. 4 (Lodge *Black Politics*, p.329). The stay-aways resulted in the flare-up of hostel-pupil antagonism. On August 24, a Zulu *impi* from Mzimhlope hostel went on a rampage in Soweto, police complicity was alleged, and in an ominous overture of violence to explode a decade later Mangosuthu Buthelezi flew up to Soweto on August 26 and held a speech urging "unity" between hostel and township.

The third stay-away occurred on September 13; up to 70% absenteeism was reported in some areas; police made a swoop in Alexandria "to protect those who

wished to go to work" arresting hundreds of people. A stay-away followed on September 15 in Cape Town with up to 50% absenteeism (*SAIRR 1976*, p. 69). The fourth and final stay-away on November 1 faltered both in Transvaal and the Cape. The Christmas boycott of department stores in the white town in December was a weak sequel to the stay-aways.

(d) Attacking the white town

The first attack on whites outside the township seems to be a stoning incident on July 20 where at least 20 whites were injured on the Pretoria-Witbank highway. The first major attack reported on a target in a white area was the Brakpan post office completely destroyed by fire on August 14. Drivers were stoned at highways outside the coloured township of Bonteheuwel, Cape Town and the first coloureds shot dead by police on August 25. Shops in Rondebosch East, Cape Town, were firebombed on September 1. But the dramatic symbolic escalation of the black-white struggle came on September 2 and 3, when two days in a row black and coloured pupils entered central Cape Town by train and successfully staged large demonstrations on Adderley Street; for the first time police used teargas in a white area. Factories were stoned and forced to close in Parow, Cape Town on September 8. Later in September these attacks were repeated in Johannesburg when two factories were gutted and black children demonstrated on the central Eloff and Jeppe Streets with fierce clashes, several shootings and stabbings; police arrested 400 in a 'giant mopping-up' operation.

For some hours, in fact, the children symbolically conquered the very heart of metropolitan South Africa by their violent presence, and this reversal of the attacker-defender polarity across the township border sent chock-waves through the white town. In a desperate move the Minister of Justice said on September 8 that white industrial and other areas had to protect themselves as police was busy in the townships. White vigilante groups sprang up, patrolling factories, white schools, universities (including Stellenbosch), and residential areas. Parents guarded white middle-class suburban schools in Claremont and Wynberg; hundreds of white vigilantes patrolled Cape Town white residential areas; several vigilante incidents were reported in Cape Town and

Johannesburg; 3 blacks were killed by white vigilantes on September 12 on the Cape (*SAIRR 1976*, p. 75). A week later police warned vigilantes not to kill blacks, but still people were organising themselves into a permanent 'Home Guard' (ibid. p. 77). On November 27, for the last time during the uprising pupils demonstrated in the white city centre of Cape Town; police dispersed the crowd with batons.

While discussing attacks on the white town it is important to note that the uprising *never* moved into the white residential areas; only two whites were killed during the entire six months of violence, and only because they were unfortunate to be caught in Soweto on the day the uprising started.

(e) Ruling the parents

Finally, the children challenged the parents head-on in the heart of the townships. In a desperate bid to re-arm patriarchal rule of the children the Minister of Justice, Jimmy Kruger held a meeting with *makgotlas* (black vigilante groups of older males) in September giving them legal recognition by the police.[8] This battle was to become ever more deadly during the next decade, however, in 1976 the children proved much stronger than the parents. On October 8, all *shebeens* in Cape Town (small informal black-owned bars and a central source of income) were ordered by the pupils to close within a week. Oct. 11, 3000 youths (Brickhill; SAIRR says only 300) closed at least 100 *shebeens* in Cape Town and the liquor was destroyed. On October 18, roadblocks set were up in Cape Town to enforce the anti-alcohol drive, adults were searched and bottles smashed and several *shebeens* destroyed. By the end of October several more attacks on shebeens took place in Soweto by students, and people carrying bottles on the street were attacked. Extending their custody of the parents the Soweto Students Representative Council on October 16 called for mourning over the victims of the uprising to last until New Year and the abolition of Christmas celebrations including purchasing of gifts in white shops.

In an ultimate move of defiance towards the parents and their perceived submission to apartheid children fled from South Africa and joined the small armed

groups in exile. By December there were in Botswana at least 8 homes housing 150 youths each that had fled from South Africa.[9]

To sum up. The violence of 1976 was almost exclusively urban and confined to townships. First of all the children contested the patriarchal authority over the house. Secondly the children contested apartheid state control of township space and succeeded for some time to do so. Finally they managed to launch violent attacks outside the township on the 'white' city. Who were these children?

5. Frontline children

We know little about the children. Photographs document pupils marching, exuberant teenagers, surging forward, school-girls in uniforms and polished shoes, shouting with clenched fists or doing the v-sign, boys running, smiling, shouting, waving placards and a few sticks. "To hell with Afrikaans", "Afrikaans is not a good subject for us" "The black nation is not a place for impurities, Afrikaans stinks".[10] No adults are in sight, no adults are leading, following or present at all. Then, some days into the uprising everybody seems to be on the streets, we see huge men with rifles running after children, smoke belching from car-wrecks and gutted houses, and this strange coexistence of dynamism and passivity peculiar to all pictures of uprisings. Crowds standing still watching, some running, some throwing stones, some shooting, all within the same frame. This 'dynamic heterogeneity' is typical of spontaneous, unco-ordinated, and un-led violence. Weeks later parents and some political leaders show up at the funerals. And still the pupils are marching with placards like, "How long must we be kicked, choked, bitten, raped and killed?" "Kruger release detainees in prison or else...!"

Court records bear witness to the central importance of the children. It was mostly youths that were arrested and brought to trial. Of 229 post mortems done on riot-victims in Johannesburg and reported on October 13, the largest group of victims was the 10-20 years old; 224 were black, 3 coloured, 2 white; and 9 out of 10 were male.[11]

By 30 October 1976, the following number of cases of persons convicted for 'public violence' had been reported in the press: 526 children under 18 years of age had been sentenced to corporal punishment and whipped, lashed etc. and only 139 adults; in September a sentence of five lashes was imposed on an eight-year-old African child for attending an illegal gathering in Port Elizabeth.[12] No children, but 111 adults had been imprisoned, 393 children had received a suspended sentence or fine, as opposed to 30 adults.[13]

The children were variously called children, youths, pupils, or students. They were certainly not university students[14] but pupils up to around twenty years of age from schools and high schools.[15] I call them children because they still lived at home. This is important for the dynamic of the uprising because it constantly fuelled the children-parent conflict, but also because it gave the street fighters unsurpassed access safe-houses, well established protective networks, and logistical support, much better than any guerrilla army could hope for.

The children lived at home, but not in any home, and particularly not in the shacks at the bottom of the African society. The children were presumably most of them legal townspeople with parents having permanent urban residence permit and employment, many of them office-work, and able to support kids through high-school. As such many of the children belonged to the urban black elite with roots to Sophiatown and the pre-apartheid mixed urban life. High-school children did not come from the illegal shacks, they were not the children of the rural squatters but of the black urban insiders. The uprising was not a class-revolt. Tom Lodge is therefore, correctly I think, arguing against a workerist interpretation of the uprising (*inter alia* Brickhill & Brooks; Hirson).

It is also relevant to point out that Soweto was not a predominantly industrial working-class community; it had a disproportionately large white collar/petty bourgeois group - numbering 50.000 - and the township's population had been virtually untouched by the revival of working-class consciousness and trade unionism that had begun elsewhere... It is likely that the bewildered and self-

accusatory response of the middle-class oriented *World* newspaper was a much more generalised perception among Soweto adults than the advocates of a township-based syndicalism would have us believe. (Lodge *Black Politics*, p.333)

Five months into the uprising Aggrey Claaste wrote in the *World*:

It may be that we have become so shell-shocked that nothing seems to touch us the raw... So many parents these days are taking very calm the horrid fact that their sons and daughters have fled the country. If parents do not shrug their shoulders with indifference when their sons and daughters are arrested, they do something very similar... They sigh wearily, they shake their heads - and they trudge off to that miserable job, travelling in those miserable trains, as if the whole world was a bed of roses.

I am able to trace this attitude back some months in Soweto. Early this year when the clouds of discontent were building ominously in our schoolyards, we shook our heads and clicked our collective tongue. Then the kids boycotted classes. Still we shook our collective head lethargically and hummed our collective disquiet. Then the boycotts began to spread. The reaction was the same from the whole world of adulthood. The scenario began to hot up. We were frightened. We were shocked. But all we did was despair. The lens moves to the graveyards and this time the adults are in the line of fire. What a moan there was in Soweto! What a tearing out of hair and collective gnashing of teeth there was! And that was all. This time they were picking up our babies right in our own homes. Oh what a clicking of tongues there was this time! So many frightened mothers and fathers dashing out in their cars to hide their children. My language spells it out very clearly - *'Singa, magwala'* (we are cowards).[16]

Aggrey Klaaste confronted "we, parents, adults, mothers, fathers" to "children, sons, daughters, kids, babies". It is revealing to compare this view of the polarity of the uprising with the children's own, different, version. As an example I quote two extracts from some of their pamphlets probably distributed in August and September: [17]

The Black Students' Message to their Beloved Parents.

Dear Parents.

The Black students throughout Azania have shown their extreme dissatisfaction with the education that is handed out to them, an education which shackles the mind and which is only intended to create a mere efficient black labour force to be exploited by those in power, more than this, the Black students have demanded a radical change from the entire oppressive apartheid system which dehumanizes and belittles one, a system that not allow the full development of man, what we have seen in Soweto and in other areas throughout the country appears to be the first stirrings of a monster and we may be standing in the tip of a powder keg which could shake the whole of South Africa...

Peaceful demonstrations by the students have been met with force by those in power a call on workers who are also our parents by students to join them have been met with the escalation of police brutality and increase in the number of legalised murders.

To Town!!! To Eloff!!! To That Exclusive White Paradise!!

...Johannesburg or Soweto, the Capital and supposed centre of this national drive, has already lagged behind the countryside. Where the heart of Cape Town - Adderley Street- was rocked by revolutionary demonstrators. Are we made of a different metal from them? Surely not, they are mortals like ourselves. But their discontent about the present oppressive structure has made them bold. They burnt buildings, they took possession of what was forcefully raped from them a few centuries ago. They did not plead for work anymore. They brought so much panic to the already frightened whites, that all guns obtained in public market were sold out...

...surely, a retreat is impossible when our brothers studying in other parts of the country have raised [sic] their schools to the ground and brought educational machinery to a halt. These people also value their education, but have abandoned

it for a better cause, namely the elimination of oppression. We cannot retreat to classrooms unless we reverse the whole course of events this year... Let us not betray the nation by pursuing selfish ends like writing exams... do we also want Vorster's certificate? To hell with a paper! Certificate! The certificate we want now is our land, and for that we shall fight till the racists are defeated.

The pupils did not repeat Klaaste's duality. The first pamphlet confronted "Black students" with two parties, "beloved parents, workers" and "those in power, the system". The second pamphlet had a different polarity again with "brothers, revolutionary demonstrators" opposing "whites, racists". We can observe three very different oppositions, (i) children vs. parents is the patriarchal conflict embedded in the house; (ii) students and workers vs. the system (of exploitation) is the functional opposition localised to town space, and finally (iii) blacks vs. white racists is the ethnic-racial antagonism constituting ethnic space. Now my point is that they exactly articulate the three spatial fronts where the children met the state; in a chain-reaction oppositions on all fronts came to fuel the violence. In the Soweto uprising we can pinpoint, I will argue, the first link to snap and the source of strength of the children and the fatal weakness of the state to the house space.

6. Children in house space: MINORS

Works of literature may allow us a glimpse of the intimate structures of patriarchal rule. Three South African autobiographies, set in different times and both urban and rural settings, capture the child ruled by the father. Rolihlahla, a Xhosa boy, grew up in the Transkei in the 1920s and remembers his father as,

[a] tall, dark-skinned man with a straight and stately posture, which I like to think I inherited.. [he] had a stern manner and did not spare the rod when disciplining his children. He could be exceedingly stubborn... (Mandela *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. :5)

Bloke Modisane, ten years Nelson Mandela's junior, writer on *'Drum'* magazine, actor, and playwright, spent his childhood in Sophiatown, Johannesburg. In his moving autobiography *Blame Me on History* he gives an intimate picture of life back in the 1930s in Sophiatown, the most vibrant black urban neighbourhood of South Africa. His childhood experiences are not all that different from Nelson Mandela's rural upbringing a decade earlier in terms of patriarchal dominance.

> My father, Joseph, was always a signal of authority, unapproachable, the judge symbol; the only time he came close to me was to administer the cane or lay down the law of Moses, and this six-foot-two giant towered above my world, the only force I ever feared, the authority I respected; perhaps I should have loved him too... (Modisane *Blame Me on History*, p.20)

In the 1950s a girl grew up in the deep rural north of South Africa. Today called one of South Africa's most powerful woman by a leading newspaper, Mamphela Ramphele has a keen eye to the patriarchal dominance over women and children in the house.

> Like most of his contemporaries, my grandfather was an authoritarian patriarch. He ruled his family with a firm hand. To underline his control over his descendants, he issued an edict that all his grandchildren were to refer to him as Papa and his wife as Mama, whereas their own parents were to be called Brother and Sister. This was a major symbolic statement about the lines of authority within the family... Children were regarded as part of the family estate - property to be handled as one pleased. (Ramphele *A Life*, p. 13)

It is important not to forget that the strict patriarchal family was shared by all races in South Africa. Annette Seegers characterises the Afrikaner family of the 1960s as,

> [a] strong, ordered unit and within it, men are patriarchal figures...

Deference is the rule. Children indeed live with rule-making parents. Even

children well into their teens are not, for example, encouraged to be present in

adult company or to interrupt adults' conversion. Punishment for transgression at

home range from admonitions .. to corporal punishment, the latter still a common

method of dealing with males in Afrikaner households and schools... Under

pressure, women support men, not children...

Since relative age determines adult rank, childhood ends only with the death of

the parent. (Seegers *Towards an Unstanding*, p. 479)

The three (four?) autobiographical glimpses show the house as the kingdom of
the patriarch where he may rule as he pleases, repress his women and children, subject
to little more than laws against murder and the rules of tradition. But at the same time
he has a deal with the state that he cannot escape, he is both an agent of state rule over
his dependants and he himself subject to rule by the state.

A landmark event in the Apartheid State's encroachment upon Black patriarchal
sovereignty was the forced removal of the black population from 'white' towns of
South Africa. The so-called Natives Resettlement Act of 1954 tore away the protection
of ownership, and provided for the removal of owners and tenants nullifying their legal
rights to urban freehold in White designated areas. Inner suburban property owned by
blacks were expropriated and the population forcibly resettled on the urban periphery
where they could no longer own property and were under total white municipal control;
a total of 750.000 people were moved to newly established townships outside the white
towns of South Africa.[18] After the forced removal of Sophiatown's black population,
described poignantly by Bloke Modisane in his autobiography, and its development as
a white area it was infamously renamed 'Triomf'. Grand apartheid was a crushing
blow for the black adult generation of the 50s, and it was up to the next generation to
strike back, the children of the 70s. In the 1960s and until the eve of the Soweto
uprising the patriarchal family was under strain from modernity promising greater
opportunities for women and children in all industrializing societies, and from

apartheid's twisted version of modernity restricting these opportunities for the black population.

By 1976 the rule of the black patriarch had become highly ambiguous, which was one of the key triggers of the uprising.[19] Blacks fought a desperate struggle for an urban foothold, and the influx of distant relatives and sub-tenants made the Soweto matchbox houses bursting at the seams; the municipal authorities calculated an average of 13 people pr. twenty-five square-metre house. Black Jacks, the black council police, would drive around at night waking up people controling their permits and tax-receipts, and deporting those without 'exemption' from the rules against black people in the 'white' town. Females often dominated the extended families and in many houses the real head of the house was a woman, blurring the lines of patriarchal authority. Often the husband would be controlled by his wife's mother. To survive the patriarchs had adjusted to the white demands, "to support their family", but the children did not buy this excuse, to them the fathers had become spineless. He was split between demands made on him by his radical children and by the repressive state, and many children lost respect for what they saw as the pitiful survival-strategies of their fathers, avoiding the hassle of the overcrowded house, drinking beer in some shebeen after work and leaving the family to its own devices.

The parents had a way of behaving and talking suited to survival around the white workplace and in the white town. Conversely, the language of the children was aimed at confrontation with white authority. "Totsi" is Sotho for rebel, one that is different, non conforing, an urban rebel. The opposite word was "mogoe" country bumpkin, a dull conformist, and it was often levelled at the Zulus, new in town. The *totsi* would not just have his own lingo, his clothes would also mark him. He would be a sharp dresser wearing ironed trousers and clothes proclaiming that he did not work manually. The worst he could think of was wearing blankets.

Many youngsters lived totally beyond the norms of their parents. Nobody could tell these children when to be at home or how to behave. They could return with a stolen car and the father would be too intimidated to ask what was going on. Young

boys got stolen taxi-vans from white areas, suddenly they learned to drive, became mobile and could organise their oppositional activities across the vast distances of Johannesburg. Coloured parents were afraid their children might have contact with blacks, but the children did as they pleased. Coloured girls would stop straigthening their hair, and come home with black boys; they would stop attending church. It was outrageous, but the parents had lost their grip on the children. Clearly the patriarchal house was under heavy fire from within.

It is probably uncontroversial to state that inspiration and mental power to want and to dare demonstrate came from the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and initial leadership of the pupils came from the Soweto Student Representative Council (SSRC).[20] As early as 1972-73, children 12-13-14 years old would discuss armed struggle against the state. From 1973 onwards children collected military magazines with recipes for bombs. These small BCM-groups included both coloured and black youth. The priest Dale White organised picnics where banned literature on civil war and petrol bombs and so forth was studied. By 1974-75, maps had been produced detailing escape routes out of South Africa.[21] These small groups would seek confrontation with the whites, demonstrating their lack of fear of the police and their readiness to name stool pigeons.

In early 1973, the Apartheid State struck against some of the BCM leaders. In an ironic full-circle the state tried to enlist support from the house it had already ruined. Steve Biko, Barney Pityana, and Harry Nengwekhulu, three BCM-leaders,

> were detained for a while by security police before being transported individually to their various places of birth... Banning orders subtly employed traditional controls to discipline errant black political activists by sending them back to their natal homes. Symbolically they can be said to have invoked parental control over political transgressors. (Ramphele *A Life*, p. 83)

Of course it did not work in this case, but ten years later the state was to turn fathers against sons on a frightening scale of 'parental control' with older male

vigilantes trashing adolescent 'comrades'. Less recognized than the BCM inspiration is, perhaps, the role played by gangs in building up the fighting force of the children. In the early 1970s gangsters were the first to supply weapons, stolen cars and money to BCM-groups, all very young boys. Two important persons were the famous Don Matera and Jimmy Mathews.[22] Historically criminal gangs had played an ambiguous role in challenging the police and setting up models for resistance and admiration among youths. Discussing the gangs operating in Sophiatown, Johannesburg, during the 1950s, Tom Lodge wrote,

> These gang were frequently very large, often had a quasi-military structure and... were to be found in the vanguard of any communal confrontation with the police. [ ].. the gangsters must have been a source of considerable anxiety to the authorities. They represented an anarchic, violent and elusive current of resistance which lay beyond the capacity of the state to control, co-opt, or suppress. (Lodge *Black Politics,* p. 102).

One controversial aspects of the gangs was their Coloured background growing originally out of the Cape slave society and becoming a prominent feature in the organisation of Coloureds at the Cape and in Johannesburg. The gangs in Sophiatown were either Coloureds or Sothos setting the fashionable urban standard to be dreamt of by rural blacks coming to town. The *comtotsis* (comrade-totsi, i.e. rebel-gangster) was the norm which children aspired to, amongst other by mastering the *totsital*, the totsi-lingo. The gangsters would talk about the township as '*die kas*' a box where you could hide from the police. The *totsital* was a crucial means of survival, when you had to develop ways to tell friend from enemy. Sotho '*dla*' was hip talk amongst youth and gangsters, making it possible to navigate in a violent ethnic space. It was mock-military and contained a silent hand-language as well securing survival. Gangster culture and ways of organising attacks on the state (not political violence in the narrow sense) was something from which the parents were totally excluded, yet, most boys in high school had brothers or other relatives with contacts to gangsters.

Outside the confines of the Soweto house was a real wilderness, full of dangers for children. Parents had every reason to fear for the life of their children once they darted out to join their comrades in the streets or in the far-away camps of the nebulous freedom fighters. But instead of the parents forbidding their children to roam the streets the children forced their fathers (and mothers) back into the house, forbade them to drink, and denied them to celebrate Christmas. The children ruled their parents and reversed in a most spectacular way the patriarchal rule of the house during the uprising. Granted, adolescents pe se question parental rule everywhere. If anybody were to revolt against generational rule in the house it would be them. Only in South Africa was the rule of the elders so violent and linked so intimately to the other vectors of rule that generational stirrings started to rock the whole structure of apartheid. The link between state and patriarchal repression, the 'farming out' of repression from the state to the house-patriarch was inherent in the rule of the house. To function, apartheid needed the deeply ambivalent co-operation of black patriarchs in order to rule black children.

7. Children in Town space: PUPILS

The Nationalist government itself created the pupils. To meet the growing need for an educated black work force to undertake ever more complex town functions 'Bantu Education' exploded in the 1960s and 1970s. Education transformed ever more children into pupils, and it collected them in schools, thus creating a whole new front where children *en masse* confronted apartheid.

> Between 1950 and 1975, the number of African children at school rose from
> around one million to over 3,5 million... Secondary expansion was especially
> dramatic between 1965 and 1975, when it increased nearly fivefold. Class sizes
> averaged over 60 in Soweto and reached 100. Under-trained teaching staff in
> acutely under-resourced schools found it difficult to cope and corporal
> punishment was commonplace. School became sites of expansion, of expectation,

of deprivation, and of explosive political potential. (Beinart *Twentieth Century*, p. 219)

Yet, no matter how poor the education was it retained a core functional rationale both for the white society needing an ever better trained work-force, and for the individual Black pupil striving for an improved life-chance. It is important to note the absence of rural-urban influx-issues which came to fuel the violence of South African cities a decade later. Then, in June 1976, the imposition of Afrikaans as the language of instruction condemned the pupils to do badly at the examines. Critique was not initially centred on the content or ideology of the curriculum. Majakathata Mokoena, one of the student leaders of '76, visited his old higher primary school in 1996, and his comment is an example of this non-ideological, functional critique:

> The curriculum was exactly the same as before. I asked the principal, why is it that we still have nine hours per week of vernacular and you have about five hours of mathematics and science? It makes no sense. Science and mathematics are critical. We should actually be having more science hours in schools. The best-performing countries do that. (Sunday Independent, June 16, 1996)

The Bantu Education-schools was petrol waiting for a match; then the state decided to ignite the Afrikaans-language issue. In Parliament the Deputy Minister of Bantu Education, Dr. Andries Treurnicht, denied any knowledge of well documented protests against the Afrikaans-imposition. As late as June 14, Councillor Leonard Mosala from the Soweto Urban Bantu Council warned that the enforcing of Afrikaans in schools could result in another Sharpeville. Speaking of the children he said,

> They won't take anything we say because they think we have neglected them. We have failed to help them in their struggle for change in schools. They are now angry and prepared to fight and we are afraid the situation may become chaotic at any time. (*SAIRR 1976*, p. 57).

The Afrikaans daily *Beeld* tracked down Andries Treurnicht in Windhoek for an urgent comment on the crisis. His answer betrayed a stupefying narrow-mindedness.

> In the white areas of South Africa [i.e. outside the homelands] the Government should have the right to decide the medium of instruction in African schools, as the Government supplied the buildings and subsidised the schools. (ibid. p. 59)

When the explosion came on June 16, the pupils did not shrink back into the house as minors, they attacked the state on the terrain where the state ruled them as pupils, i.e. in the schools. The attack was successful, they actually reversed state rule in the schools. When the children burned down schools they effectively negated state rule of them as pupils. Boycotts worked almost as well once patriarchal rule in the house had broken down and no one could force the children to attend school. As the SAIRR remarked somewhat at a loss, "Parents, teachers and police appeared to be helpless in the face of the continued refusal of children to go to school." (*SAIRR 1976*, p. 64). The school-burning and boycott of examines was efficient in turning pupils into street-fighters, but it carried the obvious dilemma between collective struggle and individual improvement. The avant-garde injunction "Let us not betray the nation by pursuing selfish ends like writing exams," in the document cited above and later the slogan "Liberation before education" became bitterly contested within the struggle. In the end the children paid a heavy price for their boycotts. Nobody awarded the street-fighters of 1976 without education in 1996 with good positions on the labour-market.

It took the minister of Bantu-affairs almost two weeks to back-track on the original Afrikaans-question. It was in vain, of course, as the language issue had ignited violent protest which immediately expanded to include the fundamental racial contradictions of apartheid.

8. Children in ethnic space: BLACKS

The June 18 editorial headline in the main Afrikaans daily, *Die Burger* "Now it has happened" gives a measure of the racial fear of the whites for their repressed Other.

> The most alarming aspect of the event is probably the demonstration it gave once again of the unthinking, excessive, almost lustfully fierceness of which a mass is capable ...We know how a black mass at the slightest provocation can be whipped up into irrational frenzy.

The fear was echoed in most headlines in white newspapers on the morning of June 17. *Die Transvaler*: "Shock violence - whites chopped to death", *Rand Daily Mail*: "Bands of marauding blacks rampaged through Soweto last night", *The Star*: "Mobs take over", "Drunken Tsotsis on prowl", *Beeld*: "Hell in Soweto", with a photo across the breath of the page of the dead body of Dr. Melville Edelstein (the white township-employee killed on the first day, and one of the only two whites killed during the entire uprising). Frantz Fanon knew the talk of the white racists very well.

> "The colonial world is a Manichean world... At times this Manicheism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly, it turns him into an animal... The native knows all this, and laughs to himself every time he spots an allusion to the animal world in the other's words. For he knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely at the moment he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure his victory." (Fanon *The Wretched of the World*, p. 43)

After a helicopter swoop over the riot-torn areas on June 18, Minister of Justice Jimmy Kruger declared that "[T]he situation would return to normal this weekend. The police are capable of handling the trouble and *the public has no reason to fear*." (Cape Times, 19 June, 1976; italics added). He blamed the unrest on Black Power ideology imported from America and promised that, "The White man will overcome it." Of course 'the public' and 'the white man', which were one and the same to Mr. Kruger,

had reason for fear, because the 'trouble' was that violence was starting to move back across the ethnic border. Premier Minister John Vorster declared, "I can unfortunately come to no other conclusion than that we do not have to do with a spontaneous outburst but with a deliberate attempt to encourage polarisation between Black and White" (The Cape Times, June 19, 1976). Such as the policy of the National Party Government, perhaps? Children looking from inside a little Soweto matchbox house out at a police station behind razor-wire and sandbags and a street made wide enough for a Hippo to operate, would see the beachhead of an oppressive state on their own territory. There was a very real and violent ethnic front between the township and the white city. In the street-battles the children did not move the front very much; their dramatic achievement was turning around the *meaning* of township space for a short, fateful moment.

Townships were invented as a solution to an unsolvable contradiction in the racist project:

> The Native should only be allowed to enter urban areas which are essentially the white man's creation when he is willing to enter and minister to the needs of the white man and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister.[23]

As early as 1922, the argument was not only racist it was also, of course, built on a false assumption - that black people did not live in towns, because while 'ministering' to the white man's need the Native obviously had to live somewhere in the town. In 1922 every sixth South African city-dweller was black and by 1976 the black urban population outnumbered the white urban population two to one.[24] Now, two fundamentally different meanings were implied in the 'entering and departing of the Native from the white man's town': a move across the town-countryside border, i.e. the migrant worker solution; or a move across the white town-black town border, i.e. the township solution. The first was the grand racist ideal, built on the utterly false and cynical notion of men staying temporarily in single-sex hostels while working in town and keeping a home in a black homeland where women and children tilled the soil

happily. The migrant solution to the racist vision of white towns reached its extreme form with the 'independence' of the Transkei in 1976. South Africa would meet all the violence inherent in this ideal in the civil war of 1986. But this was not the antagonism fuelling the uprising of 1976. In 1976 the contradictions of the second model were the ones to explode, the township-model with urban blacks living in a 'white' town.

To live in a township was a personal limbo position for blacks not anymore slaves, but still racially discriminated and expelled from the 'white' town: you could work in town but not live there. Slaves had lived in the white man's house (cf. Shell *Children of Bondage*), in the racist intimacy of Senzala (the slave huts) and Casa-Grande (the slave-owners estate including slave huts and manor) to use the designations introduced by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre in his landmark investigation of patriarchal-racist rule in colonial Brazil.[25] In 1976, many urban blacks still lived in servants quarters (cf. Cock *Maids and Madams*) and in particular in hostels (cf. Ramphele *A Bed Called Home*). The hostels bore the closest resemblance to the Senzala: a naked dormitory, intimately and harshly integrated into the Casa-Grande. All kinds of exploitation whether latifundista or capitalist demand this functional integration of the slave/worker with the overseers/owners of the production-process. In the functional domain the township was a pure dormitory housing annexed to a 'white' town. All the personal decisions associated with ownership like where to build, of how to build, and who should live in the house were appropriated by the white municipality and state. The owner of a Soweto matchbox-house enjoyed no full patriarchal sovereignty. Thus the township added up to a Senzala dependent upon and dominated by the Casa-Grande of the white town. Because the township house was not a fully sovereign patriarchal space, the township did not constitute a fully fledged urban space.

But in the ethnic domain the township was much more than a Senzala; it was also a ghetto. Separation of the races, laid down in the Group Areas Act created the township as a ghetto, an ethnic space where a kind of separate and autonomous identity however suppressed would manifest itself in contrast to the apartheid-declared identity

of the 'white' town. Each scrap of urban life added to the endless rows of matchbox houses potentially built up a fateful ethnic counterpoint to the white town, the black ghetto confronted the white town. The township always had this double-ness: Senzala ambiguously counterpoised ghetto.[26]

The township could not solve the dilemma of urban apartheid between functional integration and ethnic separation. In order to keep the township a barren dormitory, racist exploitation had to contradict ethnic separation. We see this contradiction played out in the riot-space. The police could not isolate Soweto from Johannesburg because the black workers were needed in the 'white' town to continue racist exploitation; on the other hand they desperately tried to keep the black children out of Johannesburg, to uphold the ethnic border. This was the contradiction of apartheid: by functional necessity it created an ever growing black urban population, while fervently believing in the racist ideal of White towns. Only in a collective act of make-believe were reality and ideal reconciled and the townships and their millions obliterated from the horizon of the daily life of most whites. On August 20, after two days of terrible violence in the local townships where 33 people had been killed, the Minister of Bantu Affairs M.C. Botha said in a speech in Port Elizabeth, that the basis on which blacks were present in White areas was "to sell their labour and for nothing else." (*SAIRR 1976*, p. 67).

But the children shredded this indulgent dream. Their violence reversed the meaning of ethnic space: suddenly when the children surged into central Cape Town and Johannesburg the township no longer was the ethnic Other of the dominant white town, it became dominant for a moment and the white town had to defend itself. The funerals became central political manifestations and the police tried to silence the children and their growing number of adult supporters; for example on October 24 when 5000 mourners attending a funeral for riot-victims in Soweto were attacked and people giving black power salutes were shot by the police; seven were killed and 51 injured. For a short while the children were able to seal off Soweto from Johannesburg (with the help of the police) and standing at the grave declare the ghetto a liberated space. In the discursive battle between children and state, the liability of the state, the

unsolvable contradiction between Senzala and Ghetto, became the strength of the children. Distinguishing a black worker travelling between Senzala and Casa-Grande from a black pupil transgressing the ethnic border of the ghetto demanded the one thing which apartheid had destroyed: patriarchal control of the black house.

9. Conclusion

During six months of rioting primarily in the townships of Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Port Elizabeth the children developed five forms of struggle: fights inside the township, contesting the township border, enforcing stay-aways, attacking the white town, and ruling the parents. This particular violence mapped three spaces: first of all the township, a space defined as different from a 'white' town by apartheid laws of ethnicity; secondly the town defined by the total variety of urban functions including education; and finally the private house, defined by the sway of patriarchal authority keeping it separate from all other houses and places in the town. Any matchbox house in Soweto marked a house space while simultaneously being part of the ethnic space of Soweto and the town space of metropolitan Johannesburg. Now, in each of these spaces children confronted adults: the father, the teacher, and the policeman. With the steady disintegration of parental rule the teacher and the policeman became more exposed, and when the educational authorities provoked the children with the Afrikaans issue the teachers' control of schools collapsed within a few hours. The children then suddenly confronted the state's last line of defence: police and army units deploying firearms, armoured vehicles and helicopters, and courts, prisons and draconian laws; the conflict had escalated into an all-out attack on the racist foundation of apartheid South Africa. When the children challenged the police and put their lives on the line - and lost their lives - they exposed the timidity of their parents subjected to the same racial discrimination. Within weeks the parents had to acknowledge (*inter alia* by forming the Black Parents' Association) the children's activist leadership in the inter-

generational struggle against white rule. The structure of the uprising had made a full circle: the children returned to the house as rulers of the parents.

It is a strange fact that Durban saw almost no rioting in 1976. One possible explanation, which may support my general argument about the house, is the peculiar development of the townships in Durban. Unlike Johannesburg and Cape Town, Durban was located very close to a homeland, and traditionally African urbanisation was low and migrancy high. Neither fathers nor mothers migrating to the city, living in male hostels or (female) servants quarters had their children with them. Typically the children stayed behind in the periurban or rural areas with other, older, family-members. Most African squatters were removed from municipal land during the 1960s[27] and the state provided low cost housing for these people far out of Durban in KwaMashu and Umlazi, areas included in the homeland of KwaZulu (Haarhoff *A Spatial Analysis*, p. 130). In 1976 Mangosuthu Buthelezi became chief minister of the KwaZulu homeland government, and increasingly the conservative cultural values propagated through Inkatha came to dominate the homeland. One central effect was to strengthen patriarchal control of children both at home and in the schools, and being a homeland the Afrikaans issue did not apply.[28] In 1976 the only Black townships under municipal control were the small townships of Lamontville and Chesterville. The low degree of African municipal urbanisation caused a relative absence of Black children anywhere near the city centre in 1976 and nothing like the concentration of angry high school children Soweto had. Tougher patriarchal control, virtual absence of the Afrikaans issue, and almost no townships twinned with 'white' Durban precluded a children's revolt beyond a few instances of copying events in Johannesburg. In any case, Durban remained a side-show.

The children's revolt posed a terrible challenge for the apartheid state - as children do for all states when ever they turn to the street. When the patriarchal house could no longer control the children the state had to use grossly excessive means, such as beating small kids, detaining minors in prison, and killing children. By doing this the state acknowledged adult status to the children and when it treated the children as adults

it exposed its own weakness both morally and in terms of violence. When the children neither respected their fathers nor their teachers and started burning down schools the state had only two choices: it could talk with the children as pupils and in a flexible way try to accommodate their demands, or it could turn against the children as blacks with the full force of its repressive apparatus. The first option could possibly have reconfirmed the children as minors and pupils, but the doctrinaire and racist inflexibility of apartheid leaders like Vorster, Kruger, and Botha left only the second option open. Violence and more violence, and then paradoxically the treatment of the children as adults beaten, imprisoned and killed. This gave the children enormous leverage at the *ethnic* front because here they stood on the *same* side as their parents: with the parents trailing behind the Black children were challenging White supremacy head on. Just how all-powerful the children became was demonstrated when they enforced stay-aways and later declared an anti-shebeen drive and the majority of adults complied. The ruin of the patriarchal house, the crucial input from gangs, and the BCM inspired overcoming of a black inferiority complex all contributed to the shaping of that formidable fighting force, the children.

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Tin, Hjalte, *The Spaces of Civil War. From a Global Typology of Civil War to a Topography of Violence in South Africa, 1976, 1986, 1996*, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Aarhus) 1998.

Notes
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[1]   I suggest the individual person may be concieved as simultaneously living in four super-imposed spaces each defined by their respective relations between human body and space: a pragmatic state space, an essentialistic ethnic space, a functional town space, and an organic house space. See Tin *The Spaces of Civil War*, pp. 156-227.

[2]   *Inter alia* South African Institute of Race Relations, *Yearbook 1976* (Johannesburg 1977); Kane-Berman, *Soweto: black revolt, white reaction* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1978); Baruch Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash* (London, Zed Books, 1979); Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill, *Whirlwind before the storm* (London, International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1980); Republic of South Africa, *Report of the Commision of Inquiry into the Riots at Soweto and Elsewhere* [Cillié Commision Report] (Pretoria, Government Printer, RP 55/1980); Peter Magubane, *June 16, The Fruit of Fear* (Johannesburg, Skotaville, 1986); more or less space is devoted to the riot in all the narratives of recent South African history, for example in Tom Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983), pp. 321-363; Anthony W. Marx, *Lessons of Struggle. South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press) 1992, pp. 32-73, 1992; Govan Mbeki, *Sunset at Midday. Latshon'ilang'emini!* (Braamfontein, Nolwazi Educational Publishers, 1996), pp. 21-31; William Beinart uses less than one page on the riot in his *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press) p. 220.

3   It took, for example, more than six weeks for ANC-symphatizers to distribute their first leaflets (on July 26), calling on the pupils to broaden the concerns and constituency for the revolt.

4   For a convenient overview of the riot see Brooks and Brickhill's list of events from 16 June to 31 December, *Whirlwind*, pp. 307-343, and South African Institute of Race Relations Survey for 1976, *SAIRR 1976*, pp. 51-88. They are perhaps not comprehensive, in particular not covering all the less-reported rural events, but probably revealing accurately the overall shape of the riot.

5   Inverted commas because even if blacks and whites slept segregated most other urban functions were integrated spatially: the working, shopping, commuting and some consumption by black people took place in the 'white' town.

6   'Regulation for the administration and control of townships in Bantu areas', Proclamation No. R 293, 1962, Chapter 1. *Government Gazette*, (Pretoria, 16 November, 1962).

7   Dates given are for the first appearance of particular types of incidents on Brick & Brookhill's list to give a rudimentary idea of the evolution of battle-forms; see Brickhill, *Whirlwind*, pp. 307-343.

8   In his pioneering analysis of extra-statal social ordering in townships Jeremy Seekings writes: "The most common cases brought to the *makgotla* were parents' complaints about 'disrespectful' children: 'The only medicine for children is the sjambok thrashing, you must teach them the law.'" Jeremy Seekings, *Social ordering and control in South Africa's black townships: an historical overview of extra-state initiatives from the 1940s to the 1990s,* p. 11.

9   Personal communication from Leonard Martin, himself a Soweto high-school leader living in the Botswana exile-houses at the time; Århus, March 3, 1998.

10   Peter Magubane's photographs in his *June 16, The fruit of fear* ; and the pictures in Brickhill *Whirlwind*.

[11]   1 was under 10 years, 88 under 20 years, 69 between 20 and 30 years, and 46 over 30 years, 224 were black, 3 coloured, 2 white, 210 men, and 20 women, *SAIRR 1976*, p. 85. It is likely, however, that the warning concerning figures of political violence in the 1980s apply here as well, "The most notorious instance of [official] changing categories at will, has been concerned with the number and ages of children in detention." Ruth Tomaselli, 'Reconstructing Political Violence: Difficulties in Data & Definition', in Indicator Project South Africa, *Political Conflict in South Africa, Data Trends 1984 - 1988* (CSDS, University of Natal, Durban, 1989), p. 24.

[12]   The figures were gathered by SAIRR from police-sources and may under-report the real number of children sentenced.

[13]   *SAIRR 1976*, p.144; a further 2368 persons, age unspecified, had been brought to trial, but their cases had not been concluded by the end of October.

[14]   "Biko was extremely sensitive to the fact that his generation - the SASO generation - was politically pivotal. Thus his observation that if his generation failed to confront governmental repression, the younger generation of students [i.e. the children of Soweto], represented at the time by the South African Students' Movement (SASM), would consider them 'sell-outs'." C.R.D.Halasi, 'Biko and Black Consciousness Philosophy: An Interpretation', in B. Pityana, M. Ramphele, M. Mpumlwana & L. Wilson, eds. *Bounds of Possibility. The Legacy of Steve Biko & Black Consciousness,* (Cape Town, David Philip; London, Zed Books, 1991), p. 102.

[15]   In 1985 43,8 percent of the black population were under 15 years old. Cf. BE Hofmeyr and M Ferreira, 'Demographic ageing and redistribution of the elderly in the RSA'; in Mostert and Lötter, eds. *South Africa's Demographic Future*, (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1990), p. 92.

[16]   Aggrey Klaaste; *Weekend World*, October 1976; cit. in Lodge, *Black Politics*, p.333.

[17]   "Document 2 and 4", cit. by No Ziswe [Neville Alexander] *One Azania, One Nation. The National Question in South Africa*, (London, Zed Books, 1979), pp. 192-196. Because of the repression at the time in South Africa unfortunately not with references of their origin.

[18]   Of whom 33.000 came from Sophiatown and a further 39.000 from other inner-city areas of Johannesburg, all relocated in Soweto; A. J. Christopher *The Atlas of Apartheid* (London and New York, Routledge; Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press 1994), p. 122.

[19]   Information on the children's views in the following six paragraphs stem from Leonard Martin and Lawrence McGosh, Soweto high-school activists at the time; interviewed in Aarhus, March 3, 1998. For a fictionalized memoire of the uprising highlighting the struggle in the schools rather than the conflict of children and parents, see Mzamane 1982; the most recent memoire of June 16 is Ndlovu 1999.

[20]   "Many high-school student leaders were active at the REESO (SASO Reef) [the Johannesburg branch of the BCM student organisation] office and were to play a leading role in the June 16 uprising in 1976. These early contacts were facilitated by such prominent SASO leaders as Onkgopotse Tiro, a history teacher at Morris Isaacson High School who taught student leaders like Tsietsi Mashinini, as well as veteran SASO and BCM leaders like Tom Manthata, Aubrey Mokoena, Fanyana Mazibuko and many others. It was at Morris Isaacson where the initial organisation of the 16 June uprising took place." Sipho Buthelezi, 'The Emergence of Black Consciousness: An historical Appraisal', in Pityana, *Bounds of Possibility*, p. 115.

[21]   Leonard Martin, see note 19.

[22]   Leonard Martin, see note 19.

[23]   The often cited passage from the Stallard Commision, 1922; cit. in Errol John Haarhoff, *A Spatial analysis of African Urbanisation and Informal Settlement in*

Natal/KwaZulu, unpublished PhD dissertation, (University of Natal, Durban. 1984), p. 70.

24   In 1922 of the total urban population 446.000 were African; Stanley B. Greenberg, *Race and State in Capitalist Development. Comparative Perspectives,* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1980), p. 422. By 1980 the total African urban population numbered 8,8 million including 2,8 million in homeland towns; the white urban population numbered 4,1 million; Charles Simkins, 'South African Urbanisation. Experience and prospects', in Mostert, W.P. & J.M. Lötter, eds. *South Africa's Demographic Future*, p. 139.

25   Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves. A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilisation* (New York, Alfred A Knopf 1946) [*Case-Grande & Senzala. Formaçâo da familia brasileira sob o regimen de economica patriarchal* (Rio: Maia & Schmidt 1933)]

26   In my *The Slave, The Native and the Serf. Three Sites of Violence in South African Ethnic Space; 1652-1994.* Working Papers 59-98, (Centre for Cultural Research, Aarhus,1998) I argue that the difference between Senzala and ghetto brings out the difference between racism and ethnicity.

27   "The number of the informally housed population on the periphery was estimated by Haarhoff to be as low as 38.000 in 1965 and already 275.000 in 1973, (of whom the majority would be living in KwaZulu)", Mike Morris and Doug Hindson, *The Social Structure and Dynamics of Metropolitan Durban*, unpublished paper, (Centre for Social and Development Studies, University of Natal, Durban 1996); p. 3.

28   See Johann Graaff, *Education as an Instrument of War: The Case of KwaZulu/Natal*, unpublished paper, (Sociology Department, University of Cape Town, 1996). He stresses that the heavy control put a lid on the conflict in 1976, but then built up the extremely violent confrontation from the mid 1980s onwards between children and adults.