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Griffiths Mxenge's Audi: The Agency of a 'Dead' Car

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Abstract

On 19 November 1981, attorney and anti-apartheid activist, Griffiths Mxenge, was murdered by the Vlakplaas death squad. His body was severely mutilated and his car, a brand-new Audi 200, was taken to a rural area near South Africa's border with Swaziland (present-day Eswatini), and incinerated. Here I have chosen to figure the motor vehicle wreckage, deserted in a forested area in rural Transvaal (present-day Mpumalanga), as a 'dead car', borrowing this term from research on relationships that Indigenous people in Australia have with cars, particularly abandoned, inoperable wreckages found beside roads, beneath trees, in the vast landscape. I argue that Mxenge's car does not simply evoke memories of him, but was also itself an extension of him, expressing Mxenge's continued agency beyond death. Here the Audi motor car, as a skeletal ruin and as scattered remnants can be understood as continuing the work of resistance. Moreover, as material remains, the wrecked motor vehicle constitutes vital matter under continued processes of transformation, and the Audi survives, testifies and appeals to us to listen and hear. The recovery of the remaining remnants of the Audi, scattered among the grass and trees in rural Mpumalanga, articulates an unresolved need to account for apartheid's violence, both mundane and spectacular. The enduring remnants are not simply pieces of metal which belonged to an Audi, but they have come to constitute an extension of the dead. The dead car, paradoxically, expresses a vitality not simply through Mxenge. It expresses this vitality through the continued process of ruination over time brought about through a collaborative assemblage of agencies, both human and nonhuman. These agentive bodies transform the materiality of the car, and what it leaves behind, what it is able to 'bear witness' to, and affirms Mxenge's presence and the entangled histories of the resistance of Mxenge and the resistance of the car. This complex of the lives and afterlives of agency is also about the concurrent histories of *this* Audi, as a private space, and its possible designation as public space in apartheid South Africa.

Keywords

Agency, memory, history, violence, Griffith Mxenge, South Africa, Apartheid

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Introduction

At approximately 10 am on 23 November 1981, an unnamed woman touched the burnt ruins of a motor vehicle abandoned in a remote, forested location in rural Mpumalanga, close to the border with Swaziland (present-day Eswatini). The wreckage was cold to the touch, according to Ahmed Munsoor, a local shopkeeper who had spoken to the unnamed woman shortly after her encounter with the motor vehicle.[1] Later that Monday morning, at around 11 am, Gert Potgieter, the manager of the plantation discovered the charred wreckage and notified the police. The following morning detective sergeant George William Mason arrived at the scene to find the ruins of a sedan.

The motor vehicle, a brand-new, white Audi 200, belonged to attorney and activist Griffiths Mxenge, who had been slain in Umlazi, a township in present-day KwaZulu-Natal, on 19 November 1981. Mxenge was ambushed on his way home from work, taken to a secluded field near Umlazi Cycle Stadium, and brutally murdered by his attackers. His belongings – a jacket, a wallet and his vehicle – were taken. The following year, an inquest was undertaken into Mxenge's death and on 22 March 1982, Mason completed an affidavit describing his encounter with the wrecked motor vehicle. An extract from the affidavit reads as follows:

> On Tuesday 24 November 1981, as a result of information I received, I visited a scene approximately 5 kilometers from Bothashoop border post beside the Swaziland border. I found a wreck of a motor vehicle in the field. The vehicle was completely burnt out. The wreck was an Audi sedan. I acquired engine number WC 130673 (X) from the vehicle and determined that the vehicle was reported as stolen (*sic*) Umlazi MR 459/11/81. On Monday 30 November 1981 I accompanied Constable Theunissen to the scene where I pointed out the vehicle to him.[2]

Mason would later (on 30 November 1981) accompany a Constable Theunissen to the scene, where the wreckage still stood and where its remnants would remain for decades to come.

This article reflects on two distinct occasions of encounter with the incinerated Audi: the encounters with the skeletal metal ruins described above, and an encounter with its scattered remnants by journalist Shaun Smillie and photographer John Oatway almost four decades later. On 23 November 1981, that unnamed woman felt the temperature of the motor vehicle as though feeling for a sign of life, or feeling for an estimation of how long it had been dead. I turn to the notion of the 'dead car', borrowing this term from research on Indigenous Australian community's relationships to cars, particularly abandoned, worn, inoperable wreckages found beside roads, beneath

1 'Report of Burnt Car in Mxenge Slaying', *Natal Mercury*, 28 July 1983.
2 S. Smillie, 'Searching for Griffiths Mxenge's "Disappeared" Car', *New Frame*, 26 March 2019, https://www.newframe.com/searching-griffiths-mxenges-disappeared-car/.

trees, among landscapes and in 'car cemeteries'.[3] Although the idea of a 'dead car' evokes this image of old, rusted, damaged, wreckages, often sunken into the earth and blanketed by undergrowth, the 'dead car' is not limited by its material condition. According to Rose Kizinska, 'the metaphor of a "dead car" expresses a paradoxical state'. It underscores a liminal condition and 'highlights immobility, stasis and motion, instability and promise, fetish and desire'.[4] Thinking of the burned out Audi as 'dead' evokes the unstable objecthood of the car. Being 'dead', the car is not simply an Audi, but is metonymic of Mxenge himself. It is not mere metal, but flesh, and not simply an object, but a subject. Imagining the vehicle as 'dead' allows us to imagine the destruction of the car as an extension of the 'war on the corpse'.[5]

This motor vehicle, a 'private space' abandoned and destroyed in the seclusion of the wooded fields of rural Mpumalanga, does not simply evoke the memory of Mxenge, but is an extension of him, expressing his agency beyond death. I argue that the Audi, in its varied skeletal and remnant forms near the border, continues the work of resistance, work Mxenge himself did so tirelessly during his life. Moreover, as material remains, vital matter under continued processes of transformation, the Audi survives, testifies and appeals to us to listen and hear in a practice of recovery. The recovery of its remnants articulates an unresolved need to account for apartheid's violence, both mundane and spectacular. The Audi, now a 'dead car', imbues what vital materialists call 'thing power', the ability of artefacts to 'manifest traces of independence or aliveness'.[6]

Wrecked, ruined and dead, the Audi also conjures the perpetrators of its destruction. The 'dead car', paradoxically, expresses a vitality. It expresses this vitality through its continued ruination over time, brought about through collaborative – or assemblages of – agencies, both human and nonhuman. These agentive bodies transform the materiality of the car, and what it leaves behind. The car, as that which is able to 'bear witness', affirms Mxenge's presence and his agency. As an extension of the dead, the Audi continues the work of resistance undertaken by the corpse. The remaining fragments testify to the entangled histories of the car and Mxenge's resistance, the concurrent histories of Audi, and *this* Audi, as a 'private space', and the designation of space in apartheid South Africa.

Griffiths Mxenge

Mxenge had been reluctant to purchase the Audi, but circumstances necessitated the purchase of a new vehicle. His and his family's lives had come under threat. In 1978,

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3 M. Burström, 'Garbage or Heritage: The Existential Dimension of a Car Cemetery' in C. Holtorf and A. Piccini (eds), *Contemporary Archaeologies: Excavating Now* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 131.

4 R. Kizinska, 'Dead Cars in Westall: A Narrative Exploration of Multicultural Migrancy, Postcolonial Sexuality and Commodity Culture in Cosmopolitan Melbourne' (unpublished MA thesis, Victoria University, 2003), 2.

5 D. Posal and P. Gupta, 'The Life of the Corpse: Framing Reflections and Questions', *African Studies* 68, 3 (2009), 306; N. Rousseau, 'The Farm, the River and the Picnic Spot: Topographies of Terror', *African Studies* 68, 3 (2009); N. Rousseau, 'Death and Dismemberment: The Body and Counter-revolutionary Warfare in Apartheid South Africa' in É. Anstett and J. Dreyfus (eds), *Destruction and Human Remains: Disposal and Concealment in Genocide and Mass Violence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

6 J. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), xvi.

Mxenge received an anonymous note from someone in Swaziland. The note read, Victoria Mxenge told the court in an inquest into his death which took place in 1982, that her husband Griffith Mxenge 'would die like [Rick] Turner'.[7] Later, in 1979, one of the rear wheels of his vehicle came off while returning home from the Ciskei region in the present-day Eastern Cape. Upon inspection at a petrol station, an attendant suggested that the wheels had likely been tampered with. Mxenge had reason to believe that his movements were being surveyed and that his life was in danger. He and his wife, Victoria Nonyamezelo Mxenge (née Nyebe), were prominent human rights attorneys and their role in the liberation struggle had become increasingly significant. According to Zac Yacoob, the couple 'forged and articulated the foundation of an effective relationship between the people and the leadership in South Africa and the people and leadership in exile'.[8] Owing to their active role in the struggle their 'family became used to harassment, interrogations, detention and banning orders'.[9] Early in his career as a political activist, in 1967, Mxenge was convicted under the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 for promoting the aims of a banned organisation. He served a sentence of two years on Robben Island. Undeterred, Mxenge continued his activist work, often appearing in high profile cases.[10]

Mxenge was warmly known as the 'ANC lawyer'.[11] Among his comrades, he was simply referred to as GM. In 1975, he established his own legal practice in Victoria Street, Durban, and built a reputation for 'his defense of anti-apartheid activists and hundreds of people arrested, detained and charged with offences under the Suppression of Communism Act, the Group Areas Act, the Terrorism Act, the Police Act and the pass laws legislation'.[12] He was one of the founders of the South African Democratic Lawyers Association, and spearheaded the Release Mandela Committee (RMC), serving as treasurer for its Durban division.[13] He was also involved in community work and organisation, and played an important role in the development of trade unionism in Durban and the Eastern Cape. Mxenge's activism was far reaching and would ultimately put his life in danger, attracting the attention of the security police.

Still uncertain about the purchase of a new motor vehicle, he sought advice from his friend Bheka Shezi, who encouraged him to purchase a Mercedes. After all, Mxenge was already in possession of an Audi. 'He wanted to move up in the world and get himself a fancy car', said Shaun Smillie, recalling an interview he had conducted with Shezi.[14] Mxenge's children, however, were adamant about getting another Audi. Mxenge decided to purchase the Audi 200 and bought it from South

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7 Rick Turner was an anti-apartheid activist and academic. He was assassinated in 1978, when he was shot through the window of his suburban home in Durban. See 'Mxenge: The Savage Slaughter of "an Unknown Black Male"', *Drum*, October 1982.
8 'Constitution and the Private Citizen', *Daily News*, 14 April 2011.
9 'Mxenge's Widow Refuses to be Defeated', *Daily News*, 11 December 1981.
10 The University of Witwatersrand (Wits), Historical Papers, Collection number: AK2117.
11 J. Pauw, *Into the Heart of Darkness: Confessions of Apartheid's Assassins* (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1997), 173.
12 Ibid.
13 The University of Witwatersrand, Historical Papers, AK2117. The RMC was a movement which 'mobilised thousands of Black and White democrats to demand for the release of all political prisoners'.
14 Conversation with Shaun Smillie, 20 February 2023; Smillie, 'Searching for Griffiths Mxenge's "Disappeared" Car'.

Coast Motors in Durban on 10 November 1981.[15] It was stolen and destroyed less than two weeks later.

The Audi, however, is more than evidence of a murder; it is also more than evidence of apartheid's spectacular violence. Mxenge's white Audi 200 evokes something more mundane. It enables a particular type of imaginary to emerge. Through the Audi, we can imagine the excitement of the children as their father pulled up to the driveway or even when he picked out the car. We can imagine him taking them out for a drive around the neighbourhood. We imagine the potential family trips over the weekends and holidays. We can even imagine Mxenge possibly teaching his eldest son to drive in the Audi. In light of Mxenge's violent killing and the destruction of his car, perhaps an employment of such imagination may allow for an exploration of his life unaccounted for in public narrations of his death at the inquest of 1982, at the Harms Commission in 1990 and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in 1996. While Caitlin DeSilvey, commenting on a dilapidated farmhouse in Montana, argues for 'allowing other-than-human agencies to participate in telling stories about particular places', I turn to Mxenge's car and its ability as a material object to 'tell stories' of a person, of space and of resistance.[16]

Evoking Diana Young's study of the Anangu's relationship to vehicles, functional or broken down, the Audi has the potential to 'carry the identities of [Mxenge] forward, reminding those who knew [him] of the places and events where and when they drove'.[17] The Audi serves as a reminder that Mxenge was also a husband and father, whose life was taken on his way home from work. Its short life bitterly reminds us of the places not travelled to together, of the opportunities of connection severed. Although testimony about the Audi is derived primarily from the perpetrators of its theft and destruction, the car also evokes the potentialities of Mxenge's personal life. Heinz Klug asserts that 'the amnesty granted Mxenge's murderers may be sustained so long as the life and work of Griffiths Mxenge is elevated in remembrance above the deeds of his killers'.[18] The Audi provides a window of exploration into Mxenge's life, a life beyond the bounds of his activism, though not separate from it. It represents his aspirations, his sacrifices and his relations as a husband and father. Exploring these imaginaries that arise from the Audi permits us to know at least an aspect of Mxenge and his humanity and in so doing to 'sustain' the amnesty judgments. Cars, after all, are not simply modes of transport to get you from one place to another: they are places, spaces, themselves. Carol Sanger describes the car as a movable 'location – a place of private, intimate space'.[19] Ciraj Rassool, for example, recalls being dropped off at school or going to drive-in movies with his family in the Mercedes-Benz

15 Ibid.
16 C. DeSilvey, 'Observed Decay: Telling Stories with Mutable Things', *Journal of Material Culture* 11, 3 (2006), 319.
17 Anangu means 'people' in the languages indigenous to the Pitjantjatjara in the Western Desert of south Australia. See D. Young, 'The Life and Death of Cars: Private Vehicles on the Pitjantjatjara Lands, South Australia' in D. Miller (ed), *Car Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 51.
18 H. Klug, 'Amnesty, Amnesia, and Remembrance: Obligations Past and Present Duties to Future Generations', *Graven Images* 4 (1998), 123.
19 C. Sanger, 'Girls and the Getaway: Cars, Culture and the Predicament of Gendered Space', *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 144, 2 (1995), 709.

that his father owned. The Mercedes, in turn, became an 'intimate family movie-viewing space'.[20] The car became the medium through which they travelled together and bonded with one another, as well as a medium through which Rassool and his family traversed the spaces of racial and political inequality.[21]

Mxenge's Audi can also be imagined as an intimate space which traversed the racialised space of apartheid South Africa. The car provides an insight into family and personal histories and biographies. The Audi is a space in which the relationality of the person or the 'radical relationality of life' becomes manifest.[22] The car was not simply a mode of transportation, nor a mere status symbol. As an intimate space, fostering this 'relationality of life', the Audi allows these various imaginaries to arise. Envisioning these family journeys and trips to school, we may imagine, too, the sound of the radio. Perhaps they would listen to the news together, or sing along to the music they enjoyed. Aidan Erasmus and Valmont Layne remind us that 'sociality is co-constituted through listening'.[23] By listening together in what is an intimate space, sociality is further enabled.

While vehicles in general are often status symbols, or in the words of Paul Gilroy, 'an index of hegemony', in Mxenge's story, the car was a symbol and perhaps locus of the family.[24] It is a symbol of a father, Griffiths Mxenge, foregoing his own desire to purchase a Mercedes for the sake of his family. Stephen Davis's use of the everyday elaborates on the minutiae of life in the military camps and thereby enables us to see 'history with all its rich contradiction, complexity and irony'.[25] As a symbol of the everyday, Mxenge's car reveals the complexities and trivialities of his (after)life untold when prioritising the politics of his death. Through a focus on the car we can imagine Mxenge beyond his political life.

Mxenge's white Audi was, however, only about a week old. Stotz describes new cars as 'unpredictable', 'unsocialised' and having 'no accumulated identity'.[26] We tend to socialise our cars and, according to Alfred Gell, we also tend to ascribe to cars their own personhood. We give them names, and even describe them as having human qualities.[27] We gender our cars and often describe them as dependable. The human qualities of cars are taken further by Sonja Windhanger *et al*. Drawing from our evolutionary impulse to attain information from faces to determine possible danger, they argue that we, as social beings, see faces in inanimate objects. We 'gather information from faces', they continue, and seeing faces in cars, in particular, is part of

20 C. Rassool, 'Red Mandela: Contests of Auto-biography and Auto/biography in South Africa', *Kronos* 42 (2016), 199.
21 Ibid.
22 Nicky Rousseau borrows this term from Giorgio Agamben who employs it in another context. See N. Rousseau, 'Eastern Cape Bloodlines I: Assembling the Human', *Parallax* 22, 2 (2016), 12.
23 A. Erasmus and V. Layne, 'Oral/Aural: Pastness and Sound as Medium and Method', *Kronos* 49 (2023), 7.
24 P. Gilroy, 'Driving While Black' in D. Miller (ed), *Car Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 86.
25 S. Davis, 'Cosmopolitans in Close Quarters: Everyday Life in the Ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe (1961–present)' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Florida, 2010), 15.
26 Young, 'The Life and Death of Cars', 38; G. Stotz, '*Kurdungurlu* Got to Drive Toyota: Differential Colonizing Process among the Warlpiri' (unpublished PhD Thesis, Deakin University, 1993).
27 A. Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

our 'error management strategy'.[28] As in the human, or even animal face, we perceive characteristics in the faces of car fronts. Headlights resemble eyes and the emblem often resembles the nose. Why is this relevant? Well, following the trace of the 'social life of things' foregrounded by Appaddurai,[29] and the 'socio-relational matrix' of art objects proposed by Gell, the research of Windhanger and others on the faces of cars – the 'error management strategy' – 'forces us to interpret our world primarily in social terms'.[30] Mxenge's Audi, however, in its newness, was seized from socialisation: it was stolen by Vlakplaas assassins.

'Disappearing' the Audi

On the night of 19 November 1981, just after 7 pm, Pius Langa, a Durban-based advocate, sat in his motor vehicle in Victoria Street and had a brief conversation with Mxenge. According to Langa, Mxenge appeared downcast and distant, unlike his usual 'cheerful self'.[31] Langa, however, decided not to linger on it, handed Mxenge some legal documents and went on his way. This would be Langa's final interaction with his colleague. Mxenge was ambushed and murdered on his way home from work that evening by Almond Nofomela, Joe Mamasela, David Tshikalange and Brian Ngulungwa, under the instructions of Dirk Coetzee.[32]

The four men parked their vehicle, a bakkie, across the road from Mxenge's home, feigning troubles with their vehicle. They waited for him to arrive from work. Upon seeing Mxenge's Audi approach, one of the men signalled to him to stop. Mxenge yielded, rolled down the window of his motor vehicle and agreed to assist them. He stepped out of his vehicle. He was held at gunpoint by Nofomela who, together with Mamasela, coerced Mxenge back into the vehicle. With Tshikalange and Ngulungwa tailing them in the bakkie, they drove to a secluded field close to Umlazi Cycle Stadium, where they viciously murdered Mxenge. Mxenge's mutilated body was abandoned and the assassins left with some of his belongings, including the Audi.[33]

Police arrived at the scene the following morning and found visible traces of the murder still imprinted in the ground. The muddy earth had prints of tire tracks, which

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28 S. Windhanger, D. E. Slice, K. Schaefer, E. Obergancher, T. Thorstensen, K. Grammer, 'Face to Face: The Perception of Automotive Design', *Human Nature* 19 (2008), 332–33.

29 A. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

30 Ibid.

31 'Mxenge was not his Cheerful Self, says Advocate', *Daily News*, 24 November 1981.

32 Dirk Coetzee, on the instructions of Brigadier Johannes van der Hoven, was tasked with planning and carrying out Mxenge's assassination and with making it look like a robbery. However, van der Hoven's involvement in the planning of Mxenge's death is contested. While Coetzee and his fellow assassins maintained that he was involved, van der Hoven, together with Colonel Andy Taylor, was acquitted of any involvement in Mxenge's murder and the theft of his vehicle and other belongings by the Durban High Court in 1997. The TRC, which granted Coetzee amnesty for the assassination of Mxenge, acknowledged that Coetzee acted upon the orders of 'senior members of the Security Branch'. Furthermore, van der Hoven also denied the accusations at the Harms Commission of Inquiry into Mxenge's killing and the killing of other high profile persons. The Commission concluded that there was no 'clear-cut answer to who murdered' Mxenge. The Commission cited five possibilities, one of which was that a group of assassins received instructions from a higher authority in the security apparatus. See: 'Mxenge Killing: Nofomela and Coetzee "fabricated evidence"', *Argus*, 14 November 1990; 'Mxenge Killing Remains a Riddle', *The Star*, 14 November 1990; TRC Amnesty Hearing, Dirk Coetzee, 5 November 1996, https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/amntrans/durban/coetzee1.htm, and 'Amnesty Applicant, Acquitted for Murder of Mxenge, Dies', *The Star,* 19 November 1997.

33 M. Xaba, 'Mxenge Killed Like a Cow, Court Hears', *The Daily News*, 22 April 1997.

suggested that whoever committed the murder had fled with a getaway car. Moreover, police reported that '[t]here were signs on the ground that three or four people had been struggling'.[34] Interestingly, according to Lieutenant Makhaya, Mxenge's clothing showed no sign of such a struggle. Sergeant Christopher Shange received the instruction to retrieve the body from the scene and take it to King Edward VIII Hospital, and recruited the assistance of Makhaya. At around 11.30 am, Lieutenant Willem Johannes Le Grange received orders to go to the scene of the murder. Upon arrival, Le Grange encountered members of the community gathered around the scene, some of whom knew the Mxenge family. Recounting the events at the inquest into Mxenge's death held in 1982–1983, Le Grange recalled an unknown individual at the scene providing him with 'the make, colour and registration number' of Mxenge's missing motor vehicle.[35]

Subsequent to having fled the scene, the four assailants took the Audi to CR Swart police station, located in Durban's CBD. The men met with Coetzee at a bar later that evening, where they handed over Mxenge's stolen possessions. Since the car was still new, Coetzee hoped that it could be exchanged and repurposed, perhaps as an 'askari car' in another part of the country. 'Askari cars', according to Coetzee, 'were stolen vehicles fitted with false number plates and false discs' and used for 'operational purposes'.[36] An option, for example, would have been to take the Audi to South-West Africa (present day Namibia) to be used by Koevoet.[37] With the assistance of Paul van Dyk and Constable Braam du Preez, Coetzee fixed false number plates on Mxenge's Audi. Thereafter, they set off to the Golela border where they met up with Warrant Officer Freek Pienaar who was based at the border post. Du Preez and van Dyk left with the Audi, while Coetzee left separately in his Datsun.[38]

The men then drove to an unoccupied police house and left the vehicle in its garage, where it was hidden for a few days. Thereafter, they disposed of the belongings taken from Mxenge's person. The original plates and the watch, according to Coetzee, were thrown into the Golela River. The men travelled to Pretoria, where they awaited further instructions. When Mxenge's death received a surge of media attention, it was decided that any evidence tracing the murder to the security police should be destroyed.[39] Coetzee, together with Paul van Dyk and Koos Schutte, made the journey back to the police house where Mxenge's Audi was hidden. Noticing that the spare wheel of Coetzee's Datsun was flat, they made a detour to Captain Koos Vermeulen in Bronkhorstspruit, where they borrowed a spare wheel. Vermeulen accompanied them to destroy the Audi.

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34 'Mxenge Trial Cop Takes a Rap', *Sowetan*, 19 July 1982; 'Lawyer Says Mxenge Case Lacks Inquiry', *Eastern Province Herald*, 14 October 1982.

35 'Mxenge Murder Scene Described', *Sowetan*, 17 May 1983; 'Officer Tells Mxenge Inquest He Can't Remember Stranger', *Natal Mercury*, 17 May 1983.

36 Amnesty Hearing, Dirk Coetzee.

37 Koevoet was a counterinsurgency unit of the South-West African Police. Koevoet consisted of South African Police officers, supported by the South African Security Branch, and black volunteers.

38 Amnesty Hearing, Dirk Coetzee.

39 While Coetzee did implicate his superiors in the killing of Mxenge, claiming he received his orders from Andy Taylor and Johan van der Hoven, as mentioned previously both Taylor and van der Hoven were acquitted by the Durban High Court in 1997.

The Audi was driven to the forested expanse in Mpumalanga's countryside. This region, near the Bothashoop border post, was, according to Dirk Coetzee, 'a well-known crossing point in the security circles of ANC cadres'.[40] There, within the shelter of the woodlands, the Audi was parked, doused with gasoline and set alight. The car's destruction was staged to make it appear as though the ANC had ordered the hit on Mxenge, abandoned his car close to the border and subsequently escaped into Swaziland.[41] Mxenge's radio, removed from the vehicle prior to incineration, was later installed in du Preez's Mercedes 231.[42] As I argued earlier, cars are private, intimate spaces; the radio in a car enables sociality through listening, be it to a news broadcast, music or talk. The theft of the radio, therefore, symbolically enacts a rupture in this sociality and community-making potential.

According to Zuzanna Dziuban, 'the looting of the dead was not merely a gain-oriented act; it also constituted an exercise of alterity and dehumanization, exacting the boundaries of othering and exclusion'.[43] Understood as more than a 'gain-oriented act', attaining the newer radio through theft also enacts the continued dehumanization identified by Dziuban. Jesmyn Ward, reflecting on the representation of cars in her memoir, likens them to churches: 'they become these places where [we are] able to be introspective and reflect and connect in certain ways'.[44] Mxenge's car and the potentialities it held for 'introspection', 'connection' and 'reflection' was burnt and destroyed, and its radio, an enabler of introspection and connection, was looted. The apartheid state undertook to control the private, intimate and communal space produced in the car through dispossession and incineration. The looting of the radio, an object and medium facilitating sociality, connection and community, materialises the state's power to rupture community and connection even in the confines of a car, rupturing the 'mundanity' of survival under apartheid.

To transplant this organ of the vehicle into one which belongs to a perpetrator of apartheid's violence is perhaps symbolic of the state's power over information. The incineration of the Audi was therefore not simply a practice in destroying evidence, nor merely a method of misdirection. Its 'disappearing' and destruction served as a reclaiming of state power over the everyday spaces and an attack on the community fostered in these spaces. The car, which I from hereon will refer to as a dead car serves as a reminder of its owner, Griffiths Mxenge, reminding the living of the journeys he travelled and the connections he cultivated. It is this dead car which attracted the attention of the woman who touched its metal exterior for warmth.

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40 Amnesty Hearing, Dirk Coetzee; Dirk Coetzee, 'Hitsquads: Testimony of a South African Security Policeman: The Full Story', unpublished manuscript, Wits Historical Papers, 1990, collection number: A2790F..

41 Amnesty Hearing, Dirk Coetzee.

42 This was confirmed at Coetzee's showing before the Harms Commission in 1990. Prior to the Commission, Coetzee had given a statement to a journalist in Mauritius that Brigadier Willem Schoon had installed the radio in his car. Coetzee explained before the Commission that he lied about this in order to protect du Preez and spare him any embarrassment. 'Harms's Remark Causes a Stir in Hit-Squad Probe', *Cape Times*, 4 May 1990; C. Whitfield, '"Protection of Old Friend" – Harms rebukes Dirk Coetzee', *Argus*, 4 May 1990.

43 Z. Dziuban, 'Atopic Objects: The Afterlives of Gold Teeth Stolen from Holocaust Dead', *Journal of Material Culture* 25, 4 (2020), 412.

44 A. Hartnell, 'When Cars Become Churches: Jesmyn Ward's Disenchanted America: An Interview', *Journal of American Studies* 50, 1 (2016), 216.

The Audi as a 'Dead Car'

'Dead cars', whether located in remote regions – as the Audi was – or among other eroding carcasses of metal found in car graveyards, are 'resonant with memory'.[45] They are invested and alive with the memories and stories, and remain associated with the people who once owned them. Though long past their commodity phase, these 'dead cars' are mutable and often repurposed. According to Senior, Chenhall and Daniels, 'rather than disappearing, the cars get more imbued with symbolic status as they represent the person who owned it, their relationships, the journeys they took, and the life they led'.[46] The once new, mobile Audi, in its dead state by the border, similarly maintains its connection to Mxenge. The burned and sooted metallic wreckage continues to evoke the memory of Mxenge, a husband and father, and what he represented. The wrecked Audi, imbuing the memories and identity of the deceased, may also evoke a collective hurt, a hurt necessary to be rectified through recovery.

Adding to the humanising evocations of a 'dead car' or ascribing to cars a sentience, Diana Young, with a focus on the A<u>n</u>angu indigenous people of Australia, describes 'cars as social bodies' and 'a prosthesis of the persons'.[47] Similarly, Gell, relaying his anthropology of art, asserts that it is 'in fact very difficult for a car owner not to regard a car as a body-part, a prosthesis, something invested with his (or her) own social agency vis-à-vis other social agents'.[48] When in a car, Young asserts, the A<u>n</u>angu navigate the world and space as though the car were an extension of themselves, cognisant of the social norms and courtesy. Beyond this, cars belonging to the A<u>n</u>angu have 'multiple social identities'.[49] The dead cars, the car ruins still nearby and encountered daily by the A<u>n</u>angu, according to Young, 'carry the identities of the deceased drivers forward'.[50] Similarly, Mxenge's Audi, in its 'dead' state, 'carr[ies] the identities' not simply of Mxenge, but also of the Vlakplaas operatives.

'The cars', Senior *et al.* maintain, 'get more imbued with symbolic status as they represent the person who owned it, their relationships, [and] the journeys they took'.[51] Mxenge's 'dead car', in other words, does not only represent Mxenge. It did not journey solely with Mxenge. The Audi's biography is tethered also to agents of the security apparatus. Linked to the social life of the Audi are the Vlakplaas assassins and their handling of the car, from the scene of Mxenge's murder, its concealment at the police house, the theft of its radio, and its incineration in the woodlands. The car also represents the guilt of the assassins. The car is no longer simply a locus for the everyday and the private; the private and public are instead entwined through the state's spectacular violence visited on the car.

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45 K. Senior, R. Chenhall and D. Daniels, 'Your "Eyesore", My History?: People and "Dead" Cars in a Remote Aboriginal Community', *Transfers* 11, 1(2021), 5.
46 Senior, Chenhall and Daniels, 'Your "Eyesore?"', 21.
47 Young, 'The Life and Death of Cars', 35.
48 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 18.
49 Young, 'The Life and Death of Cars', 39.
50 Ibid., 51.
51 Senior, Chenhall and Daniels, 'Your "Eyesore?"', 21.

Everyday objects found in the graves of the dead tend to humanise them. These artefacts tend to personalise and individualise. Rousseau, speaking in relation to exhumations of cadres killed by apartheid security forces and covertly buried, states:

> If recognizing bone was central to identifying the human, artefacts assembled the idea of a more fleshed, corporeal body. A shoe or zipper fragment, shoelace, button, buckle, a door key, some coins: these were more agentive in assembling the human persons, just as tyre, diesel, bullets, beer bottles, summoned their killers, suggesting the human is held together less by physical body, but assembled through fragments, things or objects, sensorial and affective.[52]

While the Audi certainly reflects Mxenge's aspirations and willingness to forgo his own desires for the sake of his family, its incinerated wreckage of metal conjures the assassins, the Vlakplaas agents. The burned exterior, the metal frames, the rubber of the tyres and along the doorframes and the other polymers in its interior, the gasoline and other loose lying fragments – even the charred earth – 'summon' the Vlakplaas agents. The Audi is transformed into a 'dead car' and 'expresses a paradoxical state'.[53] It materialises a contested social life, and evokes the agency of the dead person and his assassins. Mxenge's Audi accumulates these multiple identities and biographies as it journeys from the hands of its owner to its theft, its destruction and instrumentalisation by Vlakplaas operatives, and finally to its recovery.

An Extension of the Dead

According to Alfred Gell, artworks, artefacts and the like are 'extensions' of the persons whose agency they express'.[54] Gell's approach to the anthropology of art seeks to transcend the focus on aesthetics and meaning derived from visual codes.[55] For Gell, the art object, or artefact, is embedded within a 'social-relational matrix'. The object 'has no intrinsic nature independent of the relational context'.[56] Gell's theory may apply to artworks, objects, artefacts and even persons. Thus, while the Audi may visually encode prestige and respectability onto Mxenge, for Gell, the social context wherein the car is located is even more significant. The Audi traverses multiple 'relational context[s]' within its social life, making manifest the relationships and uniqueness of the person-as-such through its associations with Mxenge, his family, friends, colleagues and agents of the state.

Objects, however, are not merely passive in these 'social-relational' encounters. Though objects, according to Gell's theory, have agency of their own, this agency is secondary to that of the person. Objects serve as conduits or mediums through

52 Rousseau, 'Eastern Cape Bloodlines', 8.
53 Kizinska, 'Dead Cars in Westall', 2.
54 R. Bowden, 'A Critique of Alfred Gell on *Art and Agency*', *Oceania* 74, 4 (2004), 310.
55 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 5.
56 Ibid., 7.

which people act out or manifest their intentions.[57] Much like a prosthesis, artworks or objects are "'extensions" of the persons whose agency they express – part of their "distributed personhood"'.[58] Gell explains:

> We cannot speak of Pol Pot's soldiers without referring […] to their weaponry, and the social context and military tactics which the possession of such weaponry implies […]. Their kind of agency would be unthinkable except in conjunction with the spatio- temporally expanded capacity for violence which the possession of mines makes possible. Pol Pot's soldiers possessed (like all of us) […] 'distributed personhood'. As agents, they were not just where their bodies were, but in many different places (and times) simultaneously. Those mines were components of their identities as human persons.[59]

Might we then think of the Audi not simply as a 'dead car' but also an extension of the people who have used it? For example, Carl Knappett explains that '[a]n individual's psychological agency and social life might continue after death. This might occur through the extended nature of agency and personhood, in the sense that these qualities can operate beyond the confines of the individual – notably through material culture'.[60] Mxenge's agency and personhood, in other words, outlive his biological life. Furthermore, conceiving of the Audi as an extension of Mxenge gives credence to Smillie's description of the car as 'disappeared', and further allows us to imagine the violence the Audi is subjected to as an extension of the 'war on the corpse'.[61]

However, the Audi is also an extension of the Vlakplaas operatives. To echo Gell, 'we cannot speak of [Vlakplaas] without referring, in the same breath', to their false flag operations, the theft of cars and the staging of crime scenes to implicate the ANC and disrupt the liberation movement.[62] And, to recall Rousseau, 'tyre, diesel, bullets, beer bottles, summoned their killers, suggesting the human body is held together less by the physical body, but assembled through fragments'.[63] The Audi, then, not only summons the Vlakplaas operatives, but also enlivens them as present at that isolated plantation near the border. It is an extension of them, a comprisal of who they are and their covert operations as agents of the apartheid state. The wreckage of the 'dead car' in this way materialises the agency of the apartheid state. It becomes an artefact of the operatives' 'distributed personhood', an extension of 'their identities as human persons'. The wreckage extends their malevolent agency into the future – extending the 'disappearance' of Mxenge.

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57 Ibid.
58 Bowden, 'A Critique of Alfred Gell on *Art and Agency*', 310.
59 Gell, *Art and Agency*, p. 21.
60 C. Knappett, 'Communities of Things and Objects: a Spatial Perspective' in L. Malafouris and C. Renfrew (eds), *The Cognitive Life of Things: Recasting the Boundaries of the Mind* (Oxford: McDonald Institute Archaeological Research, 2010), 81.
61 Posel and Gupta, 'The Life of the Corpse', 306.
62 Gell, *Art and Agency*, p. 21.
63 Rousseau, 'Eastern Cape Bloodlines', 8.

Visible as the handiwork of the assassins, Mxenge's personhood and agency becomes secondary and made to be less visible. As the car becomes tied to multiple agencies and personhoods, Mxenge, the unique and 'always relational' *person-as-such*, is obfuscated.[64] *Mxenge,* the person-as-such is disappeared. As the Audi remains 'disappeared', so does Mxenge's extended personhood. Smillie's and Oatway's search for the location of the car is thus a 'recovery project' not merely of a car, but of Mxenge himself, perhaps speaking to the powerful nature of Mxenge's extended personhood and agency made manifest through the Audi. While the Audi's original number plates were disposed of in a river, and the car stripped of valuables, thus itself dismembered and distributed, the 'dead car' also transcends the bounds of time. The Audi and the fragments thereof survived the passage of time that extends to post-apartheid South Africa's practices of recovery.

Recovery of the Dead

'Even burnt-out cars', Young asserts, 'remain as skeleton'.[65] Journalist Shaun Smillie and photographer John Oatway embarked on finding this skeleton, the charred, metal remains of Mxenge's Audi. Travelling without a guide, Smillie and Oatway employed the help of archival aerial photographs and a GPS to find their way to the site. They arrived at the scenic woodlands of rural Mpumalanga, and together they scoured along the ground for any trace of the Audi. While Mxenge's corpse had been buried in 1981, his car remained disappeared, absent, prompting Smillie and Oatway to search for it, in a practice of recovery. The men found an abundance of fragments of metal scattered across the field. Smillie explains,

> Then, there at my feet, a piece of twisted steel. Next to it, a burnt fuse and a blob of melted aluminium. There was more, a field of debris hidden in the grass that stretched for metres. There were also signs that the debris had been charred by fire. Oatway called out. He had found something. He held out a piece of metal, the four interlocking rings that made up the Audi emblem stamped on it. Oatway photographed the remnants kept so long in seclusion by the undergrowth.[66]

Discernable in one such photograph, but unstated in Smillie's account, is the presence of the Volkswagen emblem just above that of the Audi's interlocking rings on a moderately rusted and twisted piece of metal, which calls up Volkswagen's acquisition of Auto Union. In addition to the emblems, and much harder to perceive on the damaged metal was a serial number.

Smillie and Oatway also found something more recognisable: a wholly eroded seatbelt buckle. Reflecting on the discovery of the buckle, Smillie states, 'We could

64 J. Edkins, *Missing: Persons and Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 11.
65 Young, 'The Life and Death of Cars', 38.
66 Smillie, 'Searching for Griffiths Mxenge's "Disappeared" Car'.

safely say that belt buckle was once touched by Mxenge'.[67] Perhaps Mxenge used this very buckle on the evening of his murder. Mats Burström reminds us that, though the people who once used and owned a particular object may have been deceased for decades, they remain present through the traces, the things, they leave behind.[68] These traces bear witness to their lives, as the buckle may bear witness to Mxenge who may have fastened himself to the car seat. 'To encounter such remains', Burström argues, 'is a strong experience that can give rise to thoughts and sentiments'.[69] The buckle 'touched by Mxenge', as Smillie articulates, appears to be more than a mere buckle. Perhaps the belt buckle, to Smillie, instils a symbolic significance in those who encounter it. It may even be said they recovered a piece of Mxenge.

The Audi, however, is not simply an extension of Mxenge, nor the debris simply an extension of the agency of the perpetrators. The remaining debris may also be thought of as a 'contact relic'. Paul Lowe, evoking Frank Graziano, says contact relics and secondary relics are objects that have been touched by a saint's corpse or by its burial place and are thereby imparted with its presence.[70] Edensor refers to 'material traces of people' as 'object-presences'.[71] These traces summon those who once laboured in what are now industrial ruins and have worn, held and used its now eroding and degrading objects. They summon their absence. The rusted seatbelt buckle is enlivened with Mxenge's presence and conjures his absence. Smillie's statement on the belt buckle figures the remnants of the car as somewhat of a contact or secondary relic, something touched by Mxenge, and thereby memorialises him as a saint, or rather a martyr, hero or ancestor of the nation. The journalists' search for the 'disappeared' car thus seeks to recover an ancestor of the nation.

To Rassool, Rousseau and Moosage, 'artefacts associated with skeletons of empire are like missing persons'.[72] Artefacts, such as engraved rocks, that have journeyed from southern Africa to Europe with the mortal remains looted by grave robbers, 'stand almost equally as the remains of missing ancestors'.[73] Mxenge's Audi, intimately associated with his biography and afterlife, similarly stands as extension of Mxenge, the liberation hero, martyr and ancestor of the new dispensation. Rassool, Rousseau and Moosage, ask us to consider whether we can 'think of these objects as ancestors, as living people, embodiments or extensions of those who are missed'.[74] Encountering the Audi and its scant remnants as more than material – as the ancestor, hero and martyr – thus underscores its recovery as a work towards personal and national closure and restitution. Its search and recovery takes account of it as more than mere seatbelt buckle and twisted steel.

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67 Ibid.
68 Burström, 'Garbage or Heritage', 142.
69 Ibid.
70 P. Lowe, 'Traces of Traces: Time, Space, Objects, and the Forensic Turn in Photography', *Humanities* 7, 76 (2018); F. Graziano, *Miraculous Images and Votive Offerings in Mexico* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).
71 T. Edensor, 'Waste Matter – The Debris of Industrial Ruins and Disordering of the Material World', *Journal of Material Culture* 10, 3 (2005), 328.
72 C. Rassool, N. Rousseau and R. Moosage, 'Missing and Missed: Rehumanisation, the Nation and Missing-ness', *Kronos* 44 (2018), 27.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., 28.

For Tim Edensor, industrial ruins 'swarm with ghostly intimations of the past, and objects bear these traces, haunting us with inarticulate memories, intimations and sensations about people we never met and about lives we never know'.[75] Though rusted and often embedded in the landscape, we may think of the burned Audi and its remnants as haunted with the memories of Mxenge. Far away, then, on the outskirts of the country, on a secluded plantation, endured the remnants of apartheid's violence, surviving as fragments of metal and glass.

Hearing the 'Dead Car'

Just as the mortal remains exhumed from the grave, this 'dead car' speaks. Forensic anthropologists, Thomas Keenan reminds us, employ *prosopopoeia*, 'the attribution of a face and a voice to something inanimate', when referring to the dead's capacity to communicate.[76] The 'dead car's' fragments speak more plainly in its invocations to the living. Inscribed with the Auto Union emblem, the four interlocking rings, the twisted and partially rusted fragment says Audi, the singular imperative of '*audire*', which is Latin for 'to listen'.[77] While the fragments testify to and 'summon' the perpetrators, the Auto Union impression also speaks, and once more, we are implored to listen.

The fragments of metal therefore exhort us to 'listen', to 'hear' as they speak, as they haunt and as they testify to the violence enacted upon Mxenge. To 'listen' to the materials is to acknowledge their sufficiency to bear witness; to listen as they testify to the violence. Just as the corpse is both witness and evidence simultaneously, the car fragments are also, to quote Ewa Domanska, 'an alternative form of testimony'.[78] To listen to the fragments of metal left behind is to listen to Mxenge himself, as his agency is enacted through the remains. Looking, alone, does not louden silences. To privilege materiality here is to *Audi alteram partem*, to 'listen to the other side'. That is, in the idiomatic sense, to listen as Mxenge speaks beyond the grave. To listen to the materials as a source is a means through which to recover the relational and irreplaceable *person-as-such*.

The vitality of the materials, their constant flow and endurance under environmental change, enables the dead to haunt, to speak and testify beyond the grave, and incite the living to listen and ultimately reminds us of Mxenge's resistance. 'Survival', Zuzanna Dziuban and Ewa Stanczyk maintain, 'as a process also involves resistance and struggle'.[79] The metal fragments, the buckle and the bended and twisted steel, though threatening disintegration and finality, have survived. But '[w]ho', Jane Bennett asks, 'would choose metal as a symbol of vitality?'[80] Rather

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75 Edensor, 'Waste Matter', 328.
76 T. Keenan, 'Getting the Dead To Tell Me What Happened: Justice, Prosopopoeia, and Forensic Afterlives', in *Forensic Architecture* (eds), *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 38.
77 Interestingly, Audi was founded by August Horch in Ehrenfeld district of Cologne, Germany. In his native German, Horch means 'to hark' or 'hear'.
78 E. Domanska, 'The Material Presence of the Past', *History and Theory* 45, 3 (2006), 344.
79 Z. Dziuban and E. Stańczyk, 'Introduction: The Surviving Thing: Personal Objects in the Aftermath of Violence', *Journal of Material Culture* 25, 4 (2020), 385.
80 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 55.

than being simply inert, metal, Bennett asserts, shudders, or rather, quivers with life. Bennett's comments on the life of metal draws from Deleuze's and Guattari's discussion on the war machine and particularly, their concept of *machinic phylum*, which they describe as 'materiality, natural or artificial, and both simultaneously; it is matter in movement, in flux, in variation', or simply 'matter-flow'.[81] Metal, they suggest, reveals a vitality, it is vibratory or 'quivering'.[82] I conceive of the metal fragments discovered by Smillie and Oatway as similarly vibratory, constituted by properties which react to human and nonhuman interference. Bennett states, 'there is no point of stillness, no indivisible atom that is not itself aquiver with vital force'.[83] The metal is also enacted upon by numerous bodies of matter, human and nonhuman, as it lay, abandoned, for decades. The metal, never quite motionless and always vibrant, slowly decays. Yet, still, it survives, and with it, remains the reminders of Mxenge – the journeys he embarked on and those he could not.

Mxenge is evoked through this vitality of the eroding metal of the Audi's remains. The aforementioned 'flux' and 'movement' of metal calls to mind DeSilvey's research on the decaying farmhouse in Montana. To DeSilvey, 'understand[ing] the artefact as a process, rather than a stable entity' is generative for thinking about the 'ambiguous aspects of material presence'[84] Whereas in my approach to the car, I acknowledge its entanglements with the natural processes of decay and encounters with nonhuman life forms. My concern, however, is with the vehicle as an extension of the dead. As such, I draw parallels between the vehicle's survival, its movement, vitality and resistance and the person's own resistance as living and dead.

The Corpse, the 'Dead Car', Space and Resistance

This resistance occurs also in the highly contested spaces of apartheid South Africa. Sarah Keenan considers 'how legal rules, practices and governance produce landscapes and places'.[85] Umlazi, the place of Mxenge's abduction, is certainly a product of South Africa's colonial legacy and apartheid's spatial development, comprising one of the districts of the then self-governing KwaZulu 'bantustan'. Keenan suggests that within regions under settler rule, the 'indigenous subject takes a space of racialised violence with him – whether it is to alleyways, city outskirts or rural areas'.[86] This, in turn, normalises violence enacted on the indigenous subject. Moreover, Mxenge was born in King William's Town, present-day eQonce, a municipality which, in 1981, rejected integration into the soon-to-be independent bantustan of Ciskei, which was established on 14 November 1968. Mxenge 'belonged' to spaces of ethnic,

81 G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 409.
82 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 55.
83 Ibid., 57.
84 DeSilvey, 'Observed Decay', 324.
85 S. Keenan, 'A Prison Around Your Ankle and a Border Around Every Street: Theorizing Law, Space and the Subject' in A. Philippipoulos-Mihalopoulos (ed), *Handbook on Law and Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 2.
86 Ibid., 3. Also see, S. H. Razack, 'Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamala George', *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 15, 2 (2000).

racialised and systemic violence, contested spaces, whose borders were being consolidated and settled.

Mxenge, in death, however, though 'belonging' to these racialised spaces, resisted the legitimatisation of its borders. Chief Charles Sebe, president-elect of the Ciskei, implored the Mxenge family to postpone the funeral until after the official instatement of the independence of Ciskei. The funeral, however, continued as planned on 28 November, in Rayi Village, close to King William's Town, which had also rejected integration into Ciskei. Mxenge's corpse thus could be understood as a symbol of this rejection of and resistance to the legitimacy of the homeland system.

As a liberation activist, Mxenge also inhabited a conceptual space of political unruliness and took this space with him. Belonging to this conceptual space, he was marked, or 'tagged', and his movements surveyed. Mxenge adhered to the law as an attorney, yet was unruly in relation to the apartheid government. Mxenge inhabited this conceptual space, and so too, by extension, did his Audi. The Audi was driven to the border, to a seemingly scenic yet mundane area on the outskirts of South Africa. These isolated and rural areas were themselves spaces of racialised and spectacular violence. Rousseau states that the 'rural functioned as a "safe zone"' for security police and Vlakplaas.[87] These rural spaces, whether death farms or the open fields and borders on the peripheries of the country, were often spaces familiar to security police and offered the isolation necessary to undertake their extra-judicial killings and operations. Through such operations, Vlakplaas attempted to suppress Mxenge's unruliness. Yet this unruliness is carried forward by the Audi through its paradoxical and contested nature and presence.

The symbols imprinted on the metal, Volkswagen and Audi, also evoke the introduction of Audi into 'the South African market in 1968'.[88] Curiously, and perhaps by sheer coincidence, this is the year that the Ciskei was established. The materiality of the remains testifies to distinct histories of Audi/Auto Union's production in the country and the legitimisation of the reshaping of geographical space in South Africa. The remnants remain as witness to these histories and Mxenge's relation to them. The car, in its living or 'dead' state, therefore not only questions the borders of the body; it also questions the geographical borders that were taking shape in apartheid South Africa.

Conclusion

The Audi was cold to the touch when a woman discovered it on 23 November 1981. Because cars that are 'out of place' often conjure anxieties and suspicion in passers-by, the woman did not linger.[89] Rather, she informed a local shopkeeper about the wreckage of the motor vehicle she had encountered. The Audi belonged to Griffiths

87 Rousseau, 'Death and Dismemberment', 207.
88 W. van Schie, 'The Proposed Short Term Marketing Strategy for Audi South Africa Focusing on Distribution and After Sales' (unpublished MTech Thesis, University of Johannesburg, 2012), 18.
89 L. White, 'Cars Out of Place: Vampires, Technology, and Labor in East and Central Africa', *Representations* 43 (1993), 27.

Mxenge and though wrecked and rendered a 'dead car', it remained, firstly, in skeletal form, and subsequently, as remnants and recalled the *person-as-such* – the irreplaceable and ever-relational Mxenge. As a 'dead car' abandoned in the woodlands of Mpumalanga, the Audi recalls the roads travelled and the relationships cultivated. This *person-as-such*, however, Edkins suggests, is 'never fully known'.[90] Moreover, Mxenge's personhood is occluded through the Audi's relation to and appropriation by the agents of Vlakplaas. The Audi's remnants do not only express Mxenge's agency but that of Vlakplaas and their extra-judicial operations.

More than mere metal, the remnants demand recovery, lest the perpetrators' power over the metal body silences the dead in perpetuity. As an extension of the dead, however, the remnants hidden for decades express Mxenge's resistance even in death. While figured as a 'dead car', its fragments maintain a vibrancy, a vitality, and though gradually deteriorating, it manages to survive and communicate to the living. The interlocking rings stamped on a piece of metal demand our attention, exhorting us to listen. In so doing, we can discern that the Audi also carries forward the agency of the corpse and we are reminded of its own resistance to the oppressive change and consolidation of geographical space in apartheid South Africa.

90 Edkins, *Missing*, 11.