



# The Spaces of Violence

*James Giles*

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# The Spaces of Violence

James Giles

## **The Spaces of Violence** James Giles

Probes the interrelationship of violence and space in 10 contemporary American novels.

James R. Giles examines 10 novels for the unique ways they explore violence and space as interrelated phenomena. These texts are Russell Banks's *Affliction*, Cormac McCarthy's *Outer Dark* and *Child of God*, Lewis Nordan's *Wolf Whistle*, Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*, Don DeLillo's *End Zone*, Denis Johnson's *Angels*, Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*, Robert Stone's *Dog Soldiers*, and Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*.

These stories take place in settings as diverse as small towns, college campuses, suburbs, the brokerage houses and luxury apartments of Wall Street, football stadiums, Appalachian hills, and America's no-man's-land of Greyhound bus stations and highways. Violence, Giles finds, is mythological and ritual in many of these novels, whereas it is treated as systemic and naturalistic in others. Giles locates each of the novels he studies on a continuum from the mythological to the naturalistic and argues that they represent a fourthspace at the margins of physical, social, and psychological space, a territory at the cultural borders of the mainstream. These textual spaces are so saturated with violence that they suggest little or no potential for change and affirmation and are as degraded as the physical, social, and mental spaces out of which they emerge. A concluding chapter extends the focus of *The Spaces of Violence* to texts by Jane Smiley, Toni Morrison, Edwidge Danticat, and Chuck Palahniuk, who treat the destructive effects of violence on family structures.

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