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Kwaitoscapes: Reading the historio-graphic narratives in the visual cultures of black youth

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2024
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Hlasane, Mphapho Christian . (2024). Kwaitoscapes: Reading the historio-graphic narratives in the visual cultures of black youth [PHD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WIReDSpace. https://hdl.handle.net/10539/45832

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Kwaitoscapes: Reading the *historio-graphic* narratives in the visual cultures of black youth



Rangoato Hlasane

Kwaitoscapes: Reading the *historio-graphic* narratives in the visual cultures of black youth

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in African Literature

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

by
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Supervisor:
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Co-Supervisors (after the passing of Prof Bhekizizwe Peterson):
Dr. Khwezi Mkhize and Prof. David Andrew

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Mphapho Christian (Rangoato) Hlasane (Student Number 599033).

Date: 30 April 2024

Ethics Protocol Number
H23/09/14

Dedications

Sa koša ke lerole, or make the circle bigger.
https://soundcloud.com/keleketla-library

I was not so surprised to find a similar "This thesis is dedicated to my mother Mabunang Thlasane" in my dedication for my MTech in Visual Art at the University of Johannesburg. My mother remains at the centre of the kind circle that I like to make bigger – worldmaking, kagišano. Mma, ke nyantše lerato la thuto letsweleng la lena!

I also dedicate this to my supervisor, Professor Bhekizizwe Peterson – late – whom I first met around 2010/11, at a place in Braamfontein he would probably not approve of me revealing here …Since that encounter, I have embarked on a response to his provocation – which was; this generation ought to question all and any of his (and his peers' previous work) but the very questioning, and the impulses and thereof are all ours, of our time and of the future. So is the 'work'. We see tema ya gago in this work and that of many others!

Dr Khwezi Mkhize and Prof. David Andrew for committedly and inspiringly stepping into supervisory roles at crucial moments since the handover from Prof. Peterson.

In a study with/alongside and in response to knowledge/s creation/s and sharing/s, I thank all the crew and cast members of the essayistic videos.

To my family:

Ba ga Hlasane le ba ga Matsetela.

Marie Fricout and Phedišano Pierrot Hlasane Fricout.

Malose Malahlela.

Bhekisisa Pilot Biller.

Carol Ncube and family.

The list goes on. Insofar as the routes and roots of the black family are concerned, it won't fit the capacity of this thesis. The list can't stop. Won't stop.

Le ntira motho.

Acknowledgements

Keleketla! Library.

Molepo Kiba Dinaka.

Kwaito …

The Wits School of Arts, Arts Research Africa, and Department of Fine Art.

The Wits School of Literature, Language and Media; African Literature Department.

The Carnegie Diversifying the Academy Doctoral Fellowship at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The Narrative Enquiry for Social Transformation (NEST) at the University of the Witwatersrand: Bhekizizwe Peterson, Grace Musila, Jill Bradbury to mention the closest three.

Abstract

The argument in this thesis is this: The kwaito music video *can be* an audiovisual disruptor that recasts and sometimes challenges sociopolitical norms. This study examines the optic narratives in kwaito's visual culture – with a special focus on the music video. The kwaito music video contributes scantly to scholarship about the music video genre on the African continent. As such, in addition to the exploration of kwaito's aesthetics, this study deepens 'our' reading of the kwaito music video's narration of notions of gender, race and nationalism as they intersect with technological, economic and political imperatives (Emoresele 2022).

This study encompasses two interrelated parts: the production two essayistic videos, and a reflective dissertation to advocate and advance what is understood as artistic research from the 'Global South'. This interdiscursive study is interested in the manner in which kwaito music video grammar is shot through a *historio-graphic* lens and modality, that requires a reading of kwaito visual culture within a broader constellation of trans-local black cultural practices, visual and otherwise.

The kwaito music video reflects and responds to visual motifs found in music videos for South African musical/cultural practices such as '*bubblegum'*, as well as those in Caribbean and North American black music, especially *reggae*, *R & B* and *hip-hop*. Yet, the visual practices within the kwaito music video are not limited to musical genres, but are essential to musicking practices, which are always if not increasingly visual. As such, within a complex set of dynamics in nationalist global popular culture, kwaito visual cultures represent both the positions of black youth, as well as how black youth not only negotiate their place in the so-called global village but also go about claiming their stakes therein (Musila 2022). It is worth thinking about how kwaito visual culture flips the dearth of nationalist grammar as an opportunity to re-map the topographies and visual markers that constitute black cultural work within global popular culture (ibid.: 4). Kwaito visual culture continues to redefine its visual vocabulary to contradict, complicate and reconceive of nationalist visual ideas and identities. It does this through what I term *historio-graphic kwaitoscapes* – a writing of histories that produce interdiscursive plura-literary texts (Quayson 1997). *Historio-graphic kwaitoscapes* are a cyclic writing – from the ground, to the lyric, to the screen, and back again.

KEYWORDS: Indigenous Knowledge Systems; African Popular Culture; Black Public Humanities: Kwaito Visual Culture; Tsodio

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‘Intro’
SIDE A: Interdiscursive Ways of Seeing

What does a kwaito music video do? Femi Eromosele (2022: 385) states that, in general, “the music video is more often conceived as a promotional tool. The pleasure it offers is motivated by the imperative to sell something – usually the song or the artiste”. This dissertation invites the reader to stay in the hold of *kwaitoscapes.* To *dance* to and with the kwaito music video in a broader meditation of what is proposed here as ‘kwaito visual culture’. Thinking with and expanding on Eromosele’s contention, the music video, at the most, sells *both* the song and the artiste (ibid.: 385). The music video in general, and *the kwaito music video* specifically, *sells far more than* the song and the artiste in this study.

Detour: Clifton beach via the music video for Boom Shaka’s ‘Thobela’ (1996)

> In 1996, two years after the first democratic elections in South Africa, the kwaito group, Boom Shaka, released a music video for their popular song, ‘Thobela’. *Thobela* is a greeting term in Northern Sotho/Sepedi, one of the South African ‘official’ languages, spoken by one member of the group, Lebo Mathosa[1]. The song-text conveys, articulates and advocates a convivial message of peace and friendship – through the refrain of ‘mogwera’ (friend) – while encouraging innovation and progress, as they keep “climbing until [they] reach the sky” (Boom Shaka 1996). Further, the song-text draws an intergenerational genealogy covering art, culture and politics. It calls out names of: the Boom Shaka group; members of the Kalawa Jazmee Records label they were signed to at that time; an older generation of artists, such as “[Miriam] Makeba, [Hugh] Masekela, [Letta] Mbuli [sic], [Caiphus] Semenya”, as well as political leader – and first black president of South Africa – [Nelson Mandela] “Madiba”. Outside of the studio and the *slices-of-life* performances, the main narrative was filmed at a beach in Cape Town. It is a *situated lens-based performance*, at a location in which the listener/viewer is compelled to:

[1] The root term, ‘thoba’, in ‘thobela’ has a bodily healing connotation of ‘massaging’ – *go thobolla*. I will not deduce that Boom Shaka are following these linguistic and etymological connotations of this term in ‘Thobela’s sonic text. What is clear is the circulation of *geo-philosophical ontologies* – greeting is a layered and interdiscursive black sonic and visual narration (how many times do we hear ‘heita’ – a greeting in *scamtho* – in kwaito?). The history of the use of song-text and the kwaito music video to introduce choreographies, dance and movement as kinetic forms of knowledge, includes Boom Shaka in its trajectory.

bona bana ba tswang ko kasi [see/observe township youth] – bana ba na ha ba dule fatshe [youth who are not idle]
(Boom Shaka 1996)

Twenty-three years later, a private security company would 'order' black people to exit from a beach in Clifton, Cape Town. The distinct white sand in Boom Shaka's music video suggests that the location is similar to Clifton beach. Another, less trivial, suggestion in the music video is that the black characters rarely swim – in fact, few swimsuits are in sight. Everyone is fully dressed as they jovially run in and out of the water.

When black people enter the waters at the ocean, rivers or dams, they don't necessarily always dress in swimsuits. This is because black people don't use such spaces only for 'swimming' or 'bathing'. In any case, it is classist to expect swimsuits when engaging with natural waters.

Black people use the beach and its waters for a multiplicity of activities and intentions (Nyawose 2021). I read the engagement with the ocean without swimsuits in the music video for 'Thobela' as intentional, as well as the choice of Clifton beach as one of many loxions[2], i.e. *locations*. This choice of location is an *intention* that fits what Ferial Haffajee (2019), drawing on Stephen Bantu Biko, expresses: "I swim where I like". Only, for Haffajee, *never* at Clifton, not only because "the water's too cold" (explaining why the absence of swimsuits, perhaps?). Boom Shaka[3] chose Clifton beach because there is more to a [Clifton] beach than cold water. For Haffajee: "...sometimes, the people are too".

[2] Chapters Two and Three will expand on the 'location', i.e. the township interplay in kwaito visual culture.
[3] … or the directors of the music video, or the directors of the company they were signed to.



Figure 1: Installation view of *When Rain Clouds Gather: Black South African Women Artists, 1940–2000*, curated by Portia Malatjie and Nontobeko Ntombela (foreground – Bonnie Ntshalintshali's *Jonah and the Whale*, Norval Foundation, 9 February 2022 to 9 January 2023. Photograph by Rangoato Hlasane.

Was Boom Shaka 'warming' Clifton and Cape Town – tilling the soil for the falling of Rhodes two decades later?[4] On 29 December 2018, *SABC News* wrote a statement to frame a newscast on the 'coldness' of Clifton people. *SABC News* joined the reporting and discourse:

> What happened on Clifton beach last Sunday has raised questions about race in South Africa, the fact that prime property in South Africa is still owned largely by wealthy white people, classism and it's become a political issue as well. Security guards from a private firm allegedly told black people picnicking on a public beach – Clifton 4th beach – to leave. Yesterday demonstrators slaughtered a sheep on the beach saying it was to cleanse the area of racism. The protest was organised by a group called the Black People National Crises. (SABC News)

'Public' slaughtering of livestock in the context of a ritual is an ontological and epistemic practice that disrupts not

[4] #RhodesMustFall

only the status quo (or disciplines and standards) but also sensibilities of being black in the world (Manganyi 2019).

For a "third generation Clifton resident" (Michael), who spoke to *SABC News* (2018), the eviction of black people from the beach incident is 'ironic' because Clifton during the liberation struggle was, according to him, "a seat of liberalism with ANC supporters living there". Michael expressed his support of the protest. However, on the slaughter of animals, he said:

> "... Me personally I don't think it's a good idea to sacrifice an animal because that does alienate a lot of the *Western world* who were the allies of the struggle and of transformation ... but if people must do it, then do it". [emphasis my own]

A hidden irony in Michael's position is the use of the term 'sacrifice', as the bible, a western text imposed on the natives, introduced terms such as 'sacrifice', in which animals are involved, while crossing over the symbolism to the 'Son of God', as in: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:36 *King James Bible*).

When the *SABC News* anchor interviewed an African healer at the beach, she [the news anchor] framed the question by mentioning how members of the community questioned whether a 'sheep' was the appropriate animal for a ritual.

The sangoma, Zuko Mnukwa, who joined *SABC News* to unpack the ritual on the beach, triggered by the racist incident, responded that: "Our people need to heal from the trauma that is racism. To heal and dispel evil, including racism." Mnukwa proceeded to say that the "beach is regarded as a sacred space in our practice". Mnukwa posits that the way that the process took place was "wrong". Criticising utterances such as "viva viva" as part of the ritual, he asks: "Who will account when the ancestors emerge?" Referring to the ancestral sangoma linked to Clifton beach, whose name is Makhanda ka Nxele, he mentioned that there are processes and protocols involved in the ritual of gathering the spirits of those who were never carried from sites of death. Mnukwa's comments evoke the script of *Zulu Love Letter*, a film by Ramadan Suleman – and here I am referring to a character named MOTHER ONE, who addresses the spirit of the departed:

> Bana ba rona, re tlo tla lelata kajeno hore le ye hae. Rea tseba le shetse ntweng. Le ile la re shwela, la re lwanela. Kajeno etlong, e yag mahabo lona kaofela ha lona. [Our children, we've come to fetch you today so that you can return home. You died in battle, you sacrificed yourselves]. (Peterson & Suleman 2009: 120)

"Slaughtering an animal is symbolic in itself", Mnukwa says, but if it's done as a ritual, do it the "correct way". The anchor wondered whether mixing protest and ritual is part of this "right way". Mnukwa thinks not, but is supportive of adopting "things" to "the times".

> Cleansing is needed ... cleansing involves channelling of energies ... Some things are not realistic. Cleansing is needed. It is overdue what's happened here ... I have nothing against my people about what my people did here ...If we are going to do things we must research them. Each clan and each tribe has a way of doing its own ritual ... I don't see if there is any way you can find a balance ... without angering certain people ... if you do a ritual do it right ...

Sho't left to the Otolith Group (2011): "We start from what looks like criticism. We start from a kind of critical aspect. And then for us this aspect, then begins to take on what looks like fiction."

> Boom Shaka's breakout song – which formed part of their debut album, before the one featuring 'Thobela' – was titled 'It's About Time' (1993), in which the lyrics urged the listener to "listen to Boom Shaka", which can be read as a call to 'listen to black youth' (Zwane 2021).
>
> To be *black* and be *at the beach* (Nyawose 2021) is a historical disruption. Alas, it is a contemporary disruption. The music video for Boom Shaka was one of the first post-apartheid cinematic and visual disruptors I think of as being *geo-philosophical ontologies*.
>
> It is important to note that Boom Shaka had already been accused of inciting 'xenophobia' by simply using the term 'kwere-kwere' (a term used by South Africans to mean an unwanted foreigner of African descent) in a song that was, in fact, denouncing xenophobia. In 2008, South Africa, as I discuss later, experienced heart-wrenching 'xenophobic' violence. Another shortcut to ...

The Otolith Group (2011), speaking about their most important science-fiction writer of "the last fifty years", J.G. Ballard, argue that: "Science fiction should not be about the far future. Science fiction should be about the present. Science fiction should be about this planet. Science fiction of the next 9 minutes. Mythologies of the near future."

> Boom Shaka had, already in their short entry into the public realm in their first album, been misunderstood and misconstrued. As such, the song 'Thobela', as well as its music video, must be approached keenly, as what we hear/see may not be exactly what is being said/shown. As the lyrics declare:
>
> > *You got to understand*
> > *That we need to move on*
> > *So move on …* (Boom Shaka 1996)
>
> The incident at Clifton is a sign that sectors of the South African community have not moved on. The music video for Boom Shaka does not show any slaughter of livestock; in other words, the video displays nothing as disruptive of such sensibilities comparable to the slaughtering of livestock, an activity that perhaps requires a regulation that may follow the rights of animals, or require forewarning sensitive viewers. Neither do the video or song express a 'viva viva' sensibility.
>
> Rather, the music video shows black people enjoying pieces of land in their country, including the beach (and the studio, the club, the stage etc.) as a kwaito music video motif. Refusing struggle and trauma, the music video normalises that which at some stage during apartheid was either 'illegal' - i.e. black people were disallowed from enjoying beaches – or provided only designated sections of the beach, namely the dehumanising sections. Before[5] the Clifton incident (i.e. 2016), another white woman, Penny Sparrow, equated black people on a beach to monkeys (Wicks 2016).

[5] At the time of writing this section (November/December 2022), South Africa finds itself in the midst of another racist-classist conundrum, as owners of pit bulls – mostly white – are fighting society to keep these dangerous pets. Recently, a white woman from Benoni, reported as Belinda Migor, 'called' for black men to be annihilated in defence of her keeping pit bulls (Phooko 2022).





Figure 2: Left: Installation view of *When Rain Clouds Gather: Black South African Women Artists, 1940–2000*, curated by Portia Malatjie and Nontobeko Ntombela, Norval Foundation, 9 February 2022 to 9 January 2023. Photograph by Rangoato Hlasane. **Right:** Stills from the music video for 'Bambelela' by Mas Musiq & Aymos ft DJ Maphorisa, Kabza de Small

Aryan Kaganof[6] writes an incisive observation he makes at the beach, on his Facebook profile, and I quote at length for its literary lucidity and wit, Kaganof-style:

> On the Beach
>
> I took my family to the beach. We bought an enormous hake and chips parcel round the corner and drove to Gordons Bay where we sat in the car and shared the piping hot fish and the very slap chips, doused in vinegar and heavily salted, among the four of us; my wife Nicola, my daughter Braxi, my dog TricTrac and myself. While we ate we watched an amazing tableau. In front of the car, on the grassy verge, was a group of about ten people dancing ecstatically to very loud amapiano music. The guy I used to be twenty years ago would have been able to tell you the names of the tracks and who produced them. The guy I am now can only tell you that the bass was as delicious as my chips and those ladies dancing were making the waves shy, I mean those waves had nothing on those six women who undulated into and around those piano beats like they were born inside each other. On the periphery of the gathering their men folk were whistling and waving at another group of women who were hula hooping. It's been decades since I've seen anybody hula hoop and it's a real art and there is probably no more exciting spectator sport. Those hoops were staying afloat very comfortably while on the other side of that group there was a couple who, given how they were dressed, must have just gotten married, walking onto and along the pier all the way to the edge, the waves lapping at their feet while a woman on the beach directed them and guided the drone above them, obviously filming their first kiss in the sea as a married couple. It was entirely surreal, so much was happening as we ate our fish and chips and then a car pulled up on the right of us and I glanced at the driver and yes, indeed, he and his young lady friend had also just come in from the fish and chips shop with the exact same (huge) hake and chips parcel. Our eyes locked and we gave each other very

[6] I take this piece seriously, as Kaganof is an important filmmaker and writer who has documented musicking practices in/of South Africa, including kwaito.

> proud grins, two epicures recognizing each other's good taste. I haven't even mentioned all the people jogging with their dogs on the lead past the "No Dogs Allowed" sign. Then the hula hoop ladies packed it in and walked past the amapiano dancers on the way to their car when suddenly they just broke down and started vibing, busting their moves to that irresistible amapiano groove, getting it on. There was a loud whooping and everybody mashing down and feeling each other and the vibe was of intense enjoyment, real love. The hula hoopers moved on waving back to the amapiano crowd who cheered and whistled goodbye. And suddenly I choked up and had to fight back the tears. I looked round at my fourteen year old daughter and said to her, "You know Brax when I was fourteen years old this scene would have been illegal. Everybody here would have been arrested." She looked at me as if I was deranged. "What do you mean dad?" "Back then it was against the law for people of different races to go to the beach together. The beaches were strictly segregated." "But why?" She didn't understand. Neither do I. But that's how my generation grew up. (Kaganof 2022)

Kaganof is writing in 2022 South Africa with 'blasts from the past': "Everybody here would have been arrested." This experience he describes as being a far cry from that of his "fourteen years old" self, in which "this scene would have been illegal" – referring to a mix of races sharing a beach. When Kaganof says, "The guy I used to be twenty years ago would have been able to tell you the names of the tracks and who produced them", he refers to a time when he was writing extensively about black music created by black youth, then kwaito music, which he archived on his blog, and made a documentary called *Sharp! Sharp!*. The current black popular music he refers to in his post, *amapiano*, has the potential to create the environment of joy he describes.[7] It would not be this joy only that would have led to police arrests at that time – it would have been the fact of being black and at the beach, and *ko kasie* – the real location – as I will later discuss in the thesis, is heavily policed. Everybody, all races, would be arrested, because the beach would have be deemed contaminated not only by black people, but also the whites who'd dared to endure the implied impurity because, as Kaganof unpacks the absurdity of the regime to his daughter, "Back then it was against the law for people of different races to go to the beach together."

[7] I have been looking for a beautiful text such as this one to describe *amapiano*: "Emerging out of South African townships in the early to mid 2010s, surging through the turn of the decade, and taking over the music industry in what is arguably one of the fastest come-up stories of a genre across the continent (and now the globe), Amapiano is still enjoying its well-deserved moment in the sun. Characterized by charismatic synths and air pads, a wide percussive bassline popularly known as the 'log drum', and moments of restrained, anticipatory energy giving way to frenetic and startling drums, Amapiano has distinguished itself as a dance floor staple that blends several beloved genres to create a distinct sound that has been difficult to ignore. And as we know, the infectious genre tends to birth entertaining dance moves that become even larger than the songs themselves and frequently turn into challenges on social media platforms." (Ideozu 2022)

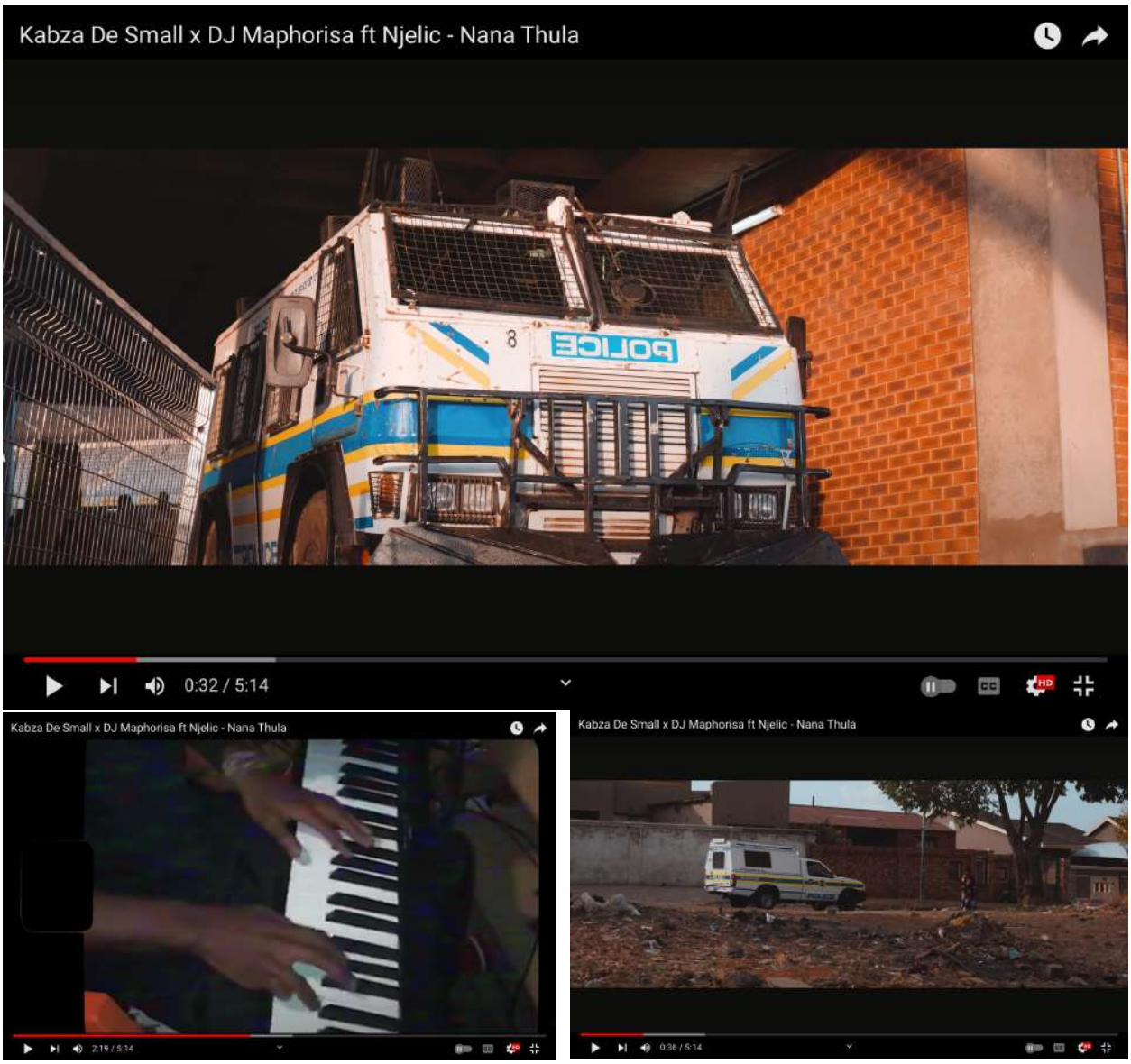

Figure 3: Scenes from the music video for 'Nana Thula' (2020) by Kabza de Small and DJ Maphorisa ft. Njelic – state of emergency in the piano keys and freedom breaks … Image courtesy of DJ Maphorisa, *YouTube* (2019).

The beauty expressed both in Kaganof's writing, and in the situated experiences of all beachgoers in this ordinary scene, would not only have been ignored but, without any irony, punished by 'arrest', because until 1990, there were state-designated "beaches for Africans, Indians, coloureds, whites and even Chinese people" (Haffajee 2019). In that segregationist set-up that was apartheid, "[t]he whites got the best beaches; the Africans got the arse-end where the currents were dangerous and the amenities appalling" (Haffajee 2019; Nyawose 2021). In the music video for 'Thobela', the demographics represent the majority of one race – black people – at one of the best beaches.

Boom Shaka's music video is an important entry in this study. It is one of the first music videos for kwaito music. As a disruptor of norms in an evolving but not necessarily 'changing' South Africa, it shows how kwaito visual culture, and the kwaito music video specifically, are important records not only for 'entertainment' but also for social commentary and scholarship, cosmologies, and ways of being. As Lwando Xaso (2020) writes:

> The changes on our TV screens and on our radios signalled the chaos and disruption of democracy. And there was no bigger disruptor in my young teenage life than Boom Shaka. No South African band has quite come to define the boundary pushing of the late 1990s. Looking back on that period I cannot help but be in awe of the bravery of those four members of Boom Shaka and all their audacity.

While Xaso is referring to Boom Shaka's oeuvre in general, in this 'Intro' I am reading just one of their music videos as a primer to the literary style and methodologies in this study. Xaso touches on something very important about one of Boom Shaka's songs, from their last album as a group, in 1998 – a remix of the national anthem, aptly titled 'Nkosi Sikelela' – recounting how the song-text "opens with a sample of Nelson Mandela's voice" (Xaso 2019). Xaso (ibid.) continues:

> In the mid- to late-1990s Mandela is known to have been the voice of reconciliation – but the sample that Boom Shaka chose is of Mandela sounding obstinate and quite frankly fed up. He can be heard on the start of track saying, "And those South Africans who have berated me for being loyal to our friends, literally they can go throw themselves into a pool."

In this sonic-citation, Boom Shaka's disruption is full of wit. In a context in which older generations are sceptical of (kwaito) and Boom Shaka – "Boom Shaka's hard-hitting kwaito sounds, their sexy dance routines, outfits and crazy hairstyles turned this country upside down" – to cite the voice of Mandela in their 1997 song, 'Nkosi Sikelela', was cheeky (ibid.). Boom Shaka went on to gain even more controversy, performing this remix of a national anthem while donning a sexually provocative dress code. As Xaso (2019) reminds, there is a long history of artists remaking said anthem without pushback, such as "Miriam Makeba, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Benjamin Dube, Freddie Gwala and the Mahotella Queens".

There are notable artists' interventions into the national anthem (for example, in 1993, Louis Moholo Moholo's *Viva la Black* included a song titled 'Nkosi/Sihlangewe', and in 2015, there emerged the 'decolonial' version during the #FeesMustFall student protests and movement). As Xaso (2019) argues "[…] even before Boom Shaka's *shocking* remix, the government had already remixed *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* by adding *Die Stem* and its English version which was the anthem under apartheid" (emphasis my own). At first, it sounds like there is nothing really shocking about Boom Shaka's remix. Yet, Boom Shaka's anthem is as radical as Zim Nqgawana's take – they both omit the English and Afrikaans lyrics and melodies added by the government. Nqgawana and Boom Shaka's sonic texts differ from Xaso's position, who, with reference to the official anthem, "endorsed this institutional remix" (Xaso 2019). Xaso (2019) states:

> When I sing the national anthem, I sing the *Die Stem* part too because in that moment I am reminded of the magnanimity of my people – a reminder that we are better than our oppressors whom we also liberated, bringing them into the fold of democracy, deconstructing their symbols like *Die Stem* and infusing them with new meaning on our own terms. That's powerful.

Xaso's position is clearly not in sync with Boom Shaka, who were already on a path of disruption in 1998, and way before then. If we read the music video for 'Thobela', filmed at a beach in 1996 in Cape Town, the spirit is convivial. The metaphor of greeting and waving in the choreography of 'Thobela', the geographic specificities of Cape Town as a point of arrival of people from overseas, and the post-apartheid narrative of 'reconciliation', is palpable, while at the same time looking "askance into the past" (Ka Canham 2023: 38). The music video for Boom Shaka, in retrospect, suggests that "without a written black archive that takes us to a period before colonialism, the crashing ocean shore and ancient mountain rock are surfaces off which [Mpondo] indigenous histories can be read" (ibid.: 37-38). The music video for Boom Shaka's 'Thobela' is thus a "a story … about [Mpondo] people and, by extension, other similarly located coastal communities on the African continent" (ibid.: 38).

Here the relationship between Durban and Johannesburg in kwaito, including in the music video, makes a for a generative meditation of what Ka Canham is proposing. Historically, the Durban harbour is an important oceanic/inland (continental) link for many types of material and ideological 'imports', that include cars – more recently, of 'cheap' cars into South Africa, and all the way into other parts of southern Africa. But also, the Durban beach is an important destination for black holidaymakers from southern African inlanders, from as far as Limpopo. In the music video to 'Bayete' (see Chapter Two), we see a Joburg-based group of musicians moving between a cultural village and the beach in KwaZulu-Natal, and in the song-text for 'Woza eDurban', "Kalawa Jazmee, igroova e'Durban …" (Professor & T'Zozo 2012), as well as in the music video, there is a linking of two black post-apartheid record labels from both cities.

Despite the 1996 'Thobela' music video foregrounding and highlighting that "African blackness is always relational" (Ka Canham 2023: 38), a year later, Boom Shaka, in 'Nkosi Sikelela', then omitted the verses representing European settlers responsible for colonisation and apartheid in South Africa. The music video to 'Thobela' begs the question: "Is it possible to reach out to a time before whiteness"? (ibid.: 61) – before "neurosis and anxiety" (ibid.). Boom Shaka, like Mandela's sonic citation, had clearly grown fatigued and impatient with the snail-paced transformational and decolonial [in]actions in the new government. Hugo ka Canham, writing about shipwrecked Asians and Europeans on South African shores, states that "It was therefore possible for white sojourners who stumbled onto the shore to become Mpondo if they decided to stay" (2023: 57), and what appears to be clear to Boom Shaka is that "kindness and civility" exist alongside "imagined savagery" (ibid.: 57). In a way, for Boom Shaka (1997), Koleka Putuma (2017), and Ka Canham (2023), "For black people, the arrival of settlers marks dispossession of land. It ushers colonization and apartheid" (Ka Canham 2023: 58).

In this way, Boom Shaka and Nqgawana's omissions of the English and Afrikaans lyrics and melodies are interesting. Nqgawana doesn't just omit the English and Afrikaans lyrics and melodies – he corrupts them with a shrieking saxophone solo over tumbling drums that evoke the spirit of the ancestors who braved the *amabutho* [warrior] battle-zone sonics (*Blue Notes for Bra Geoff*, 2005). Nqgawana's decolonial aesthetic is met with Boom Shaka's smart wit. In the place of the English and Afrikaans verses, what they insert in their rendition of 'Nkosi Sikelela' (1997) are the names of struggle heroes, such as Chris Hani and Robert Sobukwe, intercepted with a *viva*! refrain.

Much of the criticism they received was less about the artistic merits in the intervention of the song by Boom Shaka than about their performance of the song in 'skimpy' clothes. Wit has been central to Boom Shaka's oeuvre – and, I argue, Boom Shaka's women – which has often led to them being misunderstood. Fashion, as in dress, is one of their uncanny uses of wit – a provocative action that does not come without its own risks, in a variety of ways, that are discussed later in this dissertation (notably in the discussion of Lebo Mathosa in Chapter Two). In the Brothers of Peace intro to 'We Miss You Boom Shaka' (1997), a mock news reader paraphrases a statement by Boom Shaka:

> If the Kalawa Jazmee wants to take them [Boom Shaka] to court. They must first take them to the tennis court. As tennis is their favourite sport.

Understanding that this statement came from the two women of Boom Shaka, not the men, it is a brave statement – a challenge to meet at the "tennis court". Tennis as 'a favourite sport' is not idle, i.e. tennis is not their favourite sport only as fans of the the Afro-diasporic Williams sisters. Rather, it is a sport that they 'claim' to play ('Thobela' is a song in the 1996 Boom Shaka album titled *It's Our Game (No Need to Claim)*).

'Looking askance' at this *kwaitoscape* via the music video for Boom Shaka's 'Thobela', means that we see a man 'playing' with a woman in a 'game' that leaves her falling to the ground in a violent manner. While they are not the same characters, we also see another man comforting a woman who is seemingly upset, a woman who was violated in this otherwise jovial and positive gathering. As Ka Canham writes, "this is not always a positive legacy", especially in popular culture (2023: 58). What *is* perhaps positive about this is to witness how the women of Boom Shaka have since grown to be and demonstrate not only agency but resistance, that can be attributed to how young black women in music and popular culture continue to disrupt queer normativities today.



Figure 4: Khanyisa turns the tennis instrument – the racket – into a guitar on the set of 'Heita Hola', in which she is featured as vocalist, the racket-cum-guitar suggesting she is a co-writer, in my reading at least.

The Boom Shaka symbolic archive is undisputed evidence of Lebo Mathosa and Thembi Seete's athletic abilities, compared to the men in their group! Further, Boom Shaka has been an influential and outstanding format for a 'manufactured' music group in South African popular culture, precisely because of the women's performance, grit and passion. As such, this (challenge to the tennis court) statement does more – while it is witty in the tradition of the 'diss', a challenge to the physical stamina of the male-dominated Kalawa Jazmee directors, it also goes beyond Kalawa (after all, the perils of the music industry are inherited).

The challenge can be read as another layer of disruption – for how popular is tennis among black girls, women, females and queers in 1997 South Africa? The lens through which the kwaito music video is ordinarily read, would show the dominance of soccer, from the stadium (TKZee ft. Benni 'Shibobo', 1998) and the street (Kabza de Small & Maphorisa ft. Semi Tee, Miano and Kamu Dee 'Lorch', 2020), the latter highlighting the street as the domain of boys growing into men (Hlasane & Peterson 2022: 357).

As Xaso writes: "What did it mean to be a black woman in democratic South Africa? I did not know, but Lebo and Thembi added depth to what was a shallow pool of options" (2019). Indeed, Mandela's cited voice in Boom Shaka's 'Nkosi Sikelela', challenging "those South Africans … to throw themselves into a pool", is a poetic articulation of impatience with slow transformation. This quick turnaround from 'social cohesion' or, at the least, an articulation of "I swim where I like" in the 1996 music video, to a de-sedimentation of the anthem, and therefore a questioning of the rainbow-nation narrative, places Boom Shaka as forerunners of dissent (Hlasane 2023). Their optic narratives have enriched kwaito visual culture with templates and motifs that have not only

remained influential but also iconic in what we see in kwaito music videos. These are just a few of the many ways to read Boom Shaka, especially through Lebo Mathosa and Thembi Seete, who have used culture as a disruptor to recast and sometimes challenge sociopolitical norms. They were not alone, however, and their legacies – positive as well as questionable – live on, as the rest of this study will elucidate (Ka Canham 2023).

Beyond the shoreline, the music video for 'Thobela' both recalls and anticipates "how closed off communities of whiteness can be" (ibid.: 66). "They repel black people. They enslave. They bestow second-class citizenship. They maim limbs, strip flesh, break bones, and debilitate" (ibid.: 66). The omission of Afrikaans and English lyrics (in that order, as bestowed in the democratic anthem of South Africa) in Boom Shaka's 'Nkosi Sikelela' (1997) and other decolonial interventions, is a recognition that while "[a]ll those [settlers] who stayed stayed behind and in relation learned to speak isiMpondo and to love their hosts", and in that process to "become black" (ibid.: 66), this was/is not the norm but the exception. The editors of the *Social Dynamics* (2021) special edition, titled 'Cinematic Imaginaries of the African City' contend, citing Femi Eromosele (2021: 2), that the music video is a "cinematic form that challenges the privileging of film as the sole source of cinematic material worthy of scholarship".

In addition to selling the song and the artiste, the kwaito music video has and continues to sell clothes (and identities they fashion), cars (and the mobilities they promise, while constructing identities), houses (and contests over geographic specificities), etc. in addition to notions of gender (and sexualities), race (blackness and its subjectivities), and nationalist rhetoric (South African exceptionalism and its pitfalls). As a rewind to the opening question, and reading Boom Shaka's music video for 'Thobela' as one of the foundational kwaito music videos, it becomes clear that something else is for sale beyond the artiste and the song. After all, houses in Clifton do not come cheap ...

As neat closure to these opening remarks, it is important to rewind to Emoresele (2022: 385) again, who argues that: "the music video [is] a text that draws attention to itself, that articulates a message independent of its function as accessory to something else". The argument in this thesis is this: The kwaito music video *can be* an audiovisual disruptor that recasts and sometimes challenges sociopolitical norms. In Boom Shaka's spirit and 'new style', the message remains clear:

> *You got to understand*
> *That we need to move on*
> *So move on* … (Boom Shaka, 1996)

In *historio-graphic* terms, could South Africa have slept on Boom Shaka whilst in the groove? From 'Kwere Kwere' (1993) to 'Bambanani' (1998), Boom Shaka urged black South Africans to "move on" through a brand that was the opposite of rainbow-nation rhetoric. Boom Shaka, in 'Kwere Kwere' and 'Bambanani', implored black South Africa to indeed depart from apartheid-induced isolation from the land, in its broadest 'African' sense – from the continent to the diaspora – as the vivid and vital influences, from *reggae* to *R & B* to *rap* and *house*, are there for all to shake what our mamas gave us, and for the mind to follow.
Indeed, the music video and the song-text in 'Thobela' served another function through the motif of introducing a dance style. In their juxtaposition of messages, such as "Stop destroying the

planet/Refrain from breaking the home", in conjunction with hedonistic and bodily pleasures, Boom Shaka were not only disruptors but trendsetters, or read differently, vessels[8] of the kwaito visual culture – critical, diagnostic and exuberant (Boom Shaka 1996). Boom Shaka strived to decolonise our ears and our feet and our eyes and spirit and relations with the earth/soil we live/depend on.

Side B, or the Introduction, with a capital 'I', aims to reflect on and briefly unpack how we could have slept on such enunciations, and outlines how to comprehend the rest of this document. However, before Side B, I am going to offer an Interlude. This Interlude is here to account for some of the unorthodox ways of writing that has thus far taken place without orientation, warning or any preliminary notes on method.

***

Brief notes on interdiscursive *writin*' or how do we move on from the ground, to the lyric, to the screen and back again via *thi*s dissertation?

The reader has thus far encountered first the 'Intro', before the 'Introduction'. Here I have trust in the audience to follow the logic, especially as it relates to the two essayistic videos that are writing in the expanded sense, interdiscursive.

On Fonts and Formatting:

- The main text is set in Times New Roman
- Reading/analysis of music videos/films are set in *Courier New*.
- Lyrics are *italicised.* Similarly, all music genres are also in italics, with the exception of kwaito.

Image as text: interdiscursive ways of reading or reading beyond the word, disciplines:

Over and above the conclusion as a photo essay, and the *image-as-synopsis* for Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, the reader will also encounter *interludes or paratexts where image + text enter a field of writing as autonomous entities i.e. with no further unpacking beyond captioning (see Figures 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11*). In this case, the reader will sometimes encounter captioning in the expanded field. It is a real pity that image as text intervention does not fully translate in this, the pdf/screen version.

Dislocating the ~~Text:~~
Chapter 3, *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* and Chapter 5, *Sa Koša ke Lerole,* occupy Vimeo, a largely asynchronous and sometimes synchronous broadcasting, depository and streaming online portal for the moving image (text).

***

[8] See Footnote 33 on Boom Shaka's role in the early stages of grassroots merchandising of kwaito at street bashes and taxi ranks.

Introduction
SIDE B: 'I and I = we' – Setšo as a past, present and future resource base

This study aims to dwell *in the break* offered by the optic narratives in kwaito's visual culture. This *break is* both *the kwaito music video itself*, and *within* the kwaito music video. I am playing with the multiplicity of the break here. Louis Chude-Sokei, in *Dr. Satan's Echo Chamber*, writes of the break – that moment of silence in the middle, or somewhere along the journey of a song – as a site of enunciation in the Caribbean sonic sensibility (2011). In South Africa, such breaks summon responses from the listener-participant, such as ululations and whistles, and in the intentional 'break' by the DJ, singing along to the silenced lyrics or sonics. Fred Moten (2003) writes about the break in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, as a link to the Middle Passage and its echoes (or slavery and its afterlives, as Saidiya Hartman would frame it) articulated by Chude-Sokei. 'Break time' at school in 1996 South Africa was for me a moment to revel in South African popular music, in which the brave and the extroverted (the coolest) would mime the songs of the moment – Boom Shaka's oeuvre being the main hits. The kwaito music video, in this case, is one of the many imaginaries of the 'break', in ways that go beyond the promotion of the "song or the artiste" (Eromosele 2022).

In this way, the study contributes to the scant scholarship that currently exists about the music video, on the African continent. In addition to our exploration of kwaito's aesthetics – a "curation, creation and critique" of young black people's articulations of interdiscursive, intersectional, interdisciplinary, and simply interesting articulations on notions of gender, race and nationalism are examined and considered as they intersect with "technology, commercial imperative, and the political" (Emoresele 2022: 385; The Otolith Group: 2011).

The study encompasses two interrelated parts: the production of essayistic videos, and a reflective dissertation. A third element, the 'exhibition', in the form of an installation of the essayistic videos alongside other elements, including breaking bread, performance, an installation of banners, and more, within a public programme in specific *locations*, fulfil the aims of this study – for example, two chapters in this dissertation are dislocated from this document. They appear in Vimeo accounts with a password that is publicly shared. In the essayistic videos, the viewer-hearer makes visitations to three sites – in Mafikeng, Mamelodi and Meadowlands. As such, this study advocates and advances what is understood as interdiscursive, artistic research in the framework of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, as seen through the lens of African Popular Culture and Black Public Humanities (Quayson 1998; Ka Canham 2023; Motimele 2023).

The scholarship on kwaito has established imaginative arguments, reading the form as a significant carrier of political narratives that disrupts, subverts, celebrates and critiques dominant narratives (Impey 2001, Peterson 2003, Allen 2004, Mhlambi 2004, Steingo 2005, Pietilä 2013, Ntabeni & Mthembu 2018, and Zwane et al. 2019). However, with its rigour and complexity, scholarship on kwaito is characterised by a narrow focus on music. This focus suggests the neglect of kwaito's

visual culture. Scholarship on the (kwaito) music video remains inadequate, both in popular and academic sites of knowledge production and/or literature.

Beyond the music video, key examples of practices in visual culture that form part of the genealogies of kwaito music culture include, but are not limited to: literary arts (from *Drum* via *Staffrider* to *Y-Mag)*, film (*Jim Comes to Joburg* to *Come Back Africa* via[9] *Mapantsula*, *Tsotsi*, and *Jerusalema)*, television (*Bassiq*, *Pure Monate*, *Yizo Yizo*, *Street Journal*, and *Tjovitjo!*, amongst others), visual arts (Tommy Motswai, Trevor Makhoba, Gerard Sekoto, and George Pemba), dress (isiPantsula, FUBU, Loxion Kulća), and dance (isiPantsula and many, many other dance practices).

While the imports of and the reciprocal conversations between these practices and the kwaito music video are the subject of my methodology, it is the visual genealogy that helps me discern how the kwaito music video narrates its specific optic narratives that have been missed by scholarship on kwaito as sonic text. Some of these specific optic narratives include: intergenerational conversations (Mafikizolo with Hugh Masekela, 'Kwela'; Bongo Maffin, 'Makeba'; *Mapantsula*), African diaspora conversations (Spikiri *King Don Father*, Loxion Kulća/FUBU), gendered ways of being (Zola, 'Ghetto Fabulous'; Lebo 'Siyasiwisa'), racialised visual narratives (Donald Duck, 'Tabalaza'; Kwesta, 'Spirit'), and *situated lens-based performances* (GP MaOrange, 'Intuthwane'; *Jerusalema*).

Specifically, in this study, the recasting of the song 'Tsodiyo'/'Tsodio' is of central significance. It is a song that, as this submission will show, dwells in the break – it is part of how black South Africans articulate what it means to live in fugitive terms, while seeking a way out. A song that keeps on *songing*, 'Tsodio'/'Tsodiyo' embodies hauntings, and therefore refuses to leave the break. From its *mmino wa setšo* roots and routes before 1975[10], 'Tsodio'/'Tsodiyo' remains not a cog in the machine but a thorn in the side of popular music genres – especially *amapiano* and *hip-hop* at the time of writing – by black youth in 2023 South Africa, as we shall learn later with regard to the growing playlist. 'Tsodio'/'Tsodiyo' is the impetus for the essayistic video/s forming part of this submission.

The initial 'gut' of the research was framed in a series of related statements at the time of writing the proposal. However, throughout the journey of the research – and especially thanks to the creative research methodologies in this journey, with questions such as "What happened to Tsodio/Tsodiyo bathong?", as posed by Zandile Nkosi – I decided to transform these statements into questions:

- How does the _____ music video decolonise visual culture that was/is underwritten by economics, politics, race and gendered power dynamics?
- What do I make of the scarcity of scholarly writing on _____ visual culture?
- Is it _____ to establish and extend the scholarship on kwaito visual culture?

[9] I don't know what it is about 'via' when it comes to pantsula collectives – Via Vyndals and Via Katlehong comes to mind (at the time of writing this, there is a production titled *Via Injabulo* by Via Katlehong, performing for the "first" time from 29 June to 2 July 2023 at the Joburg Theatre in South Africa, after a tour of France).

[10] Johannes Mokgwadi's version as a radio drama theme song in 1974 is the reference point for subsequent interventions/remixes.

- What are the _____ that elucidate the economics, politics, race and gender questions in kwaito visual culture?
- As a study in visual cultures, should this research impact_____ and epistemology?
- ___ ___ __ and _____ suggest frameworks to read visual culture from the 'streets', i.e. from ground, the 'South' African perspective in relation to the rest of the ____?
- On the flipside, the creative component should appraise 'making' visual culture from the 'street', especially with the prevalence and _____ technologies in the making, and their dissemination, a factor that was critically absent in the construction of kwaito visual culture in its seminal years?

These questions do not enable straightforward answers. Rather, they probe further questions. It is also important to note that this study responds to Nkosi's provocation, because it is methodologically invested. The *kwaitoscape* is also subject to provocations (whether in real life or on online fora, such as YouTube etc.). The *kwaitoscape* does not need to respond, whether that's due to the neoliberal market logic in the respective industries, or that the 'creative' team is concerned with something else. Neither does it mean that the *kwaitoscape* is not interested in, or not responding to, provocations (as we shall in this Introduction address the notion of *from the street to the lyric, the lyric to the screen?* in the methodology section. It is the role of this study to 'look askance' and ask: How does the kwaito music video enunciate recuperations, recalibrations and de-sedimentations that elucidate grammars of self-determination (Ka Canham 2023)?

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Kwaitoscapes: Where kwaito never dies

The noun 'scape' is defined as "a long, leafless flower stalk coming directly from a root" (2022). According to the Oxford dictionary, a scape is also "the basal segment of an insect's antenna, especially when it is enlarged and lengthened (as in a weevil)". The neologism *kwaitoscape* suggests that kwaito is a rooted sound system that can flower – provided the ground beneath it is fit for flowering purposes. Which prompts the question: Is kwaito okay? As a base(/bass) of the antenna, *kwaitoscapes* suggest transmissions from a space beyond the layer of the earth. That is to say, *kwaitoscapes* describe a simultaneous rootedness, singularity, indigeneity, *kasiness* [township sensibility], etc. and pan-Africanity, diasporic-ness, Black Consciousness, and multiplicitous *botho* [personhood]. The *kwaitoscape* is a singular multiplicity, what I provoke as being a plura-Africanity.

'Scape' is a word that anglo-literates associate with land, as in 'landscape'. This is not surprising, given that colonialism is a matter of land in its multiplicitous being. Fittingly, there has been important and consistent engagement with this problematic phenomenon of what constitutes 'the landscape'.[11]

Chimurenga's fascinating experiments through critical cartography (2008–present), or ante-cartography – in print, alongside their Pan African Space Station *on-air*, and their *on-land* library that launches and lands in iterative, irregular frequencies and in sometimes unpredictable

[11] See Chapter Three's engagement with Isabel Hofmeyr's (2000) reading of the fence, in the then Northern Transvaal of South Africa, as a colonial attempt at "writing" on the land.

geographies, is perhaps one of the most important provocations on the vast and deep notion of *landscape* in culture and politics.

Hugo ka Canham's *Riotous Deathscapes* (2023) landed in my library three and a half months before the submission of this dissertation for examination. At that time, as it does now, *Riotous Deathscapes* helped me look askance at the *kwaitoscape*. The *kwaitoscape* is replete with the elucidations of '*vusa abalele'* – evocation of the dead, the departed, the buried, the forgotten. *Riotous Deathscapes* captures this zeitgeist perfectly through the Mpondo theory of "ukukhuphuka izizwe" (Ka Canham 2023), which suggests that "black ontology does not have a neat coherence and it is disjunctive" (ibid.: 104-106). Literally, as Ka Canham (2023: 105) orientates us, in the Mpondo conceptual frame, "ukukhuphuka izizwe" is the "emergence of multiple worlds in the experience of [a] possessed person". For Ka Canham, a deeper reading beyond the literal is located in the connotations of boundlessness and non-linearity that exceeds the constructed social world in as far as the human body is conceived i.e. beyond "biocentric constructs" (ibid.: 105). Especially given the life-stage of adolescences when it comes to "ukukhuphuka izizwe", Ka Canham is asking the reader to consider how this frame opens vistas that could "unsettle the moral position of righteousness with riotousness" (ibid: 107). It is for this reason that *kwaitoscapes* offers a way to understand the kwaito visual culture as the queering site/side within the Black Public Humanities. As "a phenomenon of post-apartheid South Africa" (Peterson 2023: 197), kwaito is treated in this study (at least this is an attempt to do so), as a theory-method, suggested by *kwaitoscapes* in the frame of multiplicity and continuous emergence.

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Ayabulela Mhlahlo, who was a respondent at the Meadowlands *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* screening event on 19 May 2022, is on the same discursive plane as Ka Canham when she argues that, "if you are and if you also accept yourself as a multi-dimensional being, you have to cut yourself into smaller pieces" (Mhlahlo in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio II* 2023). The *kwaitoscape* is invested in this 'cutting' of the self into multiple pieces, that convenes in the kwaito music video – or 'visuals' – as the *amapiano* generation calls it.

Mhlahlo links this dismembering to "the black academic traditions" as "certain spiritual trajectories" (ibid.) in a linearity of time that constellates the many ways and forms of loss and recuperation – as a "moving in and out of ancient passages" (ibid.). A meandering and arcing method of *historio-graphic* optic narrativising is the mainstay of the *kwaitoscape*.

Consider the loss and recuperation of the late Brown Dash and Lebo Mathosa, as rememoried by Reece Madlisa and Khanyisa in the 'Heita Hola' music video (2023), that also honours Mandla 'Spikiri' Mofokeng.

> Scene 1: Car-port, Carwash?
>
> Scene 2: A *kasi* extension, narrow street somewhere in South Africa. A lone VW Citi Golf. Gold.
>
> Scene 3: Close/shoulder shot of driver looking fresh, in scotch cap, military green t-shirt. *Mqwebo*. *Mjita*.

Scene 4: *Mbinchi* ya *Mjita* in the passenger seat, looking fresher. Military greens: Mqwebo, earing, *mazaza*, hand on chin looking askance ahead at an exciting adventure.

Scene 5: *Mapantsula*, *kasi* street. Lead duo in black, green and red (and white) costume, *mazaza* in place?

Scene 6: Tennis court. Sister in shades of purple gear. Freshest weave in town.



Figure 5: 'Heita Hola' music video (2023) for the song by Reece Madlisa, featuring Khanyisa, opens with a VW Citi Golf that makes various journeys *ko kasi*, facilitating greetings and honorary gestures to the dead and the living.

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The last decade has witnessed significant sociocultural and economic changes in music-video production and reception in South Africa. These changes have occurred in at least three, intertwined, spheres: technologies of production and dissemination, demographics of producers and directors, and modalities of reception and consumption. These three spheres have a direct impact on the epistemological and ontological roots and routes of the kwaito music video – as they are interdiscursive. Further questions, on the significance and impact of this study, that draw on the framing questions above, as well as the 'Intro', are:

- What is kwaito visual culture? What are kwaito's visual representations?
- What is kwaito's video grammar?
- What are the historical signifiers in kwaito visual culture?
- What do the historical signifiers in kwaito visual culture tell us about the present?

- What is at stake when the economic power relations limit self-representation in the construction of kwaito visual culture?
- How do kwaito artists subvert these sociopolitical imbalances in these visual representations?
- In what ways could these subversions suggest an alternative ecosystem that responds to the power of (self-)representation?

This study considers all of these questions in a methodology that mirrors the factors that influence and impinge on the making, consumption and afterlives of the kwaito music video and kwaito visual culture, in a unique contribution to black studies that I've termed *kwaitoscapes*. Before I formally introduce the methodology, I will briefly *gerula*[12] at the ecosystem to provide preliminary notes on these three spheres of 'change' in the trajectory of *kwaitoscapes* in South Africa:

Technologies of production and dissemination

What are the implications of the *technologies of production and dissemination* for kwaito video grammar? In the mid-1990s South Africa, kwaito videos started to infiltrate the screentime of SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) channels, Bop TV (Bophuthatswana TV), and M-Net. In addition to these, kwaito music videos are now received also through digital satellite television and the World Wide Web, mostly via the mobile phone. With regard to *modalities of reception and consumption*, the availability of the Internet, although by no means equitably accessible across class lines, leads to faster dissemination and consumption of music videos. Again, reception is increasingly via smartphones. This mobile consumption has changed the way people share the pleasures promised by the music video. 'Sharing' tools and possibilities are part of these ecologies of dissemination.

The music video is produced faster than film and television due to the ready availability of video cameras, including mobile phones. This change is further enabled by relatively affordable video-production tools, that are also less cumbersome in size and volume than those traditionally used for film and television, yet produce broadcast-quality audiovisual material. This combination of affordability and agility has a direct influence on output speed, as well as on the kwaito video grammar itself. The video for Lebo Mathosa's 'Siyasiwisa' (2005) serves as an example.[13] What, then, are the implications of the *technologies of production and dissemination* in terms of kwaito video grammar?

Modalities of reception and consumption

The availability of the Internet, although, as mentioned, by no means equitably accessible across class lines, leads to faster dissemination and consumption of music videos, again, largely on smartphones. Arguably, this mobile consumption has changed the way people share these music

[12] Go *gerula* is another means of 'looking askance' (Ka Canham 2023) in the Sepedi language world, in which the glance is a 'side-eye', or 'eye-shot', so to speak. Looking while not looking – to scan the scene.
[13] The handheld video; the prominence of cellphone cameras held by the cast; the use of one location – a township street near a large-scale jazz festival; the insertion of location audio into the soundtrack, and the blurring of professional and amateur casts, signify the improvisational possibilities afforded by a change in the technology for production and dissemination of the music video (circa 2005).

videos. For example, where the duration of film and television programmes suggests a domestic space of sociality – with possible conflicting interests based on age, preferences and privacy – the relatively brief duration of music videos not only enables affordable data usage, but also creates greater peer-to-peer mobile consumption. I argue that this modality of production influences the kwaito video's grammar. For example, the practice of semiotics is challenged in as far as the assessment of what is considered 'broadcast quality'. Online comments, for example, enable critique that disrupts disciplinary expertise, influencing the production personnel in turn.

Demographics of producers and directors

In what ways does this change in the demographics of music video-production personnel mark kwaito video grammar? Two possible factors are critical to the change in music video-production personnel. The first is the prominence of higher-learning institutions offering video production training in post-apartheid South Africa. Most of these private institutions require neither an arts education in high school nor matric exemption. The second is intertwined with *technologies of production and dissemination.* The promise of Internet-based streaming platforms motivates the ecosystem of music-video production in a time when production technologies are relatively accessible. These two factors have led to a significant growth in young black video professionals making kwaito music videos in South Africa.

Scenes from the methodology: *From the street to the lyric, the lyric to the screen, repeat?*

> We start from what looks like criticism, we start from a kind of a critical aspect. For us this critical aspect then begins to take on what looks like fiction.
>
> –The Otolith Group (2011)[14]

The idea of theorising from below, from the ground, and from within becomes a compelling force for this study. As mentioned, the key text is the kwaito music video. The kwaito music video calls for a critical *historio-graphic* approach – of reading kwaito music video as a form of writing histories on screen, in print, and via other visual forms. To focus my reading practices and acts, the *historio-graphic* considers three periods critical to the mapping of major developments in the kwaito music video[15].

The periods under study span 1985 to the present. While the music video for 'Jerusalema' (2020) is by far one of the most popular music videos to hail from South Africa, seen and embodied around the world, the history of music videos on television in South Africa follows the fact that television was first introduced in 1976 in the country. The music video is centred on a central aspect of the *kwaitoscape* – dance. This aspect is present in some of the key music videos of the 1980s, in the precursor genre before kwaito, known as *bubblegum* (Chicco Twala's 'We Can Dance', Sipho Hotstix Mabuse's 'Burn Out', and Brenda Fassie's 'Ag Shame Lovey' all employing dance at the centre of the music video[16]).

[14] FONS ÀUDIO #7: The Otolith Group.
[15] The scope of this doctoral study – in all its 70 000 + words, two essayistic films, prints and a complex methodology – does not attempt to map the history of music video production and broadcast in South Africa. Even at the proposal stage, I identified such an endeavour as an exciting post-doctoral work.
[16] See Hlasane and Peterson (2023) for an analysis of these music videos.

A few notes on the methods

This study is premised on a creative practice employing relational and time-based forms and media, such as interviews, film, sound, and video, along with empirical data analysis and interpretation. This mix is central because, as Ato Quayson (1997: 17) argues, we must pursue a project to theorise not only the mix itself, but the "different configurations" within that mix. In this way, the methodology seeks to "move from the mere detailing of indigenous items in African literary texts to a more rigorous understanding of the relationships between literature, society and culture" (ibid.: 17).

This methodological mix enables an ethical vantage from which to disrupt the linearities of visual, oral and textual registers to read the *kwaitoscape* – to dance in the dust generated by the *kwaitoscape*, so to speak (or write). I would like to think that this *dancing in the dust* to *kwaitoscapes* has already become apparent to you, the reader, by this point of my introduction. That is to say – interviews, film, sound, and video, along with empirical data analysis and interpretation, namely, the reading, writing and making methods – intertwine in this study as both a method and a theory (Ka Canham 2023; Mabena 2022; Quayson 1997). The key document in this study, then, becomes the essayistic videos, *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* and *Sa Koša ke Lerole*.

The Otolith Group (2011) articulate the essayistic as a method that informs film essays, photo essays, video essays and audio essays. Their insistent question is "What it is that your camera can do, that all the other cameras have not done?" (2011). The essayistic form produces a "[s]kepticism and a questioning of the power of the image and the duties of documentary" (ibid.). The Otolith Group describes an essayistic film as "a dissatisfaction with image, which you show through an image. A skepticism towards voice, which you show through using a voice" (2011). They employ an anti-documentary approach through the essayistic in order to articulate a constellatory "representation of truths". According to the collective, "[t]he essayistic is this form, which cancels the difference between these three practices between curating, creating and criticizing" (2011). They further articulate the essayistic form as that which "makes it very hard to understand the difference … The essayistic is a method of linking. A method of creating a constellation" (ibid.).

Banners travelling time and space

Travelling, evolving banners. Banners on the landscape of South Africa promoting music events have been central to the creative research forming part of this study. What if banners could sound? Static and strategic – as situated optic performances, could banners sound out narratives of conquest and naming, defeat and reclamation, defiance and ancestry, colliding in hedonistic poly-phonetics... From the street to the song, from the song to back to the streets, banners are visual musicking objects of *mmino wa setšo* – music of *botho*, music of the people, cultural music, black music[17].

These event banners measuring 110x300mm, made of silkscreen are synonymous with the Southern African landscape, in the townships and rural areas, as well as suburbs. Utilitarian and

[17] The term *botho* is the root term in *setšo* – Sesotho for African humanness, popularly known as Ubuntu – is used here interchangeably to refer to music of the people, the collective noun for black people. As such the term *mmino wa setšo* escapes and eschews categories such as 'traditional', 'world', even 'indigenous' and 'folk'.

ephemeral, these banners are bright, visible and bold as they mark sites of sonic pleasures, and the people who move around and about them.

These street banners, like isiPantsula dance, have 'seen' the evolution of dance music in South Africa for decades. As such, the banners are both a witness and a participant. Much like what is known as kwaito, that simultaneously found a home in, and gave a home to isiPantsula, the banners continue to evolve, while remaining consistent in what they do. Much like isiPantsula and kwaito, their corporeality demands a reckoning. As objects that speak, the banners have a story to tell, from the ground up.

The comparative reading is intentional. First, I borrow from these banners as a printmaker. I make my own banners on fabric. The very first banner, which sits in-place-of-text in Chapter Three to introduce the link for the essayistic video, *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* is conceived as; the story; the script; the treatment; the screenplay and notes for the cinematographer, the editor and the colour grader. After this banner, more banners emerged, as the first one continued to evolve, as did the rest. I make these banners 'move' in my practice as a cultural worker, printmaker, writer, researcher, filmmaker, activist, educator, *historio-graphic* storyteller in this work. They move from what they are as individuals within a collective of other banners, and from their static space into the sites where the essayistic videos are filmed, into the film, and back into the sites where the films are screened.

One of the deepest moments in their trajectory was when I half-buried them in the toxic sands of a mine dump in the outskirts of Meadowlands as an installation/scenography/set for the filming of *Sa Koša ke Lerole* (Chapter Five). Some of the banners, after an hour of submersion, emerged marked by the ground, permanently. In addition, the photographic documentation of the installation/scenography/set exist as a) a photo essay and key scenes in *Sa Koša ke Lerole.*

The gathering: The social life of essayistic videomaking and dissemination

Just as the banners and the story they tell informs the script, so does the iterations of the first essayistic video, *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*. It was intentional that *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* is screened at the very sites and communities where the 'image' was borrowed. This openness is not only to 'give back', but also to be provoked, questioned, challenged, as we discuss in Chapter 4. This 'giving back' then in turn receives. *Sa Koša ke Lerole,* the second essayistic video emerges out of this method, in which the provocations from Mamelodi screening re-directs the story to new dimensions that departs from what I intended during the proposal stages of this research.

I am more interested in the ethics of the *situation* in which the camera finds itself, than in the 'whats' and 'whys' of a moment that does not make it into the final cut of a presented narrative. The narrative I am pursuing is that of the political organisation underpinning the situation in which the camera finds itself – not as documentary evidence but as a generative archive to advance forms of organisation in the production of lens-based narratives. At the heart of this pursuit is a just pedagogical infrastructure, and a dynamic future for lens-based practices. Circular, cyclic storytelling – the remix - enables speculative fiction that starts from the place of song-text as a gateway to excavate narratives that surfaces complex historical trajectories.

Interdiscursivity: Layered storying, and the constellation of stories, storytellers and storytellings

Ato Quayson's (1997: 16) argument of the "interdiscursive" offers us a term to "describe the discernible relationships that inhere between literary texts and the field of conceptual resources". The notion of how (kwaito) visual culture is deployed, encompasses elements related to film, television, print, and dress, and how these are articulated in kwaito music videos. This requires tracing the genealogy of kwaito's visual culture through the reading of the kwaito music video as a significant contributor to black visual culture. In addition to the exploration of kwaito's aesthetics, this study also analyses how kwaito's music-video grammar narrates notions of gender, race and nationalism. The three intersectional spheres of gender, race and nationalism are mobilised in the kwaito music video, with a particular focus on the "interaction between the music video, technology, commercial imperative, and the political" (Eromosele 2022: 385).

The Kwaito music video as secondary material of significant importance in BPH

In all of these, the ethico-political question persists: How do I distinguish documentary from fiction in the kwaito music video? Does 'Tsodio' as song-being, a *lyrico-ficto-mythology*, not signify this methodological option?[18] And if not, then why? Interviews are a critical method in my study – but 'testimony' does not necessarily translate to 'truth'. (In a similar vein, I seek to understand what lies beyond the edit, in this instance, for example, to the *situated lens-based performance* that took place in Mamelodi for *Sesasesi sa Tsodio*.) The 'testimonies' in the narratives being considered in this study are gleaned from close readings of the music videos, such as through the extended reading of the music video for 'Siyasiwisa' in Chapter Two, and the essayistic video, *Sesasesi sa Tsodio*. The slippages and continuities, as well as the contradictions and ambiguities of the kwaito video-grammatical lexicon, inform this mixed-method approach, as well as the opacities and fluidities within and amongst the methods.

Furthermore, my framing of kwaito's visual culture suggests that it exists in relation to other practices in and experiences of societal visual culture – thus the need to use a frame that also explores the intertextual, intradisciplinary nature of the kwaito music video as it relates to orature, literary arts, performance and film, television, dress, dance, visual arts, and print culture. The calibration of all these elements and intentions in kwaito music videos calls for a critical *historio-graphic* approach. In the first instance of the term, such a framing argues that the kwaito music video is a form of writing histories. In the second instance, the 'graphic' points to the politics of representation in kwaito visual culture, as seen in screen, print, and other visual forms.

[18] See Gaztambide-Fernandez and Mignolo (2014)

Chapter breakdown

Chapter One: *Overview of the kwaito family tree and its visual culture; introduction to methodologies and methods*

Chapter One meditates on the past, present and futures of the kwaito music video, while considering that which the kwaito music video *does*. It starts by engaging the genealogy of the music video in southern Africa in order to locate *what* may even be considered 'the kwaito music video'. I pay attention to definitions as well as provide critical analysis of terms that are most prominent in kwaito, and consider how these definitions and terms could inform the reading of kwaito visual culture broadly, and the kwaito music video specifically. Chapter One is a primer for comprehending the ways in which kwaito defines and articulates itself, before delving into the kwaito music video as a visual text – not only of kwaito 'music' but also of being black in South Africa, and beyond. *Situated lens-based performances*, *geo-graphic territories*, and *geo-philosophical ontologies* are key themes that this chapter unpacks to table articulations of gender, race and nationalism in the kwaito music video.

From thereon, the chapter further engages tangential terms that speak to the kwaito lexicon, in relation to broader discourses in black studies, visual culture, and representation. The chapter also introduces methodologies that have implications for this study. In this context of the relative absence of scholarship on the kwaito music video, my approach to literature is experimental. By experimental, I mean that the kwaito music video, kwaito itself, and kwaito visual culture, in broad terms, are the points of departure for the formulation of the theoretical framework and the concomitant constellations of philosophies, ideas and forms therein, in line with the practice of "tapping into the African knowledge archive and engaging with the ontological narratives of African people" (Nyoka 2020: xii).

Chapter Two: *Reading the kwaito music video*

This chapter is an intertextual and interdiscursive analysis of selected music videos from South Africa, past and present. The analysis is mobilised through three interlocking and interdependent frameworks: *situated lens-based performances*, *geo-graphic territories*, and *geo-philosophical ontologies.* Using these frameworks, the chapter engages with articulations of gender, race and nationalism in the kwaito music video, and makes use of methodologies that have implications for the study in Chapter One.

Chapter Three: *Sesasedi sa Tsodio (2021)* essayistic video

Sesasedi sa Tsodio anticipates *Sa Koša ke Lerole* (chapter 5) i.e. the ground, the dust that does what it does – does it choke? Does it conceal? Reveal on a "different *styl-eh* like Trompies" in 1995, or indeed Lebo Mathosa in 1999? It prepares the reader-viewer-experiencer to find a language and a sensibility – grammar – to dwell in the meaning making complexities of landedness and landlessness. The propelling pace, charged and underscored by the multiplicitious interdiscursive writing on each frame brings together the key frameworks of *situated lens-based performances*, *geo-philosophical ontologies* and *geo-graphic territories* gleaned from the kwaito music video.

Chapter Four: *Theorising from/with the dust: Exploring the work I produce in conversation with the written text and kwaito's visual culture*

This chapter engages the creative work-in-progress accompanying this study, in relation to broader theories in black studies, visual culture, and representation. The chapter further explores visual history documents – some accessed from archives, others sourced or retrieved (including through conducting interviews) by myself as part of the research.

Chapter Five: *Historio-graphic narratives of Kwaito's visual culture*

This chapter is submitted with the final dissertation as a symbolic object. The 'object' consists of an essayistic video that poetically interweaves the dissertation with the creative work to deepen notions of 'theorising from the ground'. The essayistic video, titled *Sa Koša ke Lerole* (2023) is an interdiscursive mix between an essayistic video, a documentary, an appendix, and a feature film. Key content of the *Sa Koša ke Lerole* is a selection of responses and activities from the *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* screening tours that took place at the very sites of filming S*esasedi sa Tsodio*, namely, Mamelodi, Mahikeng and Meadowlands. Where *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* is frenetic, breathless and seemingly disparaging, *Sa Koša ke Lerole* is slow, implicative and expansive, despite the recurrence of dust and polluted waters that threaten to choke, suffocate and poison.

Chapter Six: *Towards a ~~Conclusion~~*

Chapter One

ON THE TELEVISION AS 'ATOMIC BOMB' AND OTHER 'POISONOUS' STORIES[19]: AN INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW OF KWAITO VISUAL CULTURE



Figure 6: Screenshots from the music video for 'Tjovitjo' (2018), made for the song by Spikiri. Produced by Lodi Matsetela at Puo Pha Productions, directed by Jeremiah Mosese and Vincent Moloi. Courtesy of Puo Pha Productions.[20]

[19] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Television_in_South_Africa. As I expand later in footnote number 15, this study will not be able to, within its scope, cover the ground required to discuss the history of television broadcast (within which the music video production and broadcast fall). That endeavour is future work suggested, prompted and promoted or actually indeed acknowledged by this thesis, to be carried - and/or *is* - by ourselves or present-future generations.

[20] Puo Pha Productions produced the television series *Tjovitjo*, and the song 'Tjovitjo' by Spikiri was created in that context, although the series does not have an official 'soundtrack'.

In this chapter, I pay attention to definitions as well as critically analyse terms that are most prominent in kwaito, and consider how these definitions and terms could inform the reading of kwaito visual culture broadly, and the kwaito music video specifically.

As the screenshots from 'Tjovitjo' (2018) above show, the kwaito music video, and kwaito visual culture, are replete with insightful propositions and experiments in which there is an engagement with specific ontological narratives while critiquing Eurocentrism – in a generative and generous fashion. How else to proceed, then, than to pay special attention to kwaito itself, on its own terms? What are the complications we have to face if and when we face a genre on its own terms, insofar as definitions are concerned? Kwaito – the term and its sonic lexicon – is deeply syncretic. As such, it is important to start from a place of defining the sound itself, before we are able to delve into kwaito's visual culture.

The screenshots that open this chapter are taken from only one of hundreds of kwaito music videos. In fact, this particular music video has not had the privilege of being aired on the national broadcaster. The circumstances around its production and circulation (or lack thereof, in this case) are beyond the scope of this study – rather, that this visual document exists, especially in the context of a television drama that flighted on national television (and winning six awards at the South African Film and Television Awards of 2018, and receive a mention in Parliament[21]), is telling and important in a discussion of kwaito visual culture. What the screenshots, and the music video, represent is a syncretism that would not be so obviously kwaito were it not for the *pantsula* references therein. Outside of the *pantsula* dancers in the foreground of the largest image, and 'Omama Bomthandazo'[22] in the mid-ground, and Spikiri on a phone against a car in the background, we see, in the three smaller images: a rose; the burning of a *dompas* (apartheid passbook); and an atomic bomb detonating in an unnamed location. How do these diverse scenarios and symbols end up in a kwaito music video for a song by one of kwaito's key pioneers (Mandla 'Spikiri' Mofokeng, for the song 'Tjovitjo' (2018), that also being the name of the television series that flighted in 2017 on SABC 1)?

bell hooks' contention that "[cinema] assumes a pedagogical role in the lives of many people" comes to mind – that people can "go to [movies] to be entertained … to learn stuff" (2009: 2). The kwaito music video has left a legacy in which viewers learn 'new' dance moves – in the case of the music video for 'Tjovitjo', this is clear. However, it is also clear that outside of entertainment, or learning dance moves, the kwaito music video, like cinema, as argued by hooks, can engender learning "about race, sex, and class", sometimes even more "than from all the theoretical literature" (ibid.: 3). This is due to how kwaito music videos, like cinema "not only provide a narrative for specific discourses of race, sex, and class, they provide a shared experience, a common starting point from which diverse audiences can dialogue about these charged issues" (ibid.: 3). Hooks,

[21] Jedi Ramalapa reflects on this: https://sowhatsart.wordpress.com/2017/09/06/tjovitjo-im-sorry-what/. There is a dizzyingly careless and compacted grammar to Ramalapa's write up of the Parlimentary intervention via Tjovtjo to Soith Africa's political x populat cutlureula nternetyon or lack thereof …

[22] Here I am intentionally spotlighting the title by Samthing Soweto, whose track, 'Omama Bomthandazo' from the album *Isiphithiphithi* (2019) is a tribute to prayerful black mothers, read as "prayer warriors" by Vuz'umuzi Phakathi (2020).

(2009: 3-4) notes further on how one of the ways in which film (and here I find applicability to the kwaito music video[23]) is able to do this:

> Often multiple standpoints are expressed in an existing film. A film may have incredibly revolutionary standpoints merged with conservative ones. This mingling of standpoints is often what makes it hard for audiences to critically "read" the overall filmic narrative. While audiences are clearly not passive and are able to pick and choose, it is simultaneously true that there are certain "received" messages that are rarely mediated by the will of the audience.

What hooks emphasises, with a focus on cinema, is similarly true for the music video and, in my focus, the kwaito music video. It is not only common but also vital that audiences engage in the consumption of the kwaito music video in a manner that does not "feel more like work than pleasure" (hooks 2009: 4). But this does not mean that the same work of pleasure is disposable – as hooks describes, "It's awesome when a creative work can charge my critical batteries …" (ibid.: 5). The example of the music video for 'Tjovitjo' does this for me (one of the scenarios that enters the music video is the burning of the passbooks, evoking the March 1960 PAC-led event in Sharpeville that led to a massacre of black people by apartheid forces).

The music video for 'Tjovitjo' (2018) is therefore far more politically explicit compared to that of 'Thobela' (1996). What both these ('Tjovitjo' and 'Thobela') kwaito music videos suggest – made twenty-three years apart in a 'post-apartheid' South Africa – is that black popular culture can and does speak for itself. Considering the music video as that which follows, or comes after, the piece of music as a sonic text, the kwaito music video is a *historio-graphic* representation of the conditions that gave birth to the music, which is to say – *the kwaito music video writes alongside the kwaito sonic text*.

Where the commercial imperative of the music video in popular culture dictates that the music video sells the artist and the song (Eromosele 2022), the kwaito music video spills beyond the sonic script and engenders an appreciation of the social and political conditions of 'being-black-in-the-world', both historically and into the present (Manganyi 2019/1973). This chapter is a primer for comprehending the ways in which kwaito defines and articulates itself, before I delve into the kwaito music video as a visual text not only of kwaito 'music' but also of being black in South Africa and beyond.

The kwaito music video has not received sustained study in kwaito scholarship. My study thus considers the kwaito music video as the least – if at all – studied site of knowledge production in popular culture coming out of South Africa. To appreciate the complexities of representation in the kwaito music video requires reading the *historio-graphic* citations that take place in these videos. Thus the need to examine the politics of representation in the thematic and visual histories of kwaito.

[23] Including in the example of the music video for 'Tjovitjo', as well as in many other music videos at the centre of analysis in this thesis, and in the essayistic videos, *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* and *Sa Koša ke Lerole* that forms part of this study.

Since my study is concerned with kwaito visual culture, I am interested in the manner in which the kwaito music video's grammar operates in kwaito's genealogies. Following kwaito, styles such as *gqom*[24] and *amapiano*[25], as well as *dust*, *new age kwaito*, and *skhanda*[26] have carried a music video grammar that echoes distinct patterns and unique features making up what I call kwaito's visual culture, one that is intergenerational, inter-genre, and intradisciplinary in its citational practices. Some of these *historio-graphic* citations can be discerned in the video for Moozlie's 'Sfun'kwazi' (2019), that references the music video of Brenda Fassie's 'Ag Shame Lovey' (1987), and the video to K.O.'s 'Caracara' (2014), referencing that of 'Tabalaza' (2004) by Trompies member, Donald Duck. In this cross-referencing, there is a discernible visual pattern/lexicon that traverses the boundaries of strict musical genres. It is this traversal of musical genres, suggested by the kwaito video's grammatical lexicon, that asks for a *historio-graphic* framework in my study.

A *historio-graphic* study is a lens through which to read kwaito visual culture within a broader constellation of trans-local black visual cultural practices. The kwaito music video reflects and responds to visual motifs found in music videos of South African musical/cultural practices, such as *bubblegum*, as well as those in Caribbean and North American black music, especially *reggae*, *R & B* and *hip-hop*.

Ntate Ngaka Ephraim Mabena (2022) insists on the importance of discerning the neglect – *ukwakumkanya* (Ka Canham 2023) of indigenous knowledge systems' traditions, i.e. his distrust of that "varsity level, and le ka English, e kima!" in a manner that brings us closer to Ato Quayson's (1997: 16) argument of the "interdiscursive". As stated earlier, Quayson defines 'interdiscursive' as a term to "describe the discernible relationships that inhere between literary texts and the field of conceptual resources" (ibid.). As we shall read/see in Chapter Two, the kwaito music video intercepts the spaces between a variety of texts, in a manner that surpasses both the written and the oral – a mediator of living experiences. Further, the kwaito music video complicates the urban/rural dichotomy, i.e. in the representation of the township vis-à-vis the city/suburb, in which there are translations, transpositions and *trans-inscriptions* that shift the lens of seeing in the kwaito music video. In fact, these translations, transpositions and *trans-inscriptions* go beyond

[24] Described as "skeletal, robotic, unsettling and irresistible" (Ben Murphy, *Fat Mag*: 2016), "dark and hypnotic", "visceral, rough-edged, minimal form of house" (Huw Oliver, *The Guardian*: 2016), and "kwaito's errant, teenaged child" (Kwanele Sosibo, *Mail & Guardian*: 2016), *gqom* developed in the townships of Durban, circa 2010. The descriptions of *qgom* always mention the influence and lineage of kwaito. The name *qgom* is an onomatopoeic Zulu phrase referring to the drum, or more closely '*sghubu*', kwaito's unofficial name. It is a drum-heavy sound, laced with scintillating synth melodies and vocals.

[25] *Amapiano*, the newest musical genre in South Africa, takes its name from the electronic piano that dominates most of the songs. Contrary to SAMA's position, speculative descriptions claim *amapiano* as a "mix between deep house, gqom […] with jazzy, soulful sound of a piano" (Prospect: 2018). To me, *amapiano* is deeply rooted in the kwaito experimental underground sound known as *gong*, characterised by heavy bass-driven melodies with minimal or no vocals, and solos in piano and horns. In fact, to me, *amapiano* is rooted less in house and more in kwaito than *gqom*, but I should not digress.

[26] *Skhanda*, *dust*, and *new age kwaito* are subgenres of *hip-hop*. Their influence can be traced back to experiments by Skwatta Kamp, SPEX, HHP, H20, and Pro-Kid in the early 2000s, who started incorporating southern African indigenous languages into traditional rap. What marks *skhanda*, *dust*, and *new age kwaito* artists from the acts mentioned above, is that their use of language is dominated by direct samples of kwaito lyrics and beats. Further, *skhanda*, *dust*, and *new age kwaito* artists acknowledge the influence of kwaito in press interviews, in their music, and in their music videos.

material space-time, if we consider this intro from the song ‘Masimbela’ (1998), by TKZee, a ‘definition’ of kwaito served as a poem/praise poem/*isibongo* in *scamtho*:

In the beginning he created the groove
And with that groove he made us smooth
And it? set our souls free

Kwaito is a way of life

... yeah

And makes you reach out and raise your hands in the air

... yeah yeah!

To sing a song of peace
To sing a song of happiness

... yeah

Kwaito is our release

... yeah

It shines? and souls? shows at three o’clock in the morning (like a tokoloshe]

... on and on and on…

On and on and on…

In the beginning there was the truth

... you don't know!?

And in that truth there was the sound

Ngiyabona awazi abantu

It picks up off the ground
The beating of the drum
The bottom of the bass
The pump? fives? and snares …

Make you throw your hands in the air

... hallelujah!!!

Can you feel it?

... yeah

Like I feel it…?

… I feel it

"It is clear that to speak of the oral background to literary writings is to implicitly invoke a notion of the intervention of writing in a conceptual arena of flux", Quayson (1997: 13) argues. Masimbela's sonic lexicon can take the test[27] I set in 'Sgubhu Solidarities: Sonic family trees as Kwaito writing for itself' (2018). From the intro to the outro, and everything in between, Masimbela emerges with flying colours.[28] The Radio Web MACBA platform writes about the work of The Otolith Group in this way, too – I quote at length for its purchase on 'Masimbela's composition, writing, arrangement, and performance specifically, and for reading the *historio-graphic* narratives of Kwaito's visual culture, generally:

> Past, present and future are interspersed throughout the group's work with the same intensity as reality and fiction, ~~thus destabilising the dominant narratives of Western culture and indicating the inconsistencies of the post-colonial world.~~ Theirs is a science fiction of the present, which recovers forgotten moments from history and projects them into the future. Sagar and Eshun's work is best approached by putting aside the traditional methodological boundaries between *creators, critics and curators*. (Otolith Group: 2011) (emphases my own)

The Otolith Group play with research data: "[T]he sound goes one way, the image … three elements that are traveling on their own path. The sound touch[es] the image as it's traveling on its way onto the horizon" (Otolith Group: 2011). That way, in terms of sound, in the essayistic framework, "orality has to be taken as a cultural rather than as merely a technological concept. For, the means by which people remember are ultimately tied to important cultural forms of coding" (Quayson 1997: 14).

The essayistic can best be understood by thinking through the lens of 'being-black-in-the-world', as penned by N. Chabani Manganyi (2019/1973) – an experiment on 'African Time' (ibid.: 97), an exploration of thematics that continue to nurture and celebrate the black radical tradition "on and on and on …", as TKZee (1998) proclaims. TKZee's 'Masimbela' (1998) draws oralities from across southern Africa, including Famo of Lesotho, all the way to the United States of America black world's sonic being-ness. Quayson (1997: 16) has this to offer in this regard:

> Yet the notion of an interrelationship between orality and literature renders the term intertextual fragile as a descriptive of such a relationship because of the privileging of the physical text that the term implies. This is because the semiotics of a culture does not always require prior textualization. This is a particularly relevant premise in the general context of an indigenous resource-base which may be said to be constituted not just by

[27] The text consider's Spikiri's 2011 song 'Skeem Sam' as a kwaito sonic lexicon I which five key elements of kwaito takes centre stage: Sghubu (a term that surpasses kwaito, but made promiment in popular music by kwaito); Whistle (or vluit, as a sonic element surpassing kwaito, but also found a home in it); Call & Response (elemets of a conversational lyrical/phonetic interplay); Bass (bass-driven and grounded snoic palate); Ugugawula (the darker side of sonic citation, I this song referred to as 'chopping' other people's styles)

[28] Listening advised: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3vNYyRsFY8.

representative oral and written texts, but also motifs, symbols, ritual gestures and even unarticulated assumptions.

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Figure 7: Installation view of the *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* set, with banners by Rangoato Hlasane. Set design by Marie Fricout, assisted by Sibusiso Khumalo, Gift Mangena, Nono Motlhoki, and Gillian Fleischmann. King Kong Jozi, Troyeville, Johannesburg, February 2021. Photograph by Bongani Mndaweni.

> "It is useful, then, to transfer the notion of an inter-semiotic relationship between systems, left implicit in the usage of the term intertextuality, to a new terrain that would not privilege physical texts as such. The codes of the interrelating cultural, sociological and literary systems undergo transposition into one another to produce in literature something not always recognizable as belonging to any system. The idea of literature we may derive from a notion of an inter-semiotic space is not of the literary text as reflective surface but as an arena of what Alain Villa (1988), in outlining a sociology of literature, describes as 'prismatic effects.'" (Quayson 1997: 16)

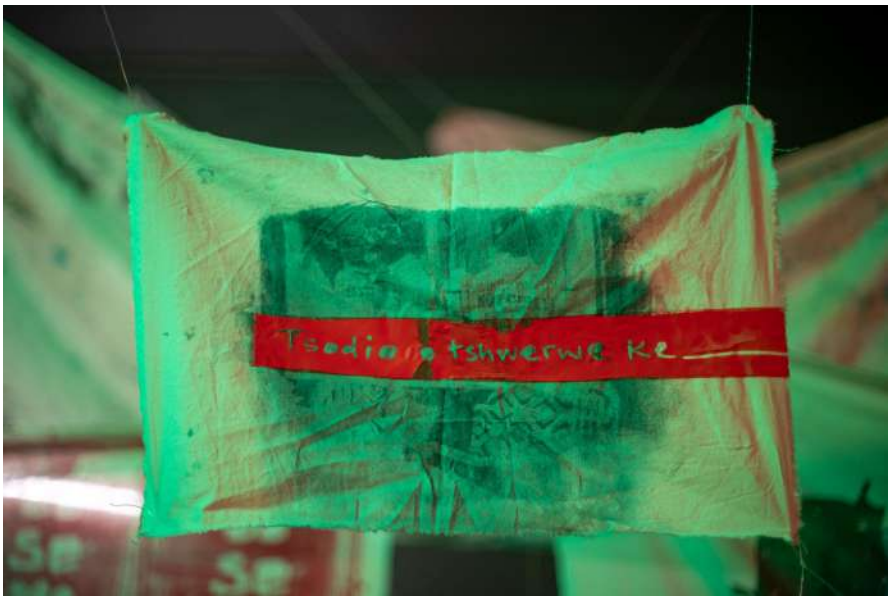

Figure 8: Installation view of the *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* set, with banners by Rangoato Hlasane. Set design by Marie Fricout, assisted by Sibusiso Khumalo, Gift Mangena, Nono Motlhoki, and Gillian Fleischmann. King Kong Jozi, Troyeville, Johannesburg, February 2021. Photograph by Bongani Mndaweni.

> "The term interdiscursive can also be used to denote the relationship between texts, since, in many ways that relationship is between different discourses constituted at the meeting point between the literary and the non-literary." (Quayson 1997: 17)



Figure 9: Installation view of the *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* set, with banners by Rangoato Hlasane. Set design by Marie Fricout, assisted by Sibusiso Khumalo, Gift Mangena, Nono Motlhoki, and Gillian Fleischmann. King Kong Jozi, Troyeville, Johannesburg, February 2021. Photograph by Bongani Mndaweni.

> "The notion of will-to-identity yields a simultaneous concern with the African nationstate as the implicit horizon, the political unconscious of the literary enterprise as it were, as well as a concern with projecting a viable identity outwards into the global arena. And so it is possible to discern in the writers to be discussed a constant concern with the processes of

nation-state formation in both direct and indirect ways, revealing an imaginative sensibility that has the political horizon as an important defining signified. This notion of African writing as a will-to-identity […] pronouncements about the function of African writing in seeking to recuperate a sense of self-worth for the African people." (Quayson 1997: 17)



Figure 10: Installation view of the *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* set, with banners by Rangoato Hlasane. Set design by Marie Fricout, assisted by Sibusiso Khumalo, Gift Mangena, Nono Motlhoki, and Gillian Fleischmann. King Kong Jozi, Troyeville, Johannesburg, February 2021. Photograph by Bongani Mndaweni.

"In relation to the projection of indigenous resources, a variety of positions may be discerned. In the writing to be discussed here, the basic tendency that is elaborated is one towards mythopoesis rather than straightforward realism. The resource-base of mythopoesis itself generates an interesting configuration of ideas to do with heroism and the establishment and transgression of boundaries. These ideas furnish a sort of subtext to the work of writers we will look at, in that there is frequently an elaboration of liminal boundaries from various perspectives in their work." (Quayson 1997: 18)

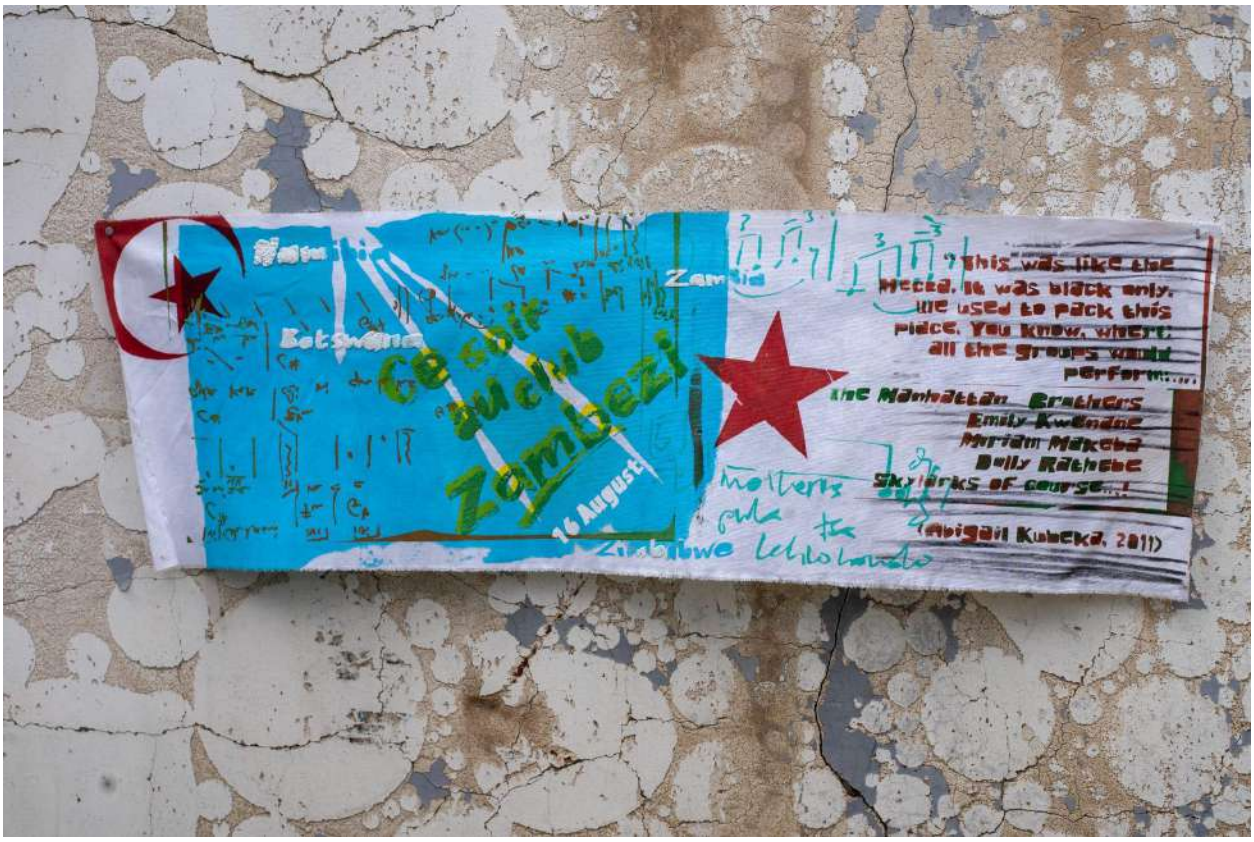

Figure 11: Installation view of the *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* location, with banners by Rangoato Hlasane. Set design by Marie Fricout, assisted by Nono Motlhoki and Gillian Fleischmann. Old Rondavels, Mamelodi, Tshwane, February 2021. Photograph by Bongani Mndaweni.

> "[…] literary criticism that is at once not just literary and historiographic but also interdisciplinary." (Quayson 1997: 18)

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On kwaito's definitions, from the inside out

Kwaito has amassed wide-ranging reception from society: the black youth themselves, their parents and grandparents, the media and its practitioners, academia, and even the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa (Peterson 2003). Kwaito's historiography has many problems and slippages (Zwane 2019). Three of the narratives that have dominated the discourse have to do with: kwaito's origins, how kwaito 'started', and what kwaito's social ills are. With regard to the third discourse, this is not to say that there have not also been positive appraisals or defences/rebuttals to the negative criticism.

This said, this study concerns itself less with what kwaito does, as that has been the emphasis of much of the kwaito scholarship for well over two decades. As such, how kwaito is defined – including by itself – is critical as a point of entry into this chapter, as captured by TKZee's 'Masimbela' and Boom Shaka's earlier and following citations, as well as many others that are central to this study.

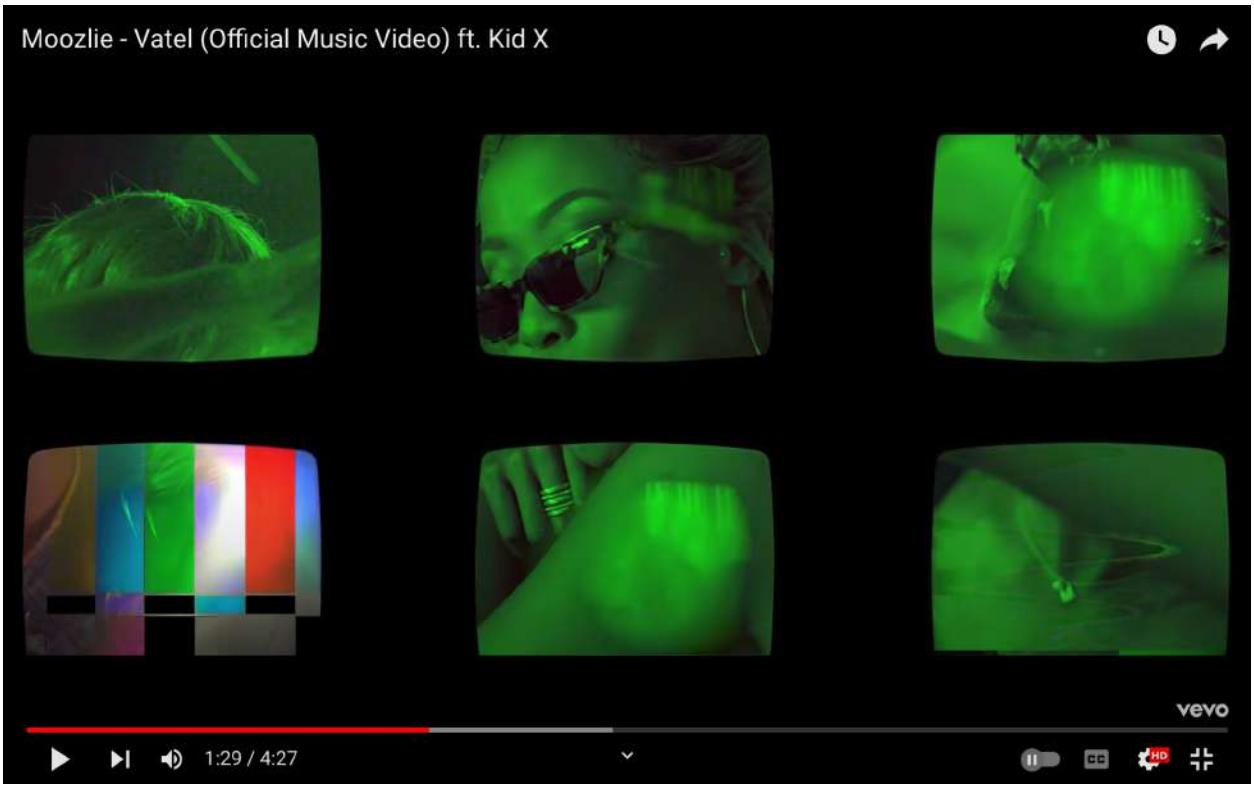


Figure 13: "Manje se bangbona e mabonakude" raps Moozlie in the new shade of kwaito piece, 'Vatel' (2018).

Given that this study is concerned with kwaito's visual culture, the introduction to this chapter serves to ground the reader in kwaito's sonic texts, and how *kwaito defines itself*. Before I do, however, I need to provide a cartography of how kwaito has been defined and described by kwaito 'others'. Following this definitional map, I will then attempt to listen to *kwaito's own definition*. Such an exercise will be generative for how we engage kwaito visual culture, since to listen to *kwaito's own definition* is critical to how I arrive at the terms of analysis that this research aims to introduce to kwaito's body of knowledge and scholarship insofar as kwaito visual culture can be theorised.

Toni Walker (2019) offers one of these useful definitions:

> Born in the *townships* of *Soweto*, Kwaito fuses *elements of traditional South African music* with other genres throughout the *African diaspora* such as *house, hip hop*, and *dancehall*. Traditionally characterized by its *slow* tempo *house* beats, Kwaito has evolved into *various subgenres* that also experiment with the *house* sound. (emphasis my own)

The "*elements of traditional South African music*" is important, for even though there is no mention of the "traditional … music", the definition foregrounds a genealogy of kwaito within South Africa before looking across the Atlantic and elsewhere. Walker's observation that "Kwaito has evolved into *various subgenres*" is also useful, for it foregrounds the temporalities and continuities of kwaito, especially in its evolution from previous genres (the first in the chronology being *bubblegum*, a genre which many kwaito pioneers participated in). Bhekizizwe Peterson and I emphasise these continuities and temporalities in the following way: "The use of 1994 is a

temporal marker that should not be simplified to mean that its creators, aesthetics or patrons were not part of, in diverse and complicated manners, cultural practices of the preceding decades" (Hlasane & Peterson 2022: 347). In an earlier overview, I also provide a link between kwaito and the key genre forming part of the intergenerational genealogies:

> By the late 80s, some artists were forging new sounds, which ultimately gave rise in the 90s to kwaito. One of the artists who bridged the gap was Senyaka, hailed by some as the 'Godfather of African rap', for others as the first kwaito artist. Some of his hits include 'Go Away' (1989), 'Ma-Gents' (1993), 'Mampara' (1995), 'Fong Kong' (a 1998 duet with 80s star Kamazu as Hunger Boyz) and 'Chesa Mpama' (1999, as part of the DJ Walker project). His more recent material includes 'Romeo O A Nkolota' (2001) and 'Sawa' (2006). Another new school pioneer was the late Spokes H, who entered the scene in 1987 with 'Tamati So'. Spokes H's earnest, matter-of-fact lyrics on hits such as 'Peace Magents' (1997) off the *Rafifi* album gained him fans of all ages. He also produced for other artists, such as Cee Bee of 'Home Boy' (1994) fame. (Hlasane 2014)

My brief overview of the direct transition between *bubblegum* and kwaito (in that order) is in conversation with Zwane, who posits that: "Anyone familiar with the history of black music in South Africa's townships will know that musical styles such as *marabi*, *kwela* and *mbaqanga* are hybrids of their own, which complicate the simplistic binary between what is considered 'traditional' and 'modern'" (2018: xv). Zwane's list of "*traditional South African music*", considered precursors as well as the build-up to *bubblegum,* from which kwaito follows and builds, foregrounds the syncretism of music.

By now it is clear, however, that Walker's definition is not without its problems. The first problem is the 'born in the townships of Soweto' claim, which is contestable, considering that Joe Nina, from the then East Rand (Ekurhuleni), is one of the key co-founders, and Oscar 'Oskido' Mdlongwa, Bruce 'Dope' Sebitlo, Don Laka, and Chris 'DJ Christos' Katsaitis – established co-pioneers of kwaito, who built kwaito in Hillbrow – all come from different parts of the country and met at different points and places (for example, Oskido met Bruce and Thebe in Mahikeng and urged them to come to Joburg – to Hillbrow – after hearing their 'kwaito' before it had a name).

This part of the genealogy is not meant to erase people like Arthur Mafokate and Mdu Masilela who do, actually, come from Soweto. Walker's pinpointing of Soweto as the group of townships claiming the birth of kwaito is problematic, but is in generative conversation with Njabulo Zwane, whose "conception of kwaito is entangled with the post-1994 township sub-culture known as *loxion* culture" and is invested in "kwaito as it relates to township youths" (2018: ix). However, as I discuss in Chapter Two, Zwane's thesis serves as a

> recognition of Black youths' refusal to be completely bound to the township that they were born and raised in, the townships of Alexandra, Tembisa and Soweto and the *inner city* of Johannesburg together make up [an] integrated site of study. (2018: vi – emphasises my own).

Zwane's inclusion of the inner city of Johannesburg is an interesting move that, again, forms part of the discussion in Chapter Two with regard to the kwaito music video's articulation of *geo-graphic territories* and *geo-philosophical ontologies*. Further, his inclusion of Alexandra and Tembisa moves the conversation further away from Soweto as the hegemonic site of kwaito, in contrast to Walker. Yet, Zwane's study is specific in terms of scope, as it is concerned with the phenomenon of how "young Black people have always been moving across what was then known as the Witwatersrand area (now called Gauteng Province)" (2018: vi).

The second problem is the heavy emphasis on *house* – mentioned three times in the quoted paragraph – in the 'character' of kwaito. There are as many *hip-hoppy* and *dancehally* kwaito songs as there are *housey* kwaito songs. But the problem doesn't start nor end with this; there are also as many *R & B-ish* and *jazzy* kwaito songs. In fact, it is telling that, in the definition, the African diasporic sounds at the heart of kwaito are listed (*house, hip-hop*, and *dancehall*), and yet the *traditional South African music* genres are not. Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 347) offer a more expansive, yet not necessarily exhaustive genealogy of influences that inform kwaito:

> Similarly, in as much as house music is a useful aesthetic and temporal marker in the origins of kwaito, it should not be concluded that other genres (kiba, mbaqanga, maskandi, bubblegum, gospel, soul, R&B, reggae and so on) are not deeply laced into kwaito.

The emphasis on *house*, in Walker's definition, as a core character of kwaito, is informed by the dominant narrative of how the kwaito pioneers who started as *house* DJs slowed down the songs as an experiment in which vocalists sang/rapped/chanted over them (*VUMA: A Music Revolution* 2009). However, this narrative, although true, is not the only story. Much like the inaccurate claim of the townships of Soweto being the birthplace of kwaito, some of the pioneers did not invent kwaito as DJs, but as producers who actually played instruments, such as Joe Nina, Mandla Mofokeng and Mdu Masilela, to mention but three.

In an interview with Joe Nina in 2015, he described to me the other branch of the kwaito family tree, one that speaks to mentorship by *bubblegum* artists of those who became the pioneers of kwaito, such as himself (Joe Nina), Mdu Masilela, and Mandla 'Spikiri' Mofokeng. These kwaito pioneers were not DJs, and therefore did not, technically speaking, 'slow down' foreign sounds, as implied in the popular narrative. However, they did do something to these foreign imports. What they did, as kwaito instrumentalists and composers, was to 'smuggle' original compositions into cover albums, instigated by local imprints of international popular 'international' releases by/from labels such as EMI and Gallo. Some of these covers include albums such as the *Mixmasters* by Oscar Mdlongwa (1992), and *Groove City Import Mixes* by Arthur Mafokate, Tim White, Gabi le Roux et al. (c. 1993). Some of the kwaito precursors that emerged from this said 'smuggling' include 'Boss of the Road' (1992) by LA Jam (Joe Nina and Mdu Masilela), later sampled by Arthur Mafokate in 'Vuvuzela' (1997), and TKZee in 'Mambotjie' (1998). It is significant that these later samples by Mafokate and TKZee borrowed Joe Nina and Mdu Masilela's inventive bassline that gave kwaito its distinctive sound, as I discuss later.

Further, these pioneer figures that I have listed – all male, by the way – are not the only pioneers. In fact, it is perhaps important to listen a bit before we write, and why not Boom Shaka, again, as listened to by Zukolwenkosi Vilakazi (2019: 8):

> For the band it is a celebration of South Africa's jazz pioneers; a slow dancehall beat which is later infused with electronic synth chords plays as Mathosa sings the hook 'siyaShebeleza' making way for Junior Sokhela who raps his experience of music he grew up listening to and the influence this has had on him as a musician. Shebeleza is something the band does in Mathosa's call, as the rest of the band responds 'siyabashebeleza' suggesting that it is done for 'them': an array of jazz singers who are praised by name who are then mentioned. It expresses a filial attachment through the speech act: to shebeleza Miriam Makeba, to shebeleza Letta Mbulu, or Hugh Masekela, suggesting an obligation, in praise of, a continuity, to pay tribute to, to honour, to celebrate, to shebeleza.

Vilakazi listens to Boom Shaka's 'Shebeleza' the way Zwane urges us to. Yet, what Vilakazi fails to highlight, is how woman-centric Boom Shaka's list is. Masekela is one of the seven other women sounded/cited in the song 'Shebeleza'. This is significant, for in the song before 'Shebeleza', in the same album (*Boom Shaka*, 1995), they again keep it woman-centric, only let down by the male-centricity of the Kalawa Jazmee record roll call they probably had to include in the list. In 'Shebeleza', the song-text tracks the sonic lineage, and how deeply it is entrenched on the 'street':

> *I was brought up in the world of classical world of funky music*
> *the one you thought it was useless I picked it and used it*
> *I know you keep wondering how Junior did it*
> *just a drumbeat a* ***bassline*** *and fused it*
> *I've been walking down the streets*
> *studying all the space/beats*
> *breaking funky beats*
> *and searching for the hits* ('Shebeleza', Boom Shaka, 1995 – emphasis my own)

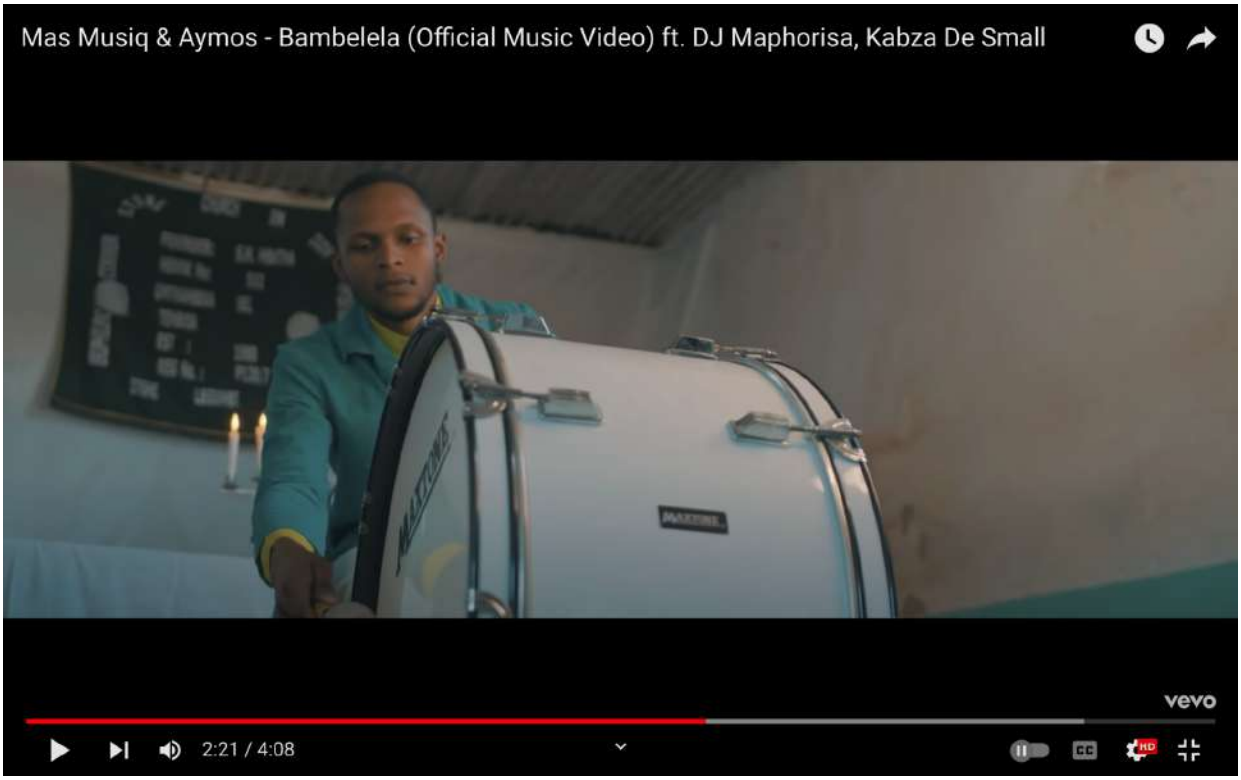
One of the respondents at the Arts Research Africa International Conference at the Wits School of Arts (September 2022), Zanele Madiba, asked a question after my screening and framing of *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* (2021). The question intimated a caution around investing value in doing research on what is considered a 'dying' genre – namely, kwaito. While this question is pivotal, we argue elsewhere about the continuous rebuttal of kwaito's eulogy (Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 347). Such a question, then, is perhaps interesting in its diagnostic nature.

There is no value in declaring, or rather discussing, a death of a musical genre. The generative question – a diagnostic rather than an autopsying one – is: Why is kwaito dying? Such a question is invested in the recuperative use of the archive, and is attendant to the past, presents and futures of black cultural work. As such, this chapter will attempt to diagnose kwaito from where it currently is – not as a dead genre, but perhaps as an ailing one. In a nurturing spirit, we will look at and 'listen' to its 'cries', not only to heal it, but to actually listen to its evolutions and revolutions. This way, we can actually 'see' the state of its being. If we are to listen, we may start with the 2022 EP by Kabza de Small and Kwesta, the former with allegiance to *amapiano* and the latter to *hip-hop,* who came together to make what is, in essence, a tribute to kwaito, with *Speak N Vrostaan* (2022). The title itself is a lexical marker.

The bassline

The first response comes via Ntone Edjabe, in a personal conversation suggesting that kwaito started 'dying' when it discarded the bass. I will return to this observation later, but for now there are a few remarks to make that relate. The *hip-hop* subgenre titled 'skhanda', and sometimes 'dust', with proponents such as K.O., Kid-X and Ma-E, borrow freely and largely from the kwaito sonic sensibilities in terms of sound – particularly the treatment of the bass – as well as the kwaito vocal lexicon itself. There are a number of hit songs from Cashtime and Skhanda Republic labels that serve as critical examples. These *hip-hop* subgenres gained popularity circa 2014, although their emergence forms part of the temporalities and continuities that also encompass other rap genres, that also embraced and borrowed from kwaito, although did not employ the kwaito bass as part of their sonic lexicon. Here one might explore *motswako* and the work of PRO (formerly Pro-Kid), Skwatta Kamp, H20, Baphixile, Bongo Maffin, and others. What is common in these examples is the use of vernacular in their reinvention of rap. There were also other kwaito artists who blurred the line between kwaito and *hip-hop*, such as Zola, Mapaputsi, Kabelo, etc., whose raps demanded and gained respect from rappers and appreciators of rap.

And then there was *amapiano*, the latest genre that is being explicitly claimed by kwaito pioneers as the evolution of kwaito, a pronouncement that was not boldly stated in relation to the *hip-hop* subgenres, although critically strategic collaborations are notable. The fact that *amapiano* is explicitly dance music may be the main reason why kwaito proponents argue for the clear sonic genealogy. I argue that it is the treatment of the bass in *amapiano*, however, that returns us to Edjabe's argument. Indeed, it is Spikiri who is one of the kwaito artists that claim kwaito as the foundation of *amapiano*. And who can forget *that* bassline in 'Sigiya Ngengoma' (1994)?



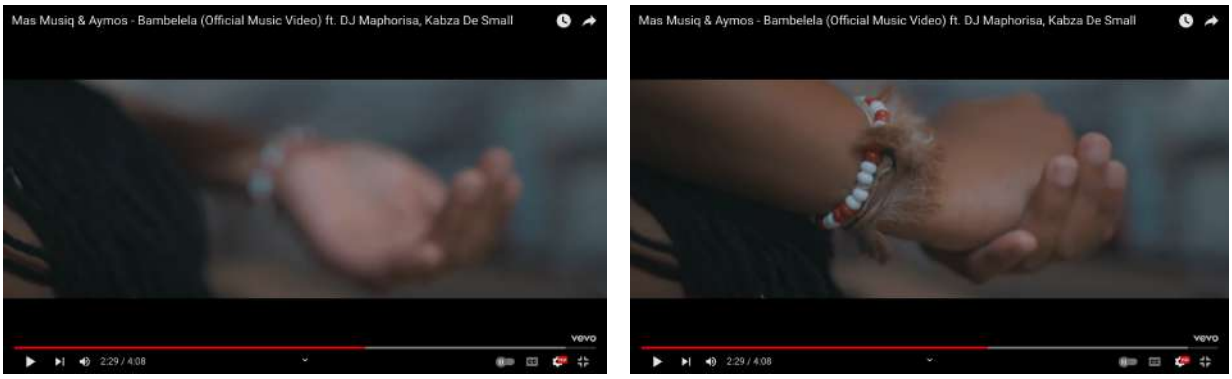


Figure 14: Stills from the music video for 'Bambelela' by Mas Musiq & Aymos ft. DJ Maphorisa and Kabza de Small (2020).

The underground

Madala Thepa (2018) argues that kwaito did not nurture and sustain an underground scene and sensibility. I have argued elsewhere that such a sensibility, which failed to be a 'scene', was nevertheless present. I cite Mdu's side projects, such as his remix albums like *Shwabana Ghost Remixes* (two volumes, 1997 and 1998), and the *Let Mdu Jam* (1998) album, alongside earlier experiments in collaboration with Joe Nina and Lindelani Mkhize (LM Jam) as 'underground' projects. Thepa is right – such projects did indeed not survive, as many of kwaito's producers leaned towards the lucrative commercial aspect within an industry that was not only competitive but also exploitative. The underground scene and sensibility, Thepa further argues (2018), is the mainstay of innovation and invention that strays away from, or is unconcerned with, mainstream pressures. It is a critical space in which to experiment and forge new directions for a genre of music. Such an underground scene was incredibly prohibitive, if not indulgent, in a country like South Africa and in an industry such as entertainment, unlike in the USA that Thepa compares kwaito to, where, in his analysis, *hip-hop* and *jazz* genres have maintained an underground sensibility. I have similarly commented on these developments, previously:

> M'du is one of the few solo Kwaito artists who created remix albums of his own music and of the artists at his label, M'du Records: his two volume Shwabana Ghost Mixes from 1996 and 1997 offered exciting sounds very different from the Kwaito of the mid-1990s, heavily influenced by Jazz and Drum 'n bass. But perhaps his best remix album is a largely unknown side project called LMJ (Let M'du Jam), released in 1998 and featuring instrumental tracks laced with a Jazz sensibility. The album came out the same year as the hit-heavy album M'du Or Die (1998). This, the Mashamplani projects, and other releases by M'du Records make the period from 1995 to 1999 the most successful time in M'du's life, a true contender to the title 'Godfather of Kwaito'. (Hlasane 2020: 201-202).

Those vocals!

My own addition to the analysis listed above (the neglect of the 'bass' and the 'underground'), is the singing element in kwaito. The neglect of sung elements in kwaito is inversely discernible by such presences in the *amapiano* repertoire. The number of 'singing' kwaito artists who identify as male, for example, has never been this prominent, and is due to *amapiano*'s emphasis on singing above all vocalisations. While woman-identifying artists are many in *amapiano*, the tradition is in

itself directly linked to kwaito, where many of these women would remain unnamed in hit songs. But today, the singing outshines other forms of vocalisations, such as chants and raps. Nonetheless, the singing is significant in and of itself.

One of the key influences on singing in kwaito/amapiano history is the choir – whether a church choir, mixed choir, boys' choir, or gospel/youth/community club. Samthing Soweto, the key example of singing in the kwaito tradition, performed with the Soweto Gospel Choir. Mandla 'Spikiri' Mofokeng and Mdu Masilela, as MM Deluxe, featured a choir on their *bubblegum*-ahead-of-kwaito album (Where Were You?, 1989). The importance of singing in kwaito is as vast as the singing experiments of the numerous serious kwaito groups and artists, being too many to mention. The opposite is the 'shouting' at the listener, which indeed has greatly contributed to kwaito's decay.

As we shall read further on, the recurrence of the bass, the underground, and the singing are key elements in the make-up, heritage, epistemologies and pedagogies of *amapiano*. As such, kwaito claims *amapiano*, while insisting that 'kwaito will never die' (FB, Insta, Jakarumba, Spikiri et al.). And yet, is kwaito okay? The legacy of Lebo Mathosa, as far as singing in kwaito goes, is at the core of my discussion in 'The Ambivalent Branch of the Kwaito Family Tree – The Gentle Matriarchy' (2013). This legacy is seen and heard in the queering of kwaito, and in the special place that women hold in writing and performing kwaito, albeit that it has been sabotaged and undermined by history-in-the-present of extraction and exploitation (Xavier 2020).

Those toxic inheritances, along with global shifts, that made *amapiano* a force

Of course, all of the above has to do with the art as the art. However, within it, there is a business-as-usual attitude that inherits that culture, which is problematic. Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 347) point to one of these attitudes, commenting that "Kwaito is generally acknowledged as a post-1994 development that is under the sway of youth drawn from the working class and lumpen-proletariat, hustlers or 'playas' who describe themselves variously as *amagents*, *olova*, *oguluva*, *majimbos*, *izinja*".

Toni Walker (2019) additionally contends that:

> While Kwaito provided an outlet through which definitions of freedom could be explored, the genre made room for a particular expression of freedom that didn't necessarily include the representation of the Black queer community. Since its inception, Kwaito has been a genre dominated by male artists and characterized by a hyper masculine aesthetic.

Walker (2019) adds that this performance often involved misogyny, along with the sexual objectification of women.

> While Black queer women like Lebo Mathosa had a significant impact on the genre and in many ways subverted the genre's patriarchal nature, these examples were infrequent in comparison to the large number of masculine heterosexual men that dominated the genre. Visibly queer Kwaito artists are even harder to find in the early years of the genre.



Figure 15: Promotional material for Kwesta and Kabza se Smalll's collaboration I honour of kwaito.

The bassline looks like this from here: Nursing kwaito as nestling emergences

What exactly is special about the meeting of Kabza de Small and Kwesta? Kabza de Small is one of the key figures in *amapiano*, the latest 'dance' music 'craze' in South Africa, and other parts of the world where it has been received with enthusiasm. Kabza de Small declares being 'uncomfortable' with the 'dance' part of that definition. So am I. But what can I do about it? People dance when moved by music! But while I cannot do anything about it, Kabza de Small can. So he met with Kwesta, a 'hip-hop' artist, who was also uncomfortable with other issues as far as *hip-hop* in South Africa was concerned. The result is 'Speak N Vorstaan', an EP combining *amapiano* and a 'South African' branch of *hip-hop* that is simultaneously a tribute to kwaito and something else altogether, and which begs the question: What is this …? That is what is significantly special about their collaboration. Kabza de Small and Kwesta's 'Sgubhu sa Kabza' (2022) starts by citing Spikiri's well-known phrase "*sticky yiki*", before citing the relationship between dance and the bass:

> *unjaivisa ngihlese*
> *s'vusa balele e'kuseni*

Before you can tell from its sonic lexicon that Kabza de Small and Kwesta's very new collaboration, released on 2 December 2022, is a tribute to kwaito, the back of the cover of the EP sounds and smells like kwaito visual culture. First, the vinyl trace on the image indicates that this is a recast of the past. But what is this past? It is the 1990s – for if we go with Kwesta's style, the Dickies outfit was made famous as part of kwaito visual culture. It is significant that Kabza appears first in the picture frame, which takes us to the Brentwood-wearing *amapantsula* of Sophiatown, an earlier time before kwaito. And then there is the *gusheshe* at the centre of the image, a motor-vehicular object that, while made famous by the kwaito music video (and is present in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, which forms part of this research), it is in fact rooted in time much earlier, as Zwane (2018: xxix -xxx) writes:

> The phenomenon of spinning *gusheshe* (as BMW's 325i model is lovingly referred to in South Africa's townships) began in the 1980s as a final tribute to a slain gangster performed at their funeral. In fact, one of the scamtho words for a gangster is "spinner". Its increased popularity amongst youth who were not gangsters, coupled with the advent of democracy in the mid-1990s (which substantially reduced police visibility in the township streets) turned spinning into a leisurely sport.

I argue that *amapiano* 'sounds' like kwaito visual culture/music video, and the inverse when the reading the promotional material for Kabza de Small and Kwesta's EP, the album cover and its paratexts, which 'looks' like the kwaito sonic lexicon. Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 348) pay close attention to "the kwaito music video because it is one of the sites where the sonic, performative, visual and kinetic elements of kwaito and its sub-cultures converge and are expressed". With this reading framework as a lens, linked to the *gusheshe* and its historical significance, there is also the EP title, *Speak N Vrostaan*.

'*Speak N Vrostaan'*, literally translating to 'speak and understand/comprehend' is a reference to so-called *tsotsitaal*, a language that combines Afrikaans with various (South) African languages. While *tsotsitaal* was prominent in Sophiatown [in the 1940s and '50s], it was made even more mainstream through kwaito. As such, *hip-hop* artists who rap in vernacular would employ *tsotsitaal*, with the exception of *motswako* hip-hop artists. *Tsotsitaal* and the *gusheshe* have something in common, which is their evolution from associations with criminality and gangsterism to liberation-struggle politics and resistance, and later popular culture subjectivity formations and the fashioning of identities. As I will discuss later, in Chapter Three, the presence of the *gusheshe* in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* probes a critical engagement with these evolutions.

The song-text for 'Huzet' (2022) maps Kwesta's trajectory as a hip hop artist who was mentored by kwaito cultural sensibilities[29]. This map is recognised by a poster on a YouTube comment about 'Huzet' writes an indentation-worthy comment:

> They say "Dankie Yano, Kwaito, Hip-Hop" obviously they embrace the sounds that mzanzi people have enjoyed and staff ... But you find fans who try to create differences and hatred between artist with their stupid comparison. Thanks Kabza and Kwesta. Piano play we jam, Kwaito play we jam, mzanzi hip-hop plays we jam, net soh. ... [they finish with two emojis, of the South African flag and a heart].

[29] *Bheka … August 1988*
Nine o'clock to be exact
that's the day ngibone amehlo a ma'oulady
celebrations … birthday cake
Mama bheka ngiyazi uku jaiva isipantsula
Gogo bheka sekinwazi ko java isipantssula
Into bengiphupha
Faka ipbhanthulo

The poster above mentions that "obviously they embrace the sounds that mzanzi people have enjoyed". It is clear that these "mzanzi people" are not *all* 'South Africans'. For one, as discussed earlier, the language is exclusive. *Tsotsitaal* itself served to exclude the oppressor, who was then Afrikaans speaking, and yet the language – *tsotsitaal* or 'clever's language' – was grounded in Afrikaans. Here there is a link to the personal and life's work of the celebrated HHP. By naming himself in the break of a *hip-hop* and *isipantsula* sensibility – Hip Hop Pantsula – South African *motswako* rapper Jabulani Tsambo, who later shortened his stage name to HHP, in songs like 'Tswaka' (2005), 'Harambe', and many others, spread his Pan-Africanist programme. Hip Hop Pantsula aka 'Bosso ke Mang' (2011) travelled through many countries in Africa, using road transport, as an artist and actor who embraced a continental life and its music.

Kwaito pushes popular music to engage in the politics of the common person's weaknesses and greatness – in the celebration of self, Black Consciousness theologies and spiritualities (Bongo Maffin's 'Amadlozi', 1998), and self-determination (Mafikizolo's 'Kwela', 2005), that declaims "ek es die baas") – complicating how we read apartheid *babalaas* (hangover) into the fashioning of identities and subjectivities in 'post'-apartheid South Africa. One of the things kwaito did differently compared to English-centric *bubblegum*, the preceding mainstream genre, was its use of indigenous languages. This emphasis indeed influenced the equally English-heavy *hip-hop* from South Africa. 2005 marked the height of vernacular rap in South Africa. (By the way, I was a rapper at this time, and committed to mixing vernacular with English, but I will not digress …) In fact, Masello Motana, who is the narrator and language contributor in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, wrote the closing piece to *Chimurenga 2* (2002), titled 'A Re Kwe Afrika Ka Gare Ga Hip Hop Ya Gae!' (let's hear ourselves in South African hip-hop).

This shift did start a few years earlier, however. Around 2001, Skwatta Kamp was at the forefront of mixing vernacular rap with English, competing with the predominantly English rap of, amongst others, Optical Illusion, Last Days Fam, Ben Sharpa, Basemental Platform, Proverb, Mizchif, Cashless Society, and others.

One of the biggest breakthroughs were H2O with their song 'It's Wonderful' (2003), the song-text centring township life and language, including a shout-out to the then hottest fashion label Loxion Kulća (township culture). Others in vernacular rap at that time included Spex, whose refrain "This is it! What you been waiting for/Real Msawawa hip-hop of sho", suggested that his was about a distinct South African *hip-hop*, linking to Motana's lament.

Then enters ProKid (later Pro), who put a stamp on that incredible mix of English, *scamtho* and *tsotsitaal*. Many of the 'vernacular' rap artists mostly employed what is known as 'boom bap' (that makes a head snap, referring to the quintessential *hip-hop* sound) in terms of the beat. Even *motswako* employed *'boom bap'*. It was only after the 2010s that a distinct borrowing from southern African sound would emerge as far as 'the beat goes', which borrowed from kwaito. Even H2O's breakthrough song employed a *boom-bap* style, while borrowing from (including the intro) African American vocal jazz (and at the same time adopting the *ga se mo States mo* sensibility that will be discussed in Chapter Two). However, H2O did not possess the type of unapologetic vernacular displayed by the then ProKid.

Much later, Pro (to which he had by that stage changed his name, suggesting a maturity in dropping the 'kid' from his name) created a project thematically titled to pay tribute to kwaito. *Heads and Tales*, a play on the popular board game, is a play in two parts. The first part, 'Heads', challenges *hip-hop* aficionados – referred to as 'heads' – to, on the second part, re-member the 'storytelling' and critical importance of 'tales'. By employing a kwaito sensibility in terms of tributes, homages, borrowings, remixes, revisions, covers, and all types of citations in the album, Pro was recognising the storytelling power of kwaito as a genre that also borrowed from, cited, referenced and indexed global black popular culture.

The late Tokollo Tshabalala, who broke into the public as a member of Mashamplani, went on to collaborate with Kabelo Mabalane and Zwai Bala as part of TKZee before going solo. In his solo project of 2000, a kwaito album, he employed the services of Moses Molelekwa. Molelekwa, who was a celebrated pianist, died in 2001. As such, this was one of Molelekwa's last projects. While for Tokollo this marked the beginning, and was musically mainstream (the album was a 'hit'), for Molelekwa it was definitely 'underground' – a 'side' project in which his production, composition and arrangement skills were put to use in a marginal, albeit mainstream, space (for kwaito was in 2000 a mainstream genre in relation to jazz in South Africa). Molelekwa's hand (pun intended) is present throughout the album, including in songs where he is not credited (eight out of eleven!).

Ezimnandi, ezibhlungu [nice, beautiful – painful]

***

Ezi'bhlungu – Ezi'bnandi: *Amapiano* and *hip hop* as atten*dances* to kwaito's phantom limb syndrome in the work of Reece Madlisa, and Kwesta & Kabza de Small

Every time an *amapiano* or (South African subgenre of) *hip-hop* artist makes a song that draws from kwaito, the comments on the mainstream streaming sites will declare 'kwaito will never die' (there is a Facebook page with the same name as this phrase, and an Instagram page called 'kwaito_legends', bearing the same 'kwaito will never die' sentiments). The latest – relatively recent – of such comments appeared yesterday (11 February 2023), at the time of me writing this, from @lungelophumlani9284 who *writes*: "Brown Dilika kwaito will never die in South africa." Inasofar as its commercial legitimacy goes, it is true to say that kwaito is 'dead'. But there is more to kwaito, of course. *Sghubu*, or the kwaito 'sound and sensibility', is indeed alive, albeit unwell.



Figure 16: Promotional Instagram post by Reece Madlisa, revealing his influence to the viewer; on the left is the Brown Dash album cover (2004), and on the right is Reece Madlisa's EP cover (2023).

The above comment appears on the YouTube comment forum for the first single from Reece Madlisa's then forthcoming EP, titled 'Kwaito nama medi'. The 'Brown Dilika' is a reference to the now departed Brown Dash (CD cover pictured above on the left, real name Siphiwe Mpamile), whose first album came out in 2004, and peppered kwaito with critically and socially engaged lyricism. Reece Madlisa sees himself as one of those *amapiano* artists who draw from kwaito, as seen in his EP visual's promotional self-styling. Reece Madlisa was roped into a Mandla 'Spikiri' Mofokeng's single, 'Tala Na', that came out in 2022, and some of us recently witnessed Instagram posts documenting a visit by Spikiri to Reece Madlisa. At the time of revising this section, on 10 July 2023, Bhekisisa Pilot Biller, the cinematographer for *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, which forms part of this research submission, plugged me into 'Ka Sesh' (2023) by Reece Madlisa, featuring Spikiri. These intergenerational collaborations support the statement that 'kwaito will never die'; a cry, a scream, a lament, a mediatory meditation.

As early as 1997, when the name 'kwaito' was still undergoing debate, *Student Life* (later *SL*), a magazine on white youth culture, asked a question on its cover: "Who is killing kwaito?" Mind you, this was before Lebo Mathosa's 'Tsodio' (1999) complicated kwaito's sonic and oral genealogies; before TKZee dropped the monumental sonic opus that is *Halloween* (1999), way ahead of its members releasing innovative solo projects (Tokollo's solo 50% produced by jazz maestro Moses Molelekwa). It is worth noting that the publishers of *SL*, who later named their company SLY (the *Y* in reference to YFM, a regional radio station focusing on black youth culture), instigated and at first started a new magazine called *Y (Y-Mag)* (launched in October 1998), targeting black youth. *Y-Mag* would go on to both 'launch' and announce the death of kwaito. Despite this relatively early announcement of an ailing kwaito, the genre and lifestyle went on to compete for space with a range of other genres up to and exceeding 2007, that is for well over a decade. In fact, by 2011, Mandla 'Spikiri' Mofokeng, one of the core architects of the movement, dropped an album that included a song questioning the eulogy of kwaito through

'Uzwe Ngobani' (Hlasane & Peterson 2022). Kwaito has been dismembered (Mhlahlo 2022). But the sensations, like phantom limb pain, remain in the brains, bodies and sensibilities of the second generation of kwaito pioneers, those "born [in]to kwaito", as the title of the book by Sihle Mthembu and Esinako Ndabeni (2018) poetise.

Kwaito thus may not need to answer to *SL*, but it does need to do a kind of self-diagnosis, for it is still alive. When hearing and seeing the work of Reece Madlisa and Kwesta & Kabza de Small, their *hip-hop* subgenres and *amapiano* do what we may call 'self-referential musicking', to borrow from the late Bhekizizwe Peterson's keynote address, titled 'Self-referential Filmmaking' (2001).

> *E ngithi I will try to change my attitude*
> *E ngithi I will try to change my anger issues*
> *E ngithi Ngizozama ukuyeka the way ngokuphatha ngakhona*
> *The way ngikuthintha ngakhona*
> *E ngithi ngiyaxolisa babe*

These 'scant' lines (Peterson 2003) come after the extended lyrics delivered by the featured artist Jabulile, a black woman, who urges the recipient to 'stop what they keep doing'. In Chapter Two, I discuss the song with the lyrics 'into ye inzayo, ayilunganga', that is to say, 'what you are doing is not right' (Mhlambi 2020).

In the song lyrics referenced above, Reece Madlisa apologises and pledges to change. For the listener, despite the vagueness of 'this thing' that the man addressed by Jabulile keeps doing, what should not escape such a listener is the social reality and awareness of the persistence of gender-based violence. Reece Madlisa calls his a 'kwaito na ma medi' genre, which is to say, 'kwaito and women', and therein lies an important diagnosis of one of the 'things' killing kwaito. That Jabulile occupies most of the vocal airtime is important to note – as it indicates a kind of 'listening' on Reece Madlisa's part. This listening 'builds up' to accepting fault, and striving for change – it suggests a kind of an antidote. But what is the antidote to? What is at stake?

Jabulile is in pain. She is singing and drawing from pain. She is giving from pain. Pain is not nice. And giving pain is giving from nothing (Sithole 2020); it can be a kind of poverty porn. To subvert the possibility of self-harm, young black practitioners of popular culture across the world, as Zwane (2019: xxii) argues, have grown to master the "inversion of aesthetics/ethics". In 1995, Boom Shaka released a song – 'Ibuhlungu' – as part of their sophomore album, the song interweaving painful and 'good' sensations; wounding and pleasure; death and … *Sghubu*, or the kwaito 'sound and sensibility', which is indeed alive, albeit unwell.

Gerularing *the music video through the dust*

Femi Emoresele (2022: 385) frames my argument word for word, in his intervention, 'Politics and the Music Video in Nigeria', which is "concerned with the music video as a text that draws attention to itself, that articulates a message independent of its function as accessory to something else". To *gerula* is to continue to 'look askance', as proposed by Hugo ka Canham (2022). In Sepedi, go *gerula* is an incisive side-eye, a glare – without speech. A casual diggin' through dusty crates [to track these *gerula* instances] is a rich encounter full of surprises and space-time multisensorial adventures: liner notes in all their interdiscursive splendours; data of 'selected' creators and enablers and profiters, sometimes with misspellings; personal interventions if pre-owned; *kwaitoscapes* sonically mapped in 'Valley of Hillbrow' (Hlasane 2013, see Fig.21).

Across the Atlantic, one of the earlier critical positions on the music video is that they "have their own generic formations that serve a number of key legitimizing functions" (Railton & Watson 2011: 10). *Music Video and the Politics of Representation*, by Diane Railton and Paul Watson (2011), employs a feminist framework while carving out propositions for the study of the music video in its own terms.

Music Video and the Politics of Representation (2011) argues for the music video as a cultural object that is ironically under-researched vis-à-vis its rise and staying power. Moving away from the predictable critique of the music video as a promotional tool, Railton and Watson instead argue for the music video being important because of: (a) "their ubiquity or the increasing perception of them as valuable products in their own right", and (b) "the visual aspect of music video impacts upon not only the pleasure we can get from any given song but also on the meanings we can attach to it and by extension how we can analyse and understand it" (ibid.: 7-8). They see the music video "as a site where normative constructions of race, gender and ethnicity are put on display, confirmed, reinforced and, sometimes challenged" (ibid.: 11).

In 2010, and over the last ten years, the music video, or musicking videos, have become even more ubiquitous, with the acceleration of the mobile phone and its video capabilities. In a sense, the meeting of a music video and personalised musicking practices, through the consumption of music in a mobile phone video format, have become one, as can be seen in early *amapiano* 'official' music videos, in which the presence of the mobile phone and what it captures enters the storyboard. What is productive about *Music Video and the Politics of Representation* for my study, is its suggestion of reading the frameworks of the structure of the music video and its optic-narratives. The authors propose four genres of the music video, namely "pseudo-documentary, art music video, narrative video and staged performance" (ibid.: 48). These genres do not blindly apply to a study of the kwaito music video. But first I must attend to them, says colonial scholarship. On the streets *ke ha se mo States mo*!

How about a sho't left? – a Sesasedi-esque time-travel through space and time, mobilising the framework for the work, namely: *situated lens-based performance*, *geo-graphic territories* and *geo-philosophical ontologies* …

~~Dinonwane~~ Sesasedi sa ~~Tša Sesasedi~~ Tsodio

Mahlo ke diala, ga a tšee sa motho

or

‘This Camera doesn't speak English’ (Otsile Ntsoane)

Koko/Come In

Opacity

Multiple Versions of ‘Truth’

Ke Rena Baeng

Illustrated Audio Play

Hymnbook

Thoka ya kgole ga e bolae mmutla – Modumo Kgole

Go tsemaya ke go di bona or

Otla Di Tseba Bjang?

From the Ground to the Sound

Ga Re Itshebeng

***

Television transmission occurred for the first time in South Africa in 1976. Thus music-video production and dissemination in South Africa started relatively late, and that relative lateness partially accounts for the lack of scholarship on the form. It is also important to note that the music video, and the kwaito music video specifically, is not the only piece of “black intellectual and creative archive” that has been neglected as knowledge production and dissemination in South Africa, and black life elsewhere (Peterson 2019).

Indeed, that which is prominent in the kwaito music video, namely *isiPantsula* – both the dance and the movement – faces similar neglect, not only in formal scholarship but also, critically, in the performance-platform sector. This has implications for pedagogy and the official curriculum – and to a large extent, formal industry participation (here noting Via Katlehong’s recent beautiful run at the Joburg Theatre). I thus consider the kwaito music video as the key text that leads to a constellation of objects of enquiry that frame and map my study of the kwaito music video.

In her MA thesis, ‘The Representation of Kwaito in the *Sunday Times* between 1994 and 2001’ (2012), Sandisiwe Vilakazi comes close to a study of kwaito visual culture in as far as literary print cultures are concerned. However, it is clear that Vilakazi’s study is far more concerned with the written aspect of kwaito’s representation in the said newspaper. On method and data collection, Vilakazi writes, “I used kwaito as a keyword in order to bring out any and all *articles* in the *Sunday Times* which contain the word kwaito in the headline or the body. The advantage of this is that [it] gave me the entire set of *writings* about kwaito” (2012: 26 – emphasis my own).

There is a brief mention in Vilakazi’s thesis of dress codes as aspects of kwaito visual culture, and these descriptions are compared to African American *hip-hop* artists (ibid.: 17-18; 36). If Vilakazi listened a bit deeper, however, they may have engaged what V. Njabulo Zwane (2018) identifies

as symbolic refusals of American influences in Brothers of Peace's song titled 'Okae Molao' (1996), and the notion of "A se mo States mo [this is not the United States of America]". For my study, the transatlantic articulations, as they pertain to African American and South African fashions, is a rich visual study that uncovers both the affinities and antagonisms between popular and political cultures of these communities.[30] I expand on this in Chapter Three.

Nonetheless, Vilakazi's study is unique in the scholarship on kwaito, as it is one of the few that engages the practice of archiving. Further, the study is important for indicating how racialised the coverage of kwaito was in the *Sunday Times* during that specified period. This is interesting in relation to how different that newspaper's coverage of (black) popular culture is in the present.

Musa Ndlovu and René Smith explore aspects of kwaito visual culture in their paper titled 'Kwaito, Hip-Hop and Television in South Africa: A Case Study of the *Yizo Yizo 3* Series and Soundtrack' (2011), with a focus on the "the intertextual relationship between music and television" (2011: 1). They aim to explore "the ways in which music (kwaito and hip hop specifically) are used as part of the series, and the cultural relevance of its meanings and messages to an educative audio-visual text" (ibid.: 2).

While Ndlovu and Smith (2011) do analyse the CD packaging of the soundtrack to the influential television series *Yizo Yizo 3* – with a focus on the series' intertextuality, they do not engage what is perhaps one of the most iconic kwaito music videos, 'Ghetto Fabulous', by Zola. The video came out of *Yizo Yizo* and was directed by the series co-director, Teboho Mahlatsi, now late. The scope of their research is limited to other concerns, in their case the relationship between the television series and the music, rather than the visual culture of the music. An iconic intertextual piece of work, the video of 'Ghetto Fabulous' not only included scenes from the series (in which the kwaito artist features as actor) but also introduced new themes that are rich in what the authors refer to as an "educative audio-visual text" (ibid.: 2).

Similarly, in 'Redemption to a Kwaito Beat: Gavin Hood's *Tsotsi*' (2007), Ian-Malcolm Rijsdijk and Adam Haupt point to the synergetic "extra-filmic association" between *Tsotsi*, the film, and the music of Zola the kwaito artist and Zola the actor in *Tsotsi* (Rijsdijk & Haupt 2007: 34). The article's focus, similar to those discussed so far, is not the kwaito music video. Rijsdijk and Haupt (2007) are concerned with a broad analysis of the film, and specifically with the place of the score and, as the title suggests, the association between *Tsotsi* the film, and 'tsotsi'[31] the subject, to kwaito.

This association reads Zola as a kwaito artist, whose 'real-life' or "extra-filmic" music is described as "energetic" and as "urban, fast-paced, heterosexist, aggressive and lyrically violent music" that "connotes heterosexual masculinity and violence" (Rijsdijk & Haupt 2007: 34). They further read Zola as a subject whose celebrity spills out of the film to signify "a whole range of characteristics

[30] For example, *isiPantsula* dress codes, as they relate to Sophiatown, links to civil rights and liberation struggles, and the role of culture in both countries. The evolution of the *isiPantsula* dress code, and its adoption of the American workwear brand Dickies, connects kwaito artists with American *hip-hop* artists such as Snoop Dogg.

[31] 'Tsotsi' is an Nguni term for two subjects in black sociopolitical life: a thug – one associated with street culture; and a socioculturally and economically smart person, mostly male. A complex elucidation of this subject can be discerned in Tokollo's 'Number 1 Tsotsi' (2002) and Spikiri's album cover for *King Don Father* (2011).

beyond the simple evocation of South African urban life" (ibid.: 36). This association thus signifies Zola the actor (as Fela) and Zola the kwaito artist as a 'tsotsi' in South African social life. Rijsdijk and Haupt write that "[i]t is through kwaito music that the film's contemporary social setting is unambiguously signalled to the audience" (ibid.: 39) Their analysis thus suggests implications for the visualities prominent in kwaito visual culture, from the *geo*graphic representations to what I called "the criminalization of black males" in kwaito visual culture (Hlasane 2015). While the authors, citing Peterson (2003), acknowledge that kwaito thematics are not homogenous, they nonetheless aver that "[m]any South Africans who are already familiar with key themes in kwaito music would be free to associate its values with these thugs" (Rijsdijk & Haupt 2007: 41).

The authors' suggestion that "the producers believed that the more marketable elements of the film were those that emphasised the image of the tsotsi, possibly overshadowing the film's narrative intent" (ibid.: 42), is of import for underpinning my research: namely the place of race in kwaito's visual culture. Given the 'visual criminalisation of the black male' as sometimes read into kwaito visual culture, Rijsdijk and Haupt bring to our attention that the notion of 'black-on-black violence' – which was actually termed by former apartheid president P.W. Botha – and Zola's "thug life" image, serve to reinscribe this notion (ibid.: 43). The consequence is that the film producers and directors fall into the trap of an ahistorical representation of black subjectivity, and *use* Zola's image in a limited fashion that "facilitates reductive and decontextualised readings of black masculinity in South Africa", and further "confirm negative racial stereotypes" (ibid.: 44). Surely these are the "scenes of subjection" that, as Hartman (1997: 3) writes, "reinforce the spectacular character of black suffering"? Is it possible to move away from such scenes of suffering?

Hartman encourages a search "[t]o grasp, to illuminate, to express other expressive modalities" (2017) in black visual cultures. This search is discernible in the kwaito group Trompies' declaration in their famous song 'Sigiya Ngengoma', i.e. "Dem comin on a different styl'e" (1994), at a time when kwaito was marking a clear transition from its predecessor, so-called 'bubblegum'. Different styles aside, is it possible to overturn racialised optic-narratives in a country like South Africa in which the film and television industries are dominated by white production companies, producers and directors? With reference to the period 1985 to 2005, this ~~white domination in relation to means of production and dissemination~~[32] was certainly the case. In 2022, it may seem redundant to ask: Has this domination changed? Or are "Dem [still] comin' on a different styl'e"?

A brief analysis of selected kwaito videos appears in the musicological article by Esther Wairimu Kiburi titled 'Pantsula to the Beat: *Kwaito* Performance and its Reception in the 'new' South Africa' (2017). Although the paper aims to "provide a comparative analysis exemplifying some of the prominent features, both musical and visual" (Kiburi 2017: 8), the analysis of the music video itself is minute. Other scholarly mentions of the kwaito music video, for example in Rob Wyenne-Griffiths 'The Kwaito Generation: The Liberation of Youth Culture in South Africa' (2009), concern themselves with minor comments about film soundtracks, such as those for *Yizo Yizo* and *Tsotsi*, or music awards such as the *MTV Africa Listeners Choice Award* or the *Channel O Africa Music Awards*. Two of the most recent scholarships on kwaito, by Femi Eromoesele (2022) and Xavier Livermon (2020), are generative for my study. They both write in a way that cites the song-

[32] Or is it apartheid *babalaas*?

texts as key texts, and in the case of Livermon, who uses one video as a point of departure from which to theorise.

Xavier Livermon (2020), from their book *Kwaito Bodies*, in a chapter titled *The Kwaito Feminine: Lebo Mathosa as a Dangerous Woman*, writes about Lebo Mathosa, using the video for 'Audede/Dangerous' (2004) to think through the idea of a subversive black woman who, in South Africa, is ensnared between "racial representation" and "material existence" because "[t]he sensuality and sexuality of Black women's bodies is a charged subject that has a long history in representational and material practices" (Livermon 2020:3-4). Drawing the distinction between the idea of a "bad girl", who "instill[s] fear in women who behave outside societal norms of femininity", and a "dangerous woman" who embodies "a strategic performance that is disidentificatory because it must work through and between normative understandings of Black women's bodies and sexuality, even as it presents the possibilities of alternative formations that are nonnormative", Livermon's work, like that of Zwane, is generative for my thinking through the characters in the *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* (2021–) trilogy that forms part of this doctoral study (ibid.: 7-8). In particular, the fear of AIDS expressed in the conclusion of the lyrics to 'Sesi Portia', and the non-stop visits to Sesi Portia's house by the seven men, is encapsulated in Livermon's reading of Mathosa's multifaceted performances as a "dangerous woman", as Livermon analyses: "The expressions on the men's faces as Mathosa enacted this performative over their bodies register a mix of desire and fear" (ibid.: 17).

Livermon's reading of the video to Mathosa's 'Audede/Dangerous' is also important to my study as far as it reads the manifold visual narratives that connect multiple geographies, "combining elements of modern dance; jazz; traditional South African, West African, and Central African movements; and hip-hop, Latin, and dancehall reggae" (ibid.: 18). Livermon's focus on Mathosa's performance and her engendering of queer possibilities in kwaito highlights "the inappropriately feminine body as central to the construction of the new nation" – a view that eschews the geo-specific lens that oftentimes reads kwaito (and its visual culture.)

Considering the political, social and economic context of these time periods under study – 1985 to present – this chapter has, up to now, engaged key ideas and debates that apply to visual cultures broadly as a way to examine the visual culture of kwaito, with a focus on kwaito's optic-narratives as they pertain to gender, race and nationalism. Before I bring this chapter to a close, the terms to follow are interdiscursive experiments to see and read what I call a *kwaitoscape* in this study: *situated lens-based performances*, *geo-graphic territories*, and *geo-philosophical ontologies*.

***Situated lens-based performances*: Gender and the kwaito music video**

A *situated lens-based performance* is what I conceive to be a performance in a location – that is an actual place in which a cinematic action and dialogue is recorded on camera. I am less interested in theories of the camera, but more interested in the *situation* in which the said performance takes place. In the kwaito music video, I am therefore interested in the choices and uses of location, and the *forms of gathering* in the kwaito music video. In a South African context, it is interesting for

my explorations and investigations that the term 'location' also refers to 'the location', also known as *lokshin* or *loxion*.[33]

I am interested in the intersecting set of practices and forms of organising that enable a narrative to enter the frame of a screen. The fixation with the set of practices and forms of organising used in the kwaito music video indicates my inclination towards the idea that *the story* exceeds the edit suite – and includes that which escapes the screen. The proposal is that the kwaito music video's location is a street bash/party in and of itself. I am also interested in the idea of the 'filming with the camera off' (Arthur Jaffa 2019), or subversive allusions such as "the camera speaks English" (Otsile Ntsoane 2005). Beyond notions of DIY[34] or guerilla music-video making, I am interested in how the constructions of *situations in locations* reflect a working ethos that is distinct in the kwaito music video, and I want to examine its consistency with regard to the constructions of gender, race and nationalism.

Concerning gender, the study discerns – *ukwakumkanya* – the manner in which the kwaito music video engages hypermasculinity and patriarchy (as I discuss further in Chapter Two). These social factors and practices are generally associated with kwaito as an art form, an industry and a movement. These are phenomena that are associated with what Pumla Dineo Gqola (2015: 116) names as "hypersexual and pornographic" vocabularies that rely on habitual and sexual objectification of [black] females. While it is too simplistic, if not polemical or moralistic, to read the kwaito music video only in these terms, these descriptors are neither false nor hyperbolic. While the kwaito music video can and does act in insidious ways, it would be simplistic not to engage with the range of contradictory and paradoxical depictions that cohere in kwaito music videos. There are videos that not only challenge toxic masculinities but also imagine liberating ways of embodying gender and performing and living queerness.

Geo-graphic territories: Race and the kwaito music video

I conceive of the *geo-graphic territories* in the kwaito music video as an articulation of contests over space, land, regions, and sites – that is, geographies. It is the 'writing' of geographies that elucidates specific activities, experiences and ways of knowing in a manner that defends such social milieu as belonging to a specific group of people. In the kwaito music video, this articulation of contestations over geographies is mobilised through a range of themes. The study *ukwakumkanya*s on two examples in which the optic-narrative engages race and the geographies of Johannesburg.

I am interested in the ambiguities in the articulation of geographies, and the claims to occupying and depicting such geographies beyond binaries. For instance, in the kwaito music video there is a significant absence of white people portrayed. What do we make of this? The answer should be

[33] The apartheid government named the townships in South Africa 'lokasie' in Afrikaans, or 'location' in English – a term from which *lokshin*/*loxion* emerges, adapted from the Afrikaans version by township residents. In the late 1990s, a new fashion label called Loxion Kulća (location culture) emerged, as part of a long history of cultural activities that celebrate and reclaim the township as an autonomous space, and in which the residents exercise agency, contrary to apartheid spatial design, and despite the dehumanising policies and realities of the township.

[34] Bongo Maffin member Stoan Seate, in his YouTube-poster persona, Stoanito, writes comments for Bongo Maffin's video for 'Makeba': "… shot this Vid for R3000 more than 15 yrs ago!"

obvious in a context in which: 1) outside of artists like Tamara Dey, DJ Christos and Danny K, there are few white artists who participate in kwaito, 2) kwaito is consumed by black people in the majority, and 3) South Africa is a majority black country.

However, what are the other possible reasons behind the absence of white people in the kwaito music video, particularly given that white personnel tend to occupy executive positions in the production and directorship of kwaito music videos? With regard to race, I also aim to understand how the kwaito music video narrates and negotiates racialised visual narratives and their resonances and intersections with gender.

Geo-philosophical ontologies: Nationalism and the kwaito music video

Kwaito is also one of the 'proudly South African brands', and/or evokes the nativist sentiment. My reading explores how and to what effect the kwaito music video mobilises notions of nativism, ethnicities and diaspora. Building from Kathryn Yusoff's (2018: 66) argument that "origins are not solely about geography", I read kwaito's visual narratives as both an embrace and a disavowal of common understandings of nationalism (as indexed in my earlier and later references to 'ga se mo States mo'). This embrace and disavowal of nationalism can be discerned in the simultaneous appraisal and rejection of particular geographies in the kwaito music video.

The Otolith Group's (2011) conception of the essayistic is most pronounced in *geo-philosophical ontologies*. The essayistic, as understood and practiced by The Otolith Group – whether audio, film, photo, or video – is a conflation of creation, curation and critique. What I think of as the *geo-philosophical ontologies* in the kwaito music video are perhaps most discernible in the manner in which they appear to be led by the song-text: the lyrics and the beat resonate with the cinematic representation. In *geo-philosophical ontologies*, the kwaito music video connects disparate geographies – most prominently in the representation of the rural/urban. Yet, the *geo-philosophical ontologies* are also a framework in which the beat, the lyric, and the image can and do claim individual, autonomous narratives that nonetheless operate in relative harmony. In *historio-graphic* terms, the *geo-philosophical ontologies* are an affective, from-the-ground articulation and writing of cultural kinship and black family histories.

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Recorded music for circulation is a phenomenon with a history of just under a century in South Africa. Sello Galane (2009) and Christopher Ballantine (1993) concur that the first records were circulated in South Africa circa 1930. Ballantine writes that *marabi* became South Africa's first urban black music in mainstream circulation, created by migrant workers with origins in the different ethnically separated regions in the country, and from other parts of the African continent, especially from neighbouring countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and elsewhere (Ballantine 1993/4; Dikobe 1973; Masekela 1975). We get to understand that many of *marabi*'s big hits would include up to three southern African languages in one song, a practice that persists in most popular music produced in South Africa today – a vernacular multiculturalism. *Marabi* is known to have carried the migration story, and its relation to forced labour, dispossession and dislocation. *Marabi* also relayed stories of dual (urban and rural) spaces, merging these narratives into subsequent genres as *marabi* evolved.

A classic 'Jim Comes to Joburg' narrative, even the central character in Lionel Rogosin's *Come Back Africa* (1959) leaves the rural enclaves to Johannesburg, where he will enjoy a front-seat experience of a young Miriam Makeba at a shebeen.[35] On the shebeen: In 2022, South Africa has experienced the surfacing of the violence associated with, but not necessarily rooted in, the shebeen. Here we are referring to a similar structure called the (Enyobeni) Tavern, in which twenty-one youths – minors in this case – died mysteriously in a tavern celebrating the end of mid-year exams. About three weeks later, a tragic mass shooting – reported at fifteen people dead – occurred in a tavern in Soweto. These tragic occurrences call for a society to order beyond the president's forceful "swift action" announcement to "regulate taverns".

Here one must think about the distinctions that mark 'taverns' from 'shebeens'. In other words, upscaled taverns are 'popping up' in suburban areas as 'lifestyle centres' across the country, and the same violences permeate in such spaces (one iteration of the project I co-founded and co-curate, the Thath'i Cover Okestra, took place at Eyethu Lifestyle Centre in Mofolo, Soweto – a beautiful initiative that combines a wine cellar, an art gallery and a tavern in one venue, opposite the now-defunct historical Eyethu Cinema). In fact, studying Ma-E's music video, 'Tse Blind' (2018) hides in plain sight how the distinctions are false. The video starts with Moozlie sippin' bubbly, accompanied by the song-text 'ema tavern … ithi amadoda la'. The motif persists.

Kwaito's umbilical cord, in its lyrics and videos, stretches right back to *marabi*. An apt example is Mafikizolo's video to 'Marabi' from the album *Sibongile* (2002), the lyrics and the video illustrating a journey from an unidentified rural village to the city.

Music, or songs as 'text' are some of the "pre-existing African arts, repertoires, archives and knowledge" that Peterson writes about, falling under what he terms "Black Public Humanities" (2019). It is thus of no surprise that the apartheid government of South Africa embarked on censorship, in which its intelligence officers would identify music that they deemed should be censored. Given that the kwaito industry had no 'formal' infrastructure at the turn of democracy, I can imagine, and indeed recall, young black people filling the streets of townships and villages in self-organised street bashes[36], singing along to Mafokate's chorus en masse. Similarly, television (and by extension the music video) was also seen as a threat, as mentioned above.

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[35] Here the shebeen, in *Come Back Africa*, evokes a line from the poem 'This Kid is No Goat' by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali (1971), that reads: "He enrolled at Life University whose lecture rooms were shebeens, hospital wards and prison cells." An alternate take by *Chimurenga*, when launching their Volume 10 – 'The Curriculum is Everything' – is "The Shebeen as a College of Music".

[36] Street bashes are musicking gatherings that gained popularity in the early stages of kwaito, circa 1993, in which the sound-system culture was employed in the streets as a way not only to get together to practice pleasure and celebrate freedom but also to market the music and practitioners of kwaito before the record companies took note. A street bash may not use a conventional PA system, but a car's sound system usually located in the boot – as seen in the video for Thebe's 'Bula Boot' (2002) – and, as the title urges one, 'abuti, brother' – to 'open the boot'. This video, and the song-text's meanings, go beyond the practice of pleasure, also indexing kwaito's seminal years when co-founders used to sell their cassettes from the boots of their cars in popular public spaces, including black transport hubs like taxi ranks. The street-bash aesthetic is a standard motif in the kwaito music video, seen in videos for the songs of many artists. Boom Shaka was at the forefront of this practice, in which the Kalawa Jazmee Records tested the merchandising by selling their cassettes with Boom Shaka performing.

The means of production, as well as the state of the nation, affected the trajectory of the music video in South Africa. The states of emergency and heightened isolation of South Africa from the continent in the 1980s, vis-à-vis American cultural imperialism, are interesting factors in the tracing of visual motifs that travel from *bubblegum* to kwaito. Whilst the (kwaito/black) song-as-text can and does act as an object of resistance, a symbolic manifestation of potentiality, why then is most of the kwaito music video grammar limited to realism? What is it that drove/drives the realist impulse for the kwaito video? In other words, if the song is not the script, then why do most kwaito music videos enact the song? Or do they?

Chapter Two

FROM *MODUMOKGOLE*[37] TO *UMABONAKUDE*[38]: READING THE KWAITO MUSIC VIDEO

> "It is clear that to speak of the oral background to literary writings is to implicitly invoke a notion of the intervention of writing in a conceptual arena of flux."
> (Quayson 1997: 13)

> "Segwagwa wee, meetse o nwa kae?" [frog, where do you quench your thirst?]
> (Blouberg 178 at Thabeng ya Mogale[39]: 2022)

This chapter is an intertextual and interdiscursive analysis of selected music videos from South Africa, past and present. The analysis is mobilised through three interlocking and interdependent frameworks: *situated lens-based performances*, *geo-graphic territories*, and *geo-philosophical ontologies.* Using these frameworks, the chapter will engage with articulations of gender, race and nationalism in the kwaito music video.

The chapter unfolds through three sections. Each section presents analyses of two music videos, along with 'detours' into 'paratexts', in the forms of 'flashbacks', 'interludes', and 'sound effects'. Through these paratextual detours, each section, while analysing two music videos as main cases, then pause into intertextual vignettes by way of drawing links to conversations taking place in other kwaito music videos, as well as broader kwaito visual culture, spanning 'record' sleeves, *isiPantsula* dress (and fashion at large) and movement, promotional materials – such as posters, flyers, television 'stories'[40] and advertisements, and many other paratexts. Indeed, these detours help the reader to grasp the temporalities and dis/continuities, as well as the genealogies of kwaito's visual grammar/s. The notion of paratextual detours introduces concepts such as 'flashbacks', 'interludes', 'pauses', 'rewinds', 'fast-forwards', 'sound effects', etc. as working terms synonymous with the production and consumption of audiovisual works of culture.

In section one of this chapter, I begin my discussion with articulations of what I am building as *geo-graphic territories* in the kwaito music video. I conceive of the *geo-graphic territories* in the kwaito music video as an elucidation of contests over space, land, regions, and sites. It is the 'writing' of geographies that elucidates specific activities, experiences and ways of knowing in a

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[37] *Modumokgole*, a Sepedi term/concept literally translated as 'sounds from afar', is also the title of a song by Philip Tabane (1988), a proponent of *malombo* – 'music of the spirits' – who deepens the meaning of the term *Modumokgole* to resonate with intra-spiritual communication.

[38] *Umabonakude* – literally 'to see far/further' – is a Zulu term for the television set, a relatively new term coined to signify this type of technology. Similar to *modumokgole*'s deeper meaning, there is something of seeing beyond the screen that is suggested by this term, surpassing the significance in the naming of the relatively recent arrival of TV in South Africa (see Chapter One for more on the significance of television). Zola writes: 'Now you see me on TV and you think that I'm sexy' (in 'Ghetto Scandalous' 2006) – undermining the allure of television, while the same medium was also vital to his professional development.

[39] I footnote this because the lyric is older than the day it was 'performed' as part of the *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* activities at the screening event on 29 May 2022. As part of the *mmino wa setšo* repertoire, the lyric is also known and performed by many ensembles.

[40] By 'stories', I refer to televisual forms of storytelling, such as 'drama', 'telenovela', and 'soaps'.

manner that 'defends' such social milieu as 'belonging' to a specific group of people. In the kwaito music video, this articulation of contestations over geographies is mobilised through a range of themes. To do this, this section will focus on two examples in which the optic-narratives embody a *geo-graphic territories* sensibility in their articulation of landedness and landlessness. Here I am interested in the ambiguities in the articulation of geographies, and the claims to occupying and depicting such geographies. To follow this thread, we 'take a walk down' 'We Love This Place/Mambotjie' – TKZee's (1998) music video montage, and the video to Zola's 'Ghetto Fabulous' (2001), to see how young black people meditate on winning, singing, dreaming and dancing to loss – *go tsamaya ke go di bona*![41] This section will make a detour into the music videos for Brother of Peace's 'iSiphithiphithi' (1996), Mafikizolo's 'Marabi' (2002), Brother of Peace's 'We Muhle' (c. 2011), and Ma-E's 'Tse Blind' (2018) and 'Hlasela' (2016). These detours are important in this section, as they will help us to briefly map not only the many grammars of the kwaito music video but also how the kwaito music video engages with geographies outside of the township.

Section two of this chapter considers the agency made visible by the subject of the late Lebo Mathosa, through a study of the videos for Trompies' 'Madibuseng' (1996) and Arthur Mafokate's 'Oyi Oyi' (1997) – two music videos that feature Mathosa as actor (not musician). The section will make a detour into the music video for Lebo Mathosa's 'Siyasiwiza' (2005), thereby employing what Ian-Malcolm Rijsdijk and Adam Haupt term the "extra-filmic association" between film and music (2007: 34). Mobilising the conceptual framework of *situated lens-based performances*, this section is grounded in the notions of 'good time girls' (Ligaga 2014, 2017 & 2020), and "cruising with Lebo Mathosa" (Hlasane & Peterson 2022).

Section three of this chapter unpacks themes surfaced by the music videos for 'Tabalaza' (Donald Duck, 2008) and 'Kwela' (Mafikizolo, 2005). Starting from an investigation of the presence of white characters in kwaito visual culture (and black life), the section unpacks ways in which young black people engage in political resistance and challenge power. Further, the section unpacks ways in which humour is used to undermine the criminalisation, infantilisation, supervision and surveillance of black youth and black people, historically and in the present, through the lens of the conceptual framework of *geo-philosophical ontologies.*

[41] *Go tsamaya ke go di bona,* a popular phrase in Sepedi, literally translates as 'to wander is to encounter', suggesting that one 'sees', i.e. learns, through movement as opposed to stasis. I use this term deliberately as it pertains to *geo-graphic territories* as far as the ethics of *geo-philosophical ontologies* are concerned. It complicates assumptions of *geo-specificities* as far as nationalism and ethnicities are concerned, dovetailing with notions of *modumokgole* and *umabonakude*.

SECTION ONE: On *geo-graphic territories* and the kwaito music video, or *"God Bless Me Nobody Will Take My Place"* [42]

But God bless me nobody will take my place
With God's blessing me nobody will take my place
Damn, I just love this place
(TKZee 1998)

You can take me out of the ghetto
But you can't take the ghetto out of me
(K.O. 2018)



Figure 17: Lindokuhle Sobekwa, *Ezilalini (The Country)* (2022). Colour photograph.

This section will read the music videos for TKZee's 'We Love This Place/Mambotjie' (1998) and Zola's 'Ghetto Fabulous' (2001). Both videos are set in a township. Where TKZee's video for 'We

[42] The phrase, "*God Bless Me Nobody Will Take My Place*" is a refrain in the TKZee song 'We Love This Place' (1998). This phrase is powerful, as it represents and evokes not only the place where 'music is playing', as expressed in the lyrics, but also the lament around landedness in a context of perverse landlessness.

Love This Place/Mambotjie' brings the viewer into the interiors of a township home, the video for 'Ghetto Fabulous' is concerned with the exteriors. What is interesting, and common, for this section, is how both music videos use the strategy of 'dreams': how young black people meditate on winning, singing, dreaming and dancing to loss. Dreaming introduces the interior melancholy of anxieties and 'dreams' from the perspective of thriving in and outside of the township. The *locations* of these two videos differ from many kwaito videos that expand and stretch the topography of the township.

Both titles – 'We Love This Place' and 'Ghetto Fabulous' – point to a recasting of the township in a positive light; the epigraphs to opening this section are two of many such examples in which the township is celebrated and glorified. Yet, the music videos do not conceal the other side of the township, historically and otherwise. Many kwaito videos, some of which will make visitations into this section as 'paratextual detours', visualise the moving in and out of the "impoverished neighbourhood to a more affluent part of the city" (Emorosele 2021: 15). The moving in and out of the township in kwaito visual culture is a strategy to present the township narrative in complex ways, as we shall get to understand not only in this section, but in the entire chapter.

As we shall see, both videos surface what Onookome Okome (2002: 334, cited in Femi Emorosele 2021: 9) considers "a complex flow of exchange and myth-making in which video filmmakers appropriate stories from social documents such as the newspaper, radio, television, and rumour mills and rewrite them into the peculiar art of the video film". The circulation and recasting of 'social documents' is an important element of the music video, and of the kwaito music video specifically. Femi Emorosele (2021: 17), writing about the music video for '1 Pound' (Brymo, 2015), emphasises how the music video is well-positioned in "subverting the truth claims of the documentary genre by deliberately calling attention to the constructedness of the reality it presents". Both music videos under analysis in this section subvert such 'truth claims' through the use of the 'dream', while also offering their own constructions of the township. More than "calling attention to the constructedness of the reality" presented by the documentary genre, the music videos critique both the township and the 'social documents' from which narratives of and about the township are drawn. In this way, these two music videos expose what Fred Thomas (2018: 285) argues, namely that "neither pessimism nor optimism is just a word in a dictionary". The videos for 'We Love This Place/Mambotjie' and 'Ghetto Fabulous' complicate optimism and pessimism about the township and, in that process, propose occupation for in-between sentiments and sensibilities. In the photograph opening this section, *Ezilalini (The Country)* (2022), by Lindokuhle Sobekwa, we are presented with multiple points of view when we look at a 'township', anchored by the central figure – a 'grandmother' – representing what Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 349) refer to as "the towering presences of grandmothers (biological ones and those from the extended families)" in kwaito. Hlasane and Peterson (ibid.: 349) go on to expand: "What is striking is that there are many songs and videos that pay homage to maternal figures encompassing grandmothers, mothers and aunts." The figure of the grandmother in kwaito visual culture is of immense interest to this study. And the grandmother is central in my essayistic video, *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* (2021). The grandmother is an important figure/factor in how the family unit is constructed in cinematic forms vis-à-vis life in the township. While the figure of the grandmother is absent in the two music videos that form the core of the analysis in this section, the grandmother is nevertheless a touchpoint for the entire chapter.

The two music videos are also interesting for how they engage with the nuclear family unit and its rituals. With regard to 'Ghetto Fabulous', a music video that cites the television drama *Yizo Yizo*, there is an invitation to a "reception in the intimate familial space of the home" (Modisane 2013: 159), which in some ways is starkly different to the same invitation discernible in 'We Love This Place/Mambotjie', and yet similar in other ways.

What place is this?: TKZee, 'We Love This Place/Mambotjie' (1998)



Figure 18: Still from TKZee's 'We Love This Place/Mambotjie' (1999), SME Africa (Pty) Ltd. (on behalf of Hola).

The music video, 'We Love This Place/Mambotjie', for TKZee's music of the same respective names[43], is a symbolic visual narrative that expresses the negotiation of black affluence and cultural authenticity vis-à-vis metaphysical and real-time hauntings of the *tokoloshe*[44], and 'social disturbance' types. Sonic texts such as "Keep trying to make money so life can be a pure bliss/reminisce on days gone by/like we all know/only the strong survive", intercept with a South Africa going into full GEAR (the Growth, Employment and Redistribution plan, an economic policy document by the African National Congress (ANC), approved by Cabinet in 1996[45]) alongside.

> An establishing shot of a content black heteronormative couple standing diorama-like in front of their picket-fenced, asbestos-roofed four-room house, with meticulously manicured

[43] The video is a montage for the two distinct songs, 'We Love This Place' and 'Mambotjie'. For promotional purposes – the bottom-line point of departure in music video production – this is a common practice. For Lebo Mathosa, we can also see a similar strategy in the 'Au Dede/Dangerous' video, critically engaged by Xavier Livermon in 'Kwaito Bodies' (2020). Of interest to me is the choice of any two or more songs chosen for a montage, inasmuch as the thematic flows emanating from the song-texts are concerned.

[44] A *tokoloshe* is a dwarf-sized being in mythology across South Africa, believed to be a tool of malevolent people to cause harm to others.

[45] https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/gear-and-neo-liberalism-part-2-thabo-mbeki-28-march-2016

front garden. The couple is dressed in their Sunday Best[46], smiling anxiously, but pregnant with hope for better days.

After all, their beautiful boy who shines in academic work will soon be home from school, holding a piece of A4 paper. As the third scene pans into his running figure, wearing grey long pants and dark orange jersey, a school uniform similar to that of Barnato Park High School[47], we can clearly see and read the poster he passes, bearing the face of Nelson Mandela and the text 'Thank You Siyabonga! MADIBA'. The time is the 1999 general elections season in South Africa.

He bounces into the living room with joy; we see the unmistakable hand-painted photograph of his grandparents on the wall behind him, representative of black elites and their modernist traditions. We also see the boy's face, with glasses, driving home his academic determination to pass on the tradition of upward mobility, smiling in elation between his proud grandparents on the wall, in anticipation of showing off his qualifications – a whole big A occupies the bottom left side of the A4 paper certificate - to his equally proud parents. He arrives in time - his mother, glasses and Afro intact – has just removed the roast chicken from the oven. Fully satisfied and content, the trio share a couch after the special meal. With kitsch artwork behind them, they watch a music video on their colour TV – parental advisory clearly turned off with all the nudity being shown – until the boy and his parents doze off, or they enter the dream world of anxiety and fear.

God bless me nobody will take my place

[46] 'Sunday Best' is a term used in South Africa to refer to stylish dress. Historically, Sundays are days for dressing up, usually for church in the morning, but then the outfit is worn all day, as people attend other happenings such as weddings, parties, street bashes, jazz stokvels (appreciation clubs), etc. In 1993, Zakes Mda published a drama, titled *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses*, about, amongst other topics: "[t]wo very different women [who] meet during a long wait to buy subsidised rice and discover they have more in common than their poverty". 'Sunday Best' is a defiance through sartorialism for the working class. In my analysis of this video, 'Sunday Best' plays with the fact that the son of the couple is wearing a uniform coming from school, and therefore it is highly unlikely that this is not a weekday.

[47] "Barnato Park High School is a co-educational school located in Berea, Johannesburg, South Africa. It was built on the site of the mansion that had been designed for Barney Barnato, the mining millionaire" (Wikipedia). I lived in and around the area of the school, as I moved from flat to flat between 1999 and 2009 in Johannesburg's inner city. I lived in three Berea-based apartments, and as such encountered the learners of that school donning the uniform every day. When the video came out in 1999, I had just arrived in Johannesburg from rural South Africa. To encounter the uniform from the street to the screen was a far cry from seeing Johannesburg on TVs and magazines in the countryside.

The video, made in 1999, is one of the popular culture records marking the transitions of political leadership within the ANC and the country at that time. 'This Place' that 'We Love' is thus quite clearly located as South Africa, in the township, and the song combines classical strings and *isiPantsula* all woven in harmony, tension, anticipation and fear. The poster as a paratext, thanking former president – and first black president of the Republic – Nelson Mandela, is more than a sign of a particular legacy; rather it is one of many foreboding, brooding clouds[48] carrying an aura of tense nostalgia and unsettling anticipation. Despite the enthusiastic 'Thank You Siyabonga!' behind the all-caps MADIBA, lies a nation – represented by this small nuclear family unit – in melancholy, the aftertaste of what is usually referred to as apartheid *babalaas* (hangover).

The foundations that enabled black children to excel in former Model C schools is quite autobiographical to TKZee members: Zwai Bala attended the Drakensberg Boys Choir School in KwaZulu-Natal – where he learnt classical music and choral music; while Kabelo Mabalane and Tokollo Tshabalala attended St. Stithians College in Gauteng, who attended Model C schools but interacted and socialised in a metropolitan context. With regard to Mabalane and Tshabalala, this double or even triple experience of being underlies tensions relating to: inclusion and exclusion on social and topographical grounds; the stark distinctions between Model C/suburban versus government/township schools; of English versus vernacular; of St Stithians and Jeppe high-school children hiding their blazers by changing clothes in the Carlton Centre[49] bathrooms before hitting the streets to Ghandi Square musicking sessions, to secure their authenticity and their street credibility[50] within another contentious position/tension between *kwaito* versus *hip-hop*[51]. This tension is alluded through the *geo-graphic territories* sensibility, which is sketched through a *tokoloshe-pantsula* invasion into this aspirational family, as the montage dizzyingly dissolves from 'We Love This Place' into 'Mambotjie'.

[48] *Brooding Clouds* (2008), a posthumous collection of short stories and poems created as part of the writing of the novel, and as a prequel to *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001), by Phaswane Mpe, carries the similar foreboding I read in the 'We Love This Place' and 'Mambotjie' montage.

[49] The Carlton Centre, a mall and office tower – the first highest tower in Africa – is located in the first Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD). It occupies a special social place in South Africa and Africa – and is located a few metres from Ghandi Square, which, Mahatma Gandhi notwithstanding, has long been a public transport hub. The Carlton Centre features in the music video for Chicco Twala's 'We Can Dance', in which Twala takes a group of children as a dance troupe both into the Carlton Centre, and its surrounding areas. In and around Ghandi Square, a formalised transit hub, there are many other 'informal' hubs for taxis (minibuses) that serve the commuting needs of township dwellers outside of Johannesburg's CBD, mostly Soweto. The latest (2021) addition to one of the office blocks at Ghandi Square is the headquarters of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), ahead of the party's ten-year anniversary in 2023.

[50] Kagiso Diseko – known as Gwyza – who attended Jeppe Boys High School, and is himself a member of the TKZee family, described these tensions in a 2013 interview with me.

[51] The relationship between kwaito and *hip-hop* started off on the wrong foot as urban black musical expressions in South Africa. It has always been a love-hate relationship, although, over time, the relationship has matured. When it comes to TKZee, Mabalane and Tshabalala's lyrical dexterity earned them unparalleled credibility. Their switch between English, Nguni, Sotho and *scamtho* was only matched by Bala's training in classical, choral and electronic composition and arrangement. TKZee was so innovative, they proposed that their style was *guz*, a subgenre within kwaito.

Ominous clouds hover over a dark township lit with 'Apollo'[52] lights under a full moon. We see the couple and their boy in bed, in deep slumber, high from *Studio Mix*[53]. They are about to be conscientised. The door creaks open during the eerie intro to 'Mambotjie'.

The mother wakes up first, frantically witnessing – looking at the shadows of a *tokoloshe-pantsula spharapharaing*[54] through their door. Then the other, and another. In come the roadies – carrying everything into the bedroom: disco balls; speakers; turntables; smoke machines. *Sghubu*! The revellers and extras. The natives! Horror!

All the while the grandparents are watching the unfolding drama from their wall – a two-dimensional diorama of a seventh dimension aura[55]. The DJ, donning a 'NY' beanie, is cued by the smoke emanating from the machine, and starts spinning. In come more revellers.

Now the father is awake, late to the party, and embraces the mother in protection – or could he perhaps be scared? After all, the mother did witness her two favourite boys dozing with a look between shame, disdain and amusement, didn't she? Now the *tokoloshe-pantsula* is +- seven members strong on the dance floor *skhandaring*[56] routines. The performers are reciting TKZee lyrics. Wha @ GWANN[57]?

Quaint middle-class life in the hood is not gonna happen in This Place! Despite the boy's 'A' performance, despite Madiba's pathfinding foundation, there lies a future that will remain unpredictable, and thus ...

---

[52] Apollo lights are the apartheid street-light solution for South African townships, imposing high-angle lights, that may also be seen and understood as surveillance lights. They are highly contentious, because such lights were not installed in the homelands during apartheid. The irony, however, is that the homelands both desire and deserve Apollos! Especially in the fight to curb post-midnight *boloi* (witchcraft), Apollos were and remain an aspiration for the villagers of South Africa.

[53] *Studio Mix* was a Friday night music-video show on SABC 1, a national television channel. Working-class families would get their weekly new music-video fix through *Studio Mix*.

[54] *Spharaphara* is a *pantsula* dance choreography derived from exiting a moving train.

[55] Lesego Rampolokeng in *Blue Notes for Bra Geoff* (2005) speaks of African languages as dense, deep and vast innovation, carrying words of "4th dimension phenomenon". Here we can also note the reference to the making of a photograph as a capturing of *isithunzi*, literally 'a shadow', but more deeply signifying an aura, a spirit.

[56] *Skhandaring* is an active verb for *skhanda*, a term for a dance routine and ethic in *isiPantsula*.

[57] This phrase appears on the cover of Grace A. Musila's *Routledge Handbook of African Popular Culture* (2022), a "hand-painted beauty Salon Sign' by Heavy 'J' – commissioned and photographed by Joseph Oduro-Frimpong, Ashesi University. The term, popularised by Caribbean musical expressions, is usually written as *wha gwann*, from *whatta' gwan*, originally 'what's going on' in English.

So his mother wakes him up. He rubs his eyes from slumber, straightens his glasses, to return to *This Place* that *We Love* 'today', in 1999, the year Thabo Mbeki took over the leadership of the ANC and South Africa.

The kwaito music video is replete with impromptu house parties and street bashes. Read this way, the 'We Love This Place/Mambotjie' music video may, in the first instance, look like a reflection of reality. And it should, only if *this place* wasn't so complicated. That is why a montage is apt, as the first segment represents comfort; which is then disrupted by the second segment. The question is: Whose *place* is *this*? In the chapter 'How the Land was Lost', Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, from his 2018 book, *The Land is Ours*, makes it clear to the reader, right from the first sentence, that "the cattle had stopped grazing" (2018: 11). When the cattle stop grazing, something must be wrong, so be afraid, or "be very afraid", as TKZee alert the reader/listener in the promotional material towards their 1998 release, aptly titled *Halloween.* 'We Love This Place' and 'Mambotjie' form part of this critical kwaito release. The disruption of/into contentment is a sign that the cattle have stopped grazing. As Vusi Mahlasela lamented, or perhaps rather warned:

> *Di tlo le thula ka ninaka* [the cattle will stab you with their horns]
> *Mohla ditswang sakeng* [the day they leave the kraal]
>
> ('Tonkana', 1998)

The music video for 'We Love This Place/Mambotjie' forms part of these warnings that were taking place in South Africa, through the lens of African popular culture. As mentioned, Boom Shaka have been central to the issuing of warnings of this kind. Indeed, while they defended themselves against the onslaught for their revision of the national anthem in 1998 by citing that they were educating the youth who did not know the lyrics, they were downplaying the political urgency of their iteration, as discussed earlier in my introduction. It is very clear that their omission of the English and Afrikaans lyrics in their 'edutaining' iteration forecasted the debates of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall – student events that started in 2015, and recast the debates of the 1976 student movement into a new context that not only shook the Eurocentric monumentalisation of colonialists (starting with Cecil John Rhodes) but also the curriculum and labour relations of South African institutions of higher learning.

God Bless Me Nobody Will Take My Place?



Figure 19: Still from 'We Love This Place/Mambotjie' (1999), SME Africa (Pty) Ltd. (on behalf of Hola).

The video is a signpost of the times. It is a *historio-graphic* narrative of promises, dreams, actions, fears, and failure. 2008 remains a pivotal moment in South Africa: Thabo Mbeki was viciously ousted from his seat, following his outvoting in the African National Congress Conference in Polokwane in 2007, with a militant pro-Zuma membership pushing Mbeki out of his desired third term as the president of the party and thus of the country. Mbeki had wanted to keep his place for two terms longer than Nelson Mandela's one term as the first black president, after years of colonialism and apartheid. Despite Zuma being voted in as the next president, the problem the nation faced was accusations of corruption against him, as well as a pending rape case facing the then ANC deputy president, who had been vying for the party's highest seat, and thus that of the country. A brooding cloud was cast over the country at the end of 2008, still reeling from the xenophobic violence of May that year, recalling Boom Shaka's song 'Kwere Kwere'[58] of 1993. The political ousting of Mbeki is eerily percepted by the 'We Love This Place' song-text:

> *Yeah, here we go I gotta go*
> *Another show*
> *Now You know I got to make dough*
> *But The world just seems to be be too high to get over*

[58] Boom Shaka may as well be the first kwaito group to cast another brooding cloud, as far as nationalism colluded with ethnicity. They were the first group to voice the term 'kwere-kwere' – a derogatory and hateful term aimed at African 'foreign nationals'. It was a brave move by young black South Africans, for they did not simply pen these lyrics but they sourced the mood on the ground, the street, the living rooms of ordinary South Africans, and circulated them on air. Saying no to something so contentious and painful has repercussions, but what they did not expect was to be accused of xenophobia.

Yeah Yeah
Too low to get under
Yeah Yeah
And we stuck in the middle of it
We better make the best of it
And the only way to survive is to make a profit
I'm out of here

Was this to be Mbeki's forced resignation speech ten years later? Before the video switches to 'Mambotjie', featuring Sbu MaLawyer, the song-text prequels the Jacob Zuma years as president of South Africa, replete with another foreboding haunt:

Here I am
Bouga Louv coming with the fat jams
That cat that doesn't give a damn
But anyway I figured this – That if you don't stop
Then I won't quit
Keep trying to make money so life can be a pure bliss
Reminisce – On days gone by
Like we all know – Only the strong survive
Don't be scared
Just let each other fly
Just chill
And see how we get by

And please don't get caught up in the mix
This world
Is full of dirty tricks.
Add to that
Never trust a trick

But God bless me nobody will take my place
With God's blessing me nobody will take my place
Damn, I just love this place
(TKZee 1998: 'We Love This Place')

Around the same time as the ousting of Mbeki, in 2008 the USA was celebrating its first black president. While down here, in South Africa, a regime was knocking that would later swear to "[r]ule until Jesus comes back".

God Bless Me Nobody Will Take My Place!

Perhaps none of these examples actually felt like brooding clouds; perhaps it was just my distant heart that grew fonder. I was in the USA between August and December 2008, when the ousting unfurled. Working mainly in the ailing city of Detroit, but sponsored by the ultra-wealthy Ann Arbor-based University of Michigan (UM), specifically the then Centre for Afro-American and

African Studies (CAAS), I was re-reading Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) and *Brooding Clouds* (2008), alongside K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001). During the week, I was working in the studio of the UM School of Art and Design, making videos and visual art, and participating in various CAAS happenings and conversations at Ann Arbor. On weekends, I was hanging out with members of Detroit Summer and the Allied Media Conference, and contributing to those programmes. Detroit lies about 45 minutes away from Ann Arbor. The train connecting these starkly different geographies had long stopped working before 2008. With the recession hovering over Detroit, the USA more broadly, and over the majority of the globe, I was invigorated and inspired by the Detroiters' pride despite their losses, and inspired by their will to rebuild their land and art – mile by mile, block by block, song by song, programme by programme.

My fond heart yearns and pledges long life to our then less-than-a-year-old Keleketla! Library, located right at the heart of Pan-Africa – Joubert Park, Johannesburg. These Detroiters were/are from vast geographical genealogies, with vaster demographics: Mexicans, African Americans, Chinese. My fond heart was still aching from the widespread, but not new, 'xenophobic' violence that took place in South Africa in May 2008. But there must be more to this clear nostalgia. And there is. Ten years earlier, Boom Shaka had urged the oppressed to once again come together to tackle violence, including xenophobia; but also to begin the work of rebuilding outside and alongside government programmes and policies, through their song 'Bambanani' (1999), featuring Ihashi Elimhlophe. Indeed, to invite Elimhlophe, who was by then one of the key proponents of *maskandi* music, and an elder to Boom Shaka, indicates that a) intergenerational conversations and actions are critical to this kind of rebuilding, and b) kwaito is located in and draws influence from far more spaces, ideologies, practices and forms than was acknowledged at the time. That the song was addressing xenophobia amongst other social and political ills (a subject that Boom Shaka was returning to years after their 'Kwere Kwere' intervention of 1994), then also suggests that kwaito itself can look to other African roots and genealogies more than it was doing in 1998, a year before a *Y-Mag* cover (featuring kwaito massives Bruce Dope Sebitlo and 'Skizo') announced that in South Africa, it's "house all night long". A shortcut to Detroit would thus be apt at this juncture in the text.

A detour 1: Invincible ft. Finale, 'Locusts' (2008)







Figure 20: Stills from the music video for Invincible and Finale's 'Locusts' (2008).

In Detroit, I got to learn how community activism was linked to cultural production in ways similar to Johannesburg. In terms of community media-making, the music video to a song titled 'Locusts' (2008), made by two of Detroit's rappers – Invincible and Finale – made a huge impression on me. The music video at that time (2008) blew me away in terms of its combination of documentary and music video. Grace Lee Boggs (2008) says in the docu-music-video that:

> Most people think of Detroit as a place from which you, escape
> From which you sort of have school that encourages the people to leave the community
> We think of schooling and education that helps children to engage in rebuilding the community and engaging people of all ages that
> It's a whole of looking at a health of a city and the health of the community and the health of the people

"Enough talk", says one of the youths at the end of the docu-music-video, pointing at the camera. Anchored on the city's historical and enduring spirit of resilience, the song-text and the video chronicle: the segregationist past of Detroit; its demise after the industrial meltdown; the 2008 recession; and the growing realities and impacts of gentrification. Like Johannesburg, Detroit experienced what is termed 'white flight', a phenomenon when white businesses and residents deserted the inner city to move to the suburbs, leaving the city to decay.

* * *

How does the kwaito music video negotiate the township, the city and the suburb? Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 354) explain this multi-situatedness in the kwaito music video:

> The kwaito music video articulates the township as a state of mind that complicates national and state narratives. It does so through its projections through cutaways and flashbacks of vignettes of trips from the township to the suburb and back again as well as life in the village. The combination of performed multi-situatedness in the kwaito music video and the multi-lingualism in its lyricism espouses a vernacular imaginary that is not consistent with the national project of multiculturalism.

Danai S. Mupotsa, Polo B. Moji, and Natasha Himmelman (2021: 3) contend that "the African city is understood in relation to its proximity to and imbrication with rural spaces". The kwaito

music video is a cinematic site in which this proximity and imbrication have been made visible. This thematic trope does not come as a surprise, as it is discernible in other works of culture. In literature, the novel *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) by Phaswane Mpe is one example of a dual rural/urban setting. In similar ways to television series such as *Muvhango* (7 April 1997 to present), set in Johannesburg and Venda, and later series like *Isibaya* (18 March 2013 to 2 April 2021), set in Johannesburg and Thukela Valley in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, the kwaito music video has tended to intervene in the distance between the urban and the rural. In music itself, the genre of *marabi*, considered to be the first mainstream recorded music in South Africa, is replete with lyrics that could be read as 'sonic letters' between the city and the village.

This section will now take a few detours into some of the articulations of the dual city/village itineraries, and see what thematic priorities have concerned young black youth in negotiating the relationship between the city and 'home'[59]. If we consider these dual thematics in the kwaito music video as audiovisual letters, what messages are being transmitted? These "trips from the township to the suburb and back again as well as life in the village" offer insights into the complex geography that is a legacy of apartheid (Hlasane and Peterson 2022: 354).

The first insight that would seem most obvious is the notion that the village and the township are under-served, underdeveloped and uninhabitable. Emorosele, writing about Lagosian artist Brymo, makes a point that similarly applies to a South African context in terms of how the township is articulated in kwaito visual culture:

> Coming from a relatively underprivileged background in Okokomaiko, he had succeeded in achieving his dream of being a musician and moving out of this impoverished neighbourhood to a more affluent part of the city. [...] he emphasises his practice of returning periodically to his old neighbourhood to visit his friends, implying that he continues to identify with that part of the city and what it means to live there. (2021: 15)

Many kwaito artists would leave the township or the village for the city or the suburb after they'd found success. This move from the township is a reversal of, or a commitment to, the protest 'We Won't Move', popularised as a resistance against the forced removal of the people of Sophiatown[60] in the west of Johannesburg at the height of apartheid, who were moved to the township of Soweto and other such under-served, underdeveloped, and uninhabitable spaces. Reflecting on the poem 'I Am Not Going Back to the Township' (2013) by Makhafula Vilakazi, Percy Zvomuya (2013) describes the poet as "an insistent and troubling presence, much like the township itself", and says about the poem: "In it, all our terrors, anxieties and nightmares about the township that limpidly lie hidden in the folds of the yarns told about the rainbow nation suddenly rise, erect and threatening."

The second insight is that the city, the suburb and village are articulated as complex sites. As we shall see in the first detour, via the music video for the song 'Isiphithiphithi' by Brothers of Peace,

[59] Many urban dwellers of Johannesburg, even those born in the city, consider and refer to rural villages as 'home'. This is a legacy of many colonial legislations and Acts.

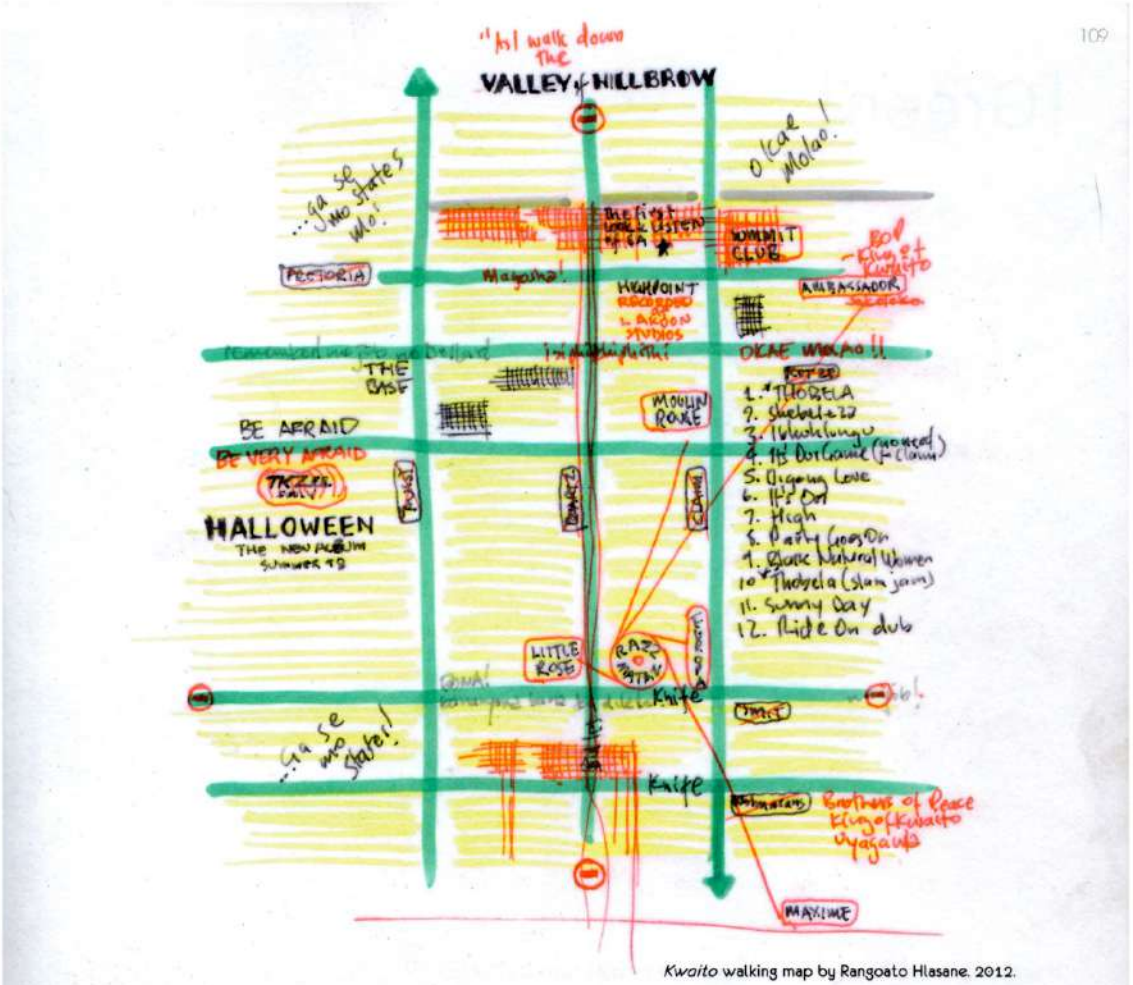
[60] While the forced removals of Sophiatown have been the most famous, there were forced removals in Mitchells Plain in the Cape, Lady Selborne in the then Transvaal, and many more.

'Joburg City'[61] carries layers of meanings for South Africans. Later in this chapter, we will also see articulations of the city of Joburg through the video for 'Tabalaza', 'Marabi', 'Kwela', and the commercial for SABC 1, 'Ya Mampela'. Indeed, there will also be a number of allusions to the city of Johannesburg through the other paratexts that form part of the chapter, and its points of discussion. Zwane, in his introduction about the subject formation of black youth – as heard in kwaito, and as a kind of refusal of the rainbow-nation state narrative – expands on the idea of freedom of 'movement':

> [...] despite the country's racist segregationist laws that aimed to make their very presence in the urban areas of South Africa a problem, they have produced their own space/s within Johannesburg. A consciousness of this history and the continued occupation of these spaces, with all of the attendant dangers and pleasures, is what I argue produced kwaito and the black subjectivity that is discernible in the music. (2018: vi)

It is at this point that we introduce the second detour.

[61] This refers to a song by Ismael (2002, but the South African songbook is replete with songs named after Johannesburg, ranging from 'Gauteng' to 'Egoli', and many other names, such as 'Maboneng' and 'Jozi'.



Kwaito walking map by Rangoato Hlasane. 2012.

Valley of Hillbrow

Valley of Hillbrow is a track by the Kwaito band, *Bongo Maffin* (Thandiswa, Stoan, Appleseed and Speedy) with the chorus line '... as I walk down the valley of Hillbrow, I shall fear notin' evil'. The track is from the 1998 hit album, *The Concerto.* Many of *Kwaito's* earlier songs engaged with Hillbrow of the 1990s: 'Magosha' (Whores) and 'Isphithiphithi' (with the line 'remember no job no dollar') are by *Brothers of Peace* (Oscar 'Wa Warona, Batho' Mdlongwa and Bruce 'Dope' Sebitlo) from their 1994 debut album, *Traffic Cop* (Ibiz'e Moyeni). The track 'Okae Molao' (where is the law/respect?), with the lines 'Ga se mo states mo' (this is not the United States) and 'Bona! Bona bananyana bana ba tletse ho jola...' (look these little girls are preoccupied with dating), is taken from their controversial album *King of Kwaito Uyagawula* ('King of Kwaito, you are a copycat') released in 1996. The list of tracks on the right are from *Boom Shaka's* album *It's Our Game* (*No Need to Claim*), the first Kalawa project recorded at *Lakdon Studios* (1994). The album was produced by Don Laka, with Oscar Mdlongwa and Mandla Mofokeng. *Boom Shaka* (Lebo Mathosa, Junior Sokhela, Thembi Seete and Theo Nhlengethwa) performed at clubs like *The Base* and the bar that gave Oscar his first DJ break, *Razzmatazz,* originally located at the corner of Quartz and Smit streets and surrounded by strip joints and brothels: *Little Rose, Europa* and *Moulin Rouge.* Oscar Mdlongwa spoke in an interview about corner of Quartz and Smit streets, a hot spot of crime known as 'Bullet' and 'Knife' in the '90s. (54)

(54) Ra Hlasane. 2012. Email, 2 October.

Figure 21: *Valley of Hillbrow,* a 'kwaito walking map' by Rangoato Hlasane, in Bettina Malcomess and Dorothee Kreutzfeldt (eds). 2013. *Not No Place: Johannesburg. Fragments of Spaces and Times*.

Detour 2: Brothers of Peace, 'Isiphithiphithi'

Brothers of Peace is a duo, formed in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, consisting of Bruce 'Dope' Sebitlo and Oscar 'Oskido' Mdlongwa,[62]. In Hillbrow, they met with Don Laka and Chris 'DJ Christos' Katsaitis, and together became the Kalawa Records co-founders. In the early 1990s, Hillbrow was a mecca for music production and club cultures. It was there that Kalawa Records discovered and mentored what was their first breakthrough group, Boom Shaka. Kalawa Records then merged with members of Trompies – who were once a rival group from Meadowlands, Soweto – to become Kalawa Jazmee. But Hillbrow was also going through a rapid change, and indeed, by the late 1990s, most of the kwaito groups and recording studios had deserted that part of the city. The music video for 'Isiphithiphithi' (havoc), by Brothers of Peace (1996), was filmed in Hillbrow. *Isiphithiphithi* is an expression that comes close to what Nigerians term 'jaga jaga', described by Emorosele (2022: 388) as "a pidgin expression for when something is upside down or out of order – including longstanding issues like lack of electricity and clean water, politically motivated assassinations, 419 scams, poverty, child labour, and fuel scarcity".

> This time it is not a dream we are looking at, but a view from below the street itself. This time we are in the inner city of Jozi, possibly in Hillbrow, because we are shown the popular imagination of: street fights, beggars, queers, street kids, running males, daylight hijackings, pirated CDs sold by the King of Kwaito ... *isiphithiphithi* indeed.

The music video to 'Isiphithiphithi' paints Johannesburg, like Lagos, as "a sign of desire, aspiration and struggle [that] index[es] the overt concern with subjectivity in a postcolonial African city" (Emorosele 2021: 9). Hillbrow, as Phaswane Mpe (2008: 41) writes it into literary being, carries a "reputation for prostitution and crime" in the psyche of Tiragalong villagers who are recipients of "new wild stories" from Johannesburg migrants. These "new wild stories" are not limited to the psyche of villagers, however. Hillbrow and its neighbours – Joubert Park, Berea and Yeoville – remain in the imaginations of popular culture as locations through which to narrate crime and grime, squalor and vice; "milk and honey"; dreams and opportunities; hustle and consequence, etc. Despite all of this, Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) is a love letter to this unique site, as well as a lament on its absence in literary representation. But Mpe should recognise that Hillbrow is indeed written about, in an expanded literary sense.

For example, Oscar 'Oskido' Mdlongwa, like Mpe, is fond of Hillbrow. Over and above the video for 'Isiphithiphithi', Brothers of Peace also wrote a song titled 'Magosha' (sex workers) (1995), on the album *Traffic Cop*; Oskido narrated his life story in Hillbrow and Berea as part of the documentary *VUMA: A Music Revolution* (2009), and he filmed the music video for his song 'Eish' (2019) in Hillbrow. In another reflection of/in Hillbrow, Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 350) write about Oskido's music video for 'Mama Wami' (1998), in which a young man leaves the township to try life elsewhere:

> He lands in Jozi's tenements, the centre of heightened forms of hustles in which drug

[62] As producers who also perform vocals, their methodology has always been one of collaboration with other vocalists. One of the first consistent collaborators was Ignatius 'Dr Mageu' Ntshebele, who is now late.

> peddling is synonymous with rhyming and writings songs about mamas. But of course, the inner city of Johannesburg is, as many authors have described, the land of perils, along with the dreams of gold.

As I discuss elsewhere in this chapter, the *Y-Mag* fashion spread was set in Hillbrow (Fig. 36); 999 All Star's music video for 'Kwasa Kwasa' (2000), addressing xenophobia, while borrowing from the cultural world of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), was filmed in Hillbrow. In fact, the narratives in 'Kwasa Kwasa' (2000) and 'Eish' (2019) share one thing in common: a dance competition (*kwasa kwasa,* 'from' the DRC vs *twalatza*, from South Africa; as well as *isipantsula* vs *sbhujwa*, both from the South African township as well) is used as a way to address social issues. It is unfortunate, although perhaps not surprising, that Arthur Mafokate, in this music video, wearing the same overall as in 'Oyi Oyi' – as I discuss and analyse in section two in this chapter, is also the one instigating violence, this time of a xenophobic kind. This violence is unfounded, as he is the one who decides to stop the barber from finishing his job, brushing his head and walking away from the makeshift barbershop common in Hillbrow, to go to a pub where, after looking in the mirror, he sees his unfinished haircut and decides to go back to confront the 'foreign' barber.

Gaz'lam (2002–2005), the television series about dual rural/urban complexes, was filmed in and around Hillbrow; so was the gangster/building-hijacking film *Jerusalema* (2008), the protagonist of which fronts as a founder of the Hillbrow People's Housing Trust; and so was *Hijack Stories* (2001), which was filmed in Hillbrow and in the township. In one of the scenes in *Hijack Stories*, the main protagonist is in his apartment, and we see a poster for Bongo Maffin's album *IV* as he walks to the kitchen to speak to a character, who is played by Boom Shaka's Thembi Seete, who started her career in Hillbrow. The opening scene in *Hijack Stories* is that of a car hijacking, not dissimilar to what we see in the music video to 'Isiphithiphithi'.

> Oskido and Bruce rise from below the manhole to ask what all this mess is about, only to be met by a beggar. Followed by a group of black males mugging a black woman jaywalking at a robot (traffic light). Later, Oskido and Bruce are to be robbed of their own car in their above-ground life. Everything socially ill is relentlessly reflected on screen. "Ups and downs" as the 'song-text' declares.

In *Jerusalema* (2008), we see the fronting director addressing residents of his newly acquired building, telling them that rent will be halved until all the amenities and services are improved. Further, he announces: "In the meantime, it is our intention to get rid of drugs, prostitutes, and all other unsavoury elements" (*Jerusalema* 2008). His announcement is met with: "Ey, asshole. Go fuck yourself", from a character who is meant to represent a Nigerian, or foreigner, based on his accent and his partner's dress code (ibid.), thus reinscribing the widely held stereotype that foreigners are responsible for drug and prostitution businesses in Hillbrow.

On the damaging, pertinent, and sadly intergenerational stereotypes of the perils of being a foreign African in South Africa, the reader is advised to look at Keleketla! Library's *Teen Talk*, in which young people are seen engaging in xenophobic acts – filmed at Constitution Hill, that lies between Hillbrow, Joubert Park, Braamfontein and Parktown, which are some of the settings for Mpe's

Welcome To Our Hillbrow. In the document *Teen Talk*, these youths from the township of Thokoza, on the east rand of Johannesburg, interrogate a Nigerian who was a guest on the workshop about foreigners and drug businesses in Hillbrow, and who responds calmly about political education (or lack thereof in South Africa), and Nigeria's contribution to the decolonial struggle of South Africa (Keleketla! Library: 2017).

Teen Talk was a seven-week workshop in which young people (primary and high-school learners) worked with facilitators in the then Keleketla! After School Programme (KASP) – as is discussed further in the section on Mafikizolo's music video 'Kwela' in this chapter – and embarked on a process to understand migration and xenophobia in Africa. The 'Nigerian' is in fact Prince Adesina Al-Amin, then the Secretary General of the Nigerians of South Africa, and an independent businessman, who was selected for the programme by the core group of *Teen Talk* during the pre-production and research phase of the workshop to share his experience and expertise. In *Teen Talk*, Al-Amin mentions that in Hillbrow he works as a director of a security company he founded (which works in "three sites" in Hillbrow, and that are under his supervision), and that as far as security is concerned, he thinks that "the police" should do their work (Keleketla! Library: 2017). Incredible, given how the discussion about Hillbrow has been going thus far, right? Especially when it comes to the private security complex at the heart of South African suburban life.

But this work should never ever lead to a police state that looks like a state of emergency (see Fig. 23). Al-Amin goes further to mention that, as a "security man", he was commissioned to be part of the security cluster for events where two South African presidents were attending, namely for Nelson Mandela at Ellis Park, and for Thabo Mbeki at Montecasino (Keleketla! Library: 2017). Al-Amin describes those commissions as some of the most "fortunate" events in his life. And why wouldn't he be fortunate? This is before Al-Amin became his own boss with a company operating in Hillbrow (ibid.). In *Teen Talk*, Al-Amin, 'calmly and with patience', talks to the youth from Thokoza, and everyone present, about how he, as a school child in Nigeria, "sacrificed" his pocket money from his parents to contribute to what was known as the 'Mandela Fund', to free political prisoners and South Africa (ibid.). Phaswane Mpe should very well be satisfied about how Hillbrow, despite its '*jaga jaga*' and '*isiphithiphithi*' reputation, continues to be written about in an expanded sense – a holistic sense.

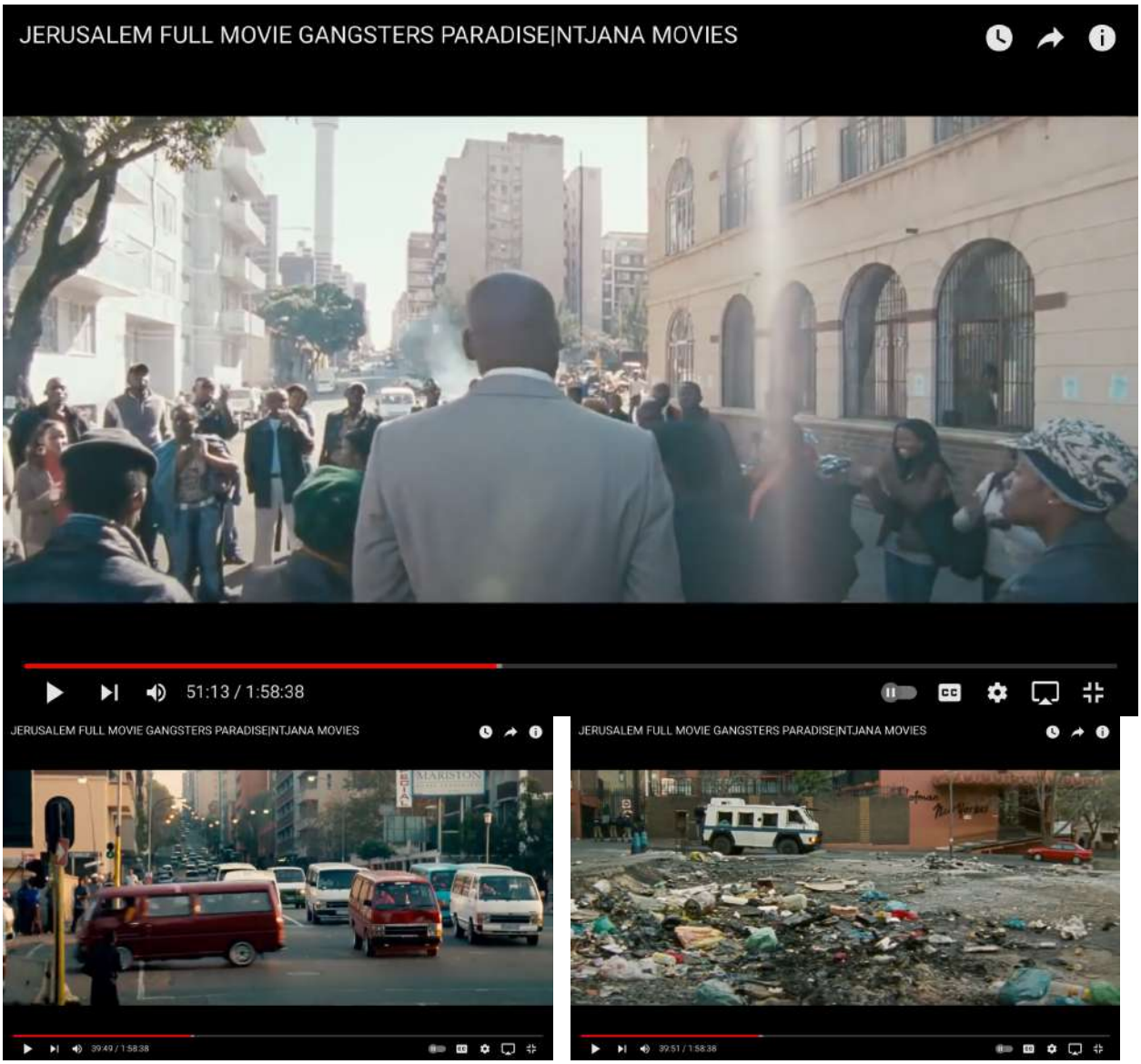


Figure 22: Stills from *Jerusalema* (2008). **Top:** The main protagonist addressing residents as con-founder of the Hillbrow People's Housing Trust in Hillbrow; **Left:** A scene on Twist Street near the then Mariston Hotel (where Brenda Fassie used to live during her drugging days, and where I lived as a student (2003–2007) after the Mariston rid itself of its stigma and qualified as one of the first private apartments to receive rental money from NSFAS) in Joubert Park; and R**ight:** A state of emergency-like police Casspir passes Hofman New Yorker, an apartment block in Hillbrow, on the corner of Kapteijn and Quartz Streets (diagonally opposite an apartment block I lived in in 2001). Hofman New Yorker is up the street from the former Razzmatazz Club, where Oscar 'Oskido' Mdlongwa got his big break as a DJ, and two streets down from Highpoint, an apartment block where Oscar Mdlongwa and Don Laka lived and met. Little Rose and Europa brothels, mentioned in the song 'Magosha' (sex workers) by Brothers of Peace, are a few streets down from Hofman New Yorker.

Detour 3: Ma-E, 'Tse Blind' (2018)

Where in Detroit – a city that is treated here as a springboard – a group of cultural activists are imagining ways to rebuild in 'Locusts'; and in Joburg, in 'Isiphithiphithi', the city is described as havoc, in the music video for Ma-E's 'Tse Blind', the city is bypassed altogether. The music video for 'Tse Blind' is a journey from Soweto to Rosebank and back to Soweto, and then back to

Rosebank – while the city in the music video is merely a passageway to access the township and the suburb. However, the final destination is as dramatic as it is devastating.

> Starring Ma-E as 'The Township Councillor', Moozlie as 'the New Age MaBreezus' and Kid X as 'Mfana ka Aunty', the music video for 'Tse Blind' starts at a bar in Rosebank, on Keyes Art Mile. It is interesting that the song-text starts with the phrase "e-matarverni" (at the taverns), given that Keyes Art Mile is one of Johannesburg's newer upmarket art 'markets', along the so-called Jan Smuts Avenue art strip in the northern suburbs. It is close to the Circa on Jellicoe, and the Everard Read Gallery, one of the most 'elite' art galleries in Johannesburg, targeting wealthy art collectors.
>
> Posing as regular visitors of an art exhibition, New Age MaBreezus approaches a security guard, and brushes his chest as she continues to flirt with him. As the security guard smiles at the surprise attention by New Age MaBreezus, the Township Councillor is seen gesturing gun signs to a seemingly doubtful Mfana ka Aunty, emphasising the importance of their real mission in their visit to the northern suburbs. Unaware and fully distracted by New Age MaBreezus's cleavage, a figure in a mask appears behind and topples the security guard, as two other figures appear from behind and continue to assault the guard.
>
> The team proceed towards a vitrine holding expensive-looking objects, and escape with the loot as the alarm wails. The three of them drive away in a BMW 325i, the quintessential car in the kwaito music video. Afterwards, we can tell they are around Soweto, as we can see parked tourist buses at the Hector Pieterson Memorial Museum in Orlando West, a mural of the Orlando Towers on a house next door to the memorial, and the Orlando Stadium. After this scenic tour in their *gusheshe*, they arrive at a *shisanyama*, where the transaction takes place over Glenfiddich whiskey. Although the Township Councillor is shown to be complaining that the money was little, they nevertheless take it, and head back to Keyes Art Mile to enjoy their spoils, until they get arrested.

At this point I propose a slight pause – another sho't left detour – and briefly read into the gender dynamics at play in 'Tse Blind'.

> New Age MaBreezus is, in this video, albeit an accomplice in this criminal spree and therefore one with 'magents' – as the old-school, real Brenda Fassie claimed – sexualised. While the agency is all hers, she nevertheless has to use her

sexuality to distract the security guard. It is important to recognise this agency, for, as Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 352) argue, "If 'hanging' with *magents* (gentlemen) is an act that places women in the centre of a public life beyond caregiving and raising of venerable children, Brenda Fassie proposes and highlights a way to 'bloma' with gentlemen – as a 'participant and witness'." Yet, in her role as New Age MaBreezus, it is difficult not to read her as the woman in Kid X's lyrics, who is, ironically, going with the character of 'Mfana ka Aunty'. The song-text says:

> *Uhamba nam' lo* [this one is leaving/cruises with me]
> *Ngimthole emashoweni e front row* [I found her at the shows at the…]
> *Gave her the work and she want more*
> *Ugijimisana nam' eHigh and Low* [she is chasing/following me]
> *Hai ho, nxa ho ...* [this whore]
> (Kid X in 'Tse Blind': 2018)

On the notion of 'cruising' which they apply in their reading of the figure of Lebo Mathosa, Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 352) write:

> By cruising we are not solely referring to moving and signifying through motor-cars. It encapsulates other forms of fluidity and stasis such as 'om te blom' (slang derived from the Afrikaans word for flower/'blom') as in "ngiyo blomma namagents" (I am going to hang out with the guys). On the surface (especially in the eyes of officialdom) *uku blomma* may be associated with idleness and waywardness but a lot of thinking, planning, 'spinning tales', and all kinds of pleasures play themselves out while *blomming*.

It is with more than mere benefit of the doubt that New Age MaBreezus can be read as more than a sex object, more than a video 'vixen', but indeed a participant and witness who in fact performed 'important' tasks, albeit through sexualisation. Indeed, as Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 358) observed:

> Moozlie has built an interesting video archive in terms of her mobilisation of the car. In Tse Blind by Ma-E (GhandaGhanda TV 2018) she is cruising with her 'magents'; in 'Vatel' (MoozlieVEVO 2018) she is chauffeured from home to the spaza shop and back, and in S'funukwazi (MoozlieVEVO 2019) she is simply uninterested in the car and the men who drive them.

So, Moozlie holds her own! That is, if we quickly detour and follow Moozlie chauffeured around Ben City (Benoni, Daveyton). Indeed, it is plain to see that *amagents* have got Moozlie's back, and together they come from far (Moozlie 2018).



Figure 23: The 'ka!' seals the overstanding between Moozlie and *legents* in 'Vatel'. © 2018 Nomuzi Mabena Music.

While Moozlie doesn't get to spin the *gusheshe* (she leaves that to Stacey Lee, one of the few women who spin, as seen in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*), she gets to drive it with her girlfriend in the music video for 'La La La' (2020), connecting the visual grammar to Lebo Mathosa 'driving' her RAV4 with her girlfriend in Mamelodi, in the music video for 'Siyasiwisa' (2006).

On kasi love and its perils, with Zola et al.[63]

It is virtually impossible to read the music video to Zola's 'Ghetto Fabulous' (2001) without referring to *Yizo Yizo* (1999–2004). Much has been written and discussed about and in relation to *Yizo Yizo* from various perspectives (Barnett 2003; Ndlovu & Smith 2011; Smith 2001, Rijsdijk & Haupt 2007; Modisane et al. 2013). Modisane (2013: 161) provides a succinct premise of *Yizo Yizo*:

> *Yizo Yizo* is a product of a campaign by the national Department of Education in South Africa called Culture of Learning and Teaching and Service (COLTS). It was part of the Department's strategies of addressing problems besetting township schools. These were identified as low morale and ill-discipline among teachers and learners, lack of community support, lack of essential teaching and learning resources, as well as poor leadership. In addressing these problems, the Department and SABC's Education division commissioned

[63] 'Kasi love' evokes sentiments in the 1997 album by Bongo Maffin (Leaders of Gong), Da Brat's 1998 song 'Ghetto Love', and Thandiswa Mazwai's line in the song 'Nizalwa Ngoban'i (2006) that goes "the ghetto is our first love", among many others.

> research in schools, the outcomes of which would be used to develop a drama script leading to an educational television drama.

The film company, The Bomb (then known as Laduma Film Factory), was commissioned to produce the television series, a process that started with the company's team and writers conducting research in township schools for a period of three months (ibid.: 161). Hlasane (2023: 203) writes: "Known to have broken both records and boundaries of television aesthetics in South Africa, *Yizo Yizo* is arguably the quintessential kwaito ode in moving image". The music video to 'Ghetto Fabulous' emerges from *Yizo Yizo*, performed by Zola, who was also one of the key actors in the television series.

The music video for 'Ghetto Fabulous' represents one of the "pathways of circulation" and "secondary texts" of the television drama, *Yizo Yizo* (Modisane 2013: 161). Modisane's analysis of the reception of *Yizo Yizo* in theoretical discourse is that it has tended to focus on "moral concerns and about what a television series should or should not do" (ibid.: 160). Such concerns, argues Modisane, overlooked how *Yizo Yizo* "generated discussions around black identity, a theme that fell outside of its educational mandate" (ibid.: 160). Due to how *Yizo Yizo* "disturbs the rigidity with which televisual and cinematic genres are normally identified", which led to its "acceptance by many international festivals as a film in the cinematic sense", and how that demonstrates "its transgression of a strictly educational television drama genre" (ibid.: 163), the series has gained both popular and critical acclaim. Even with these accolades, Modisane writes about how *Yizo Yizo* was mired by "controversy as the local press published complaints and commentaries on its gritty violence, graphic sex, and uncouth language" (ibid.: 163). Some of the commentaries, as well as 'reportage', claimed that the series had potential to instigate violence in real life, in that young black people could actually mirror/mimic what they see in the television series.

While such claims remain unproven, Ndlovu and Smith (2011: 5) cite some of the intentions by the producers of *Yizo Yizo*, and their hopes that "long after the series is over, the music will keep the images and memories of Yizo Yizo alive". An important factor to consider in these "pathways of circulation" and "secondary texts" of the television drama *Yizo Yizo* (Modisane 2013: 161) is the soundtrack, and in particular the music video for 'Ghetto Fabulous'. The video for 'Ghetto Fabulous', as a paratext to *Yizo Yizo*, building from the series in terms of narrative, was one of these "images and memories of Yizo Yizo" that kept the story of the series 'alive'. I argue that *Yizo Yizo* did indeed turn out to be a template for new cinematic grammar that would be replicated in television, film, and the music video. What is interesting is that as much as *Yizo Yizo* introduced a new visual grammar, the producers themselves borrowed from kwaito itself: "Long before *Yizo Yizo* there was a voice reflecting the joy, anger and hope of young people. Kwaito music. *Yizo Yizo* embraced the spirit and energy of that voice and introduced it to television drama" (Ndlovu & Smith 2011: 5).

This subsection expands on ideas forming part of what I term "Unfolding in-conclusion", in my chapter 'The Quiet Violence of 'Ghettofabulous' Dreams: Notes from Kwaito's Optic-Narratives' (2023: 220):

> The 'wake' at the end of the video to "Ghetto Fabulous" marks the wedding as a democratic site of inclusive performance in South(ern) Africa. Pre- or post-coronavirus, a wedding,

> much like a funeral, is an amnestying day when "sghubu sa bo kleva" (FN) summons everyone from the yard (and the jail cell) to the street in the ethic of *sa koša ke lerole* (FN). When the shebeen queen summons *bo-guluva* to the yard. When the white wedding goes *ghettofabulous*. When a *ghettofabulous* wedding does not need the metro police escort. When there is a framework for everyone's safety, so that even *uguluva* deserves to "Bambelela" (MM Deluxe, 1990 & Mas Musiq & Aymos, 2020) because the "enraged kwaito troubadour or griot seems more endangered than dangerous (Peterson 2003: 207).

I quote the above at length because the unfinished thought was a link to 'Afrodiasporic Space' (Livermon 2020). I might have continued with further articulations like: "As the late The Notorious B.I.G – he who was 'ready to die'[64] – stated, 'it was all a dream'[65] … until it fades to (a bloody) wake." The music video to 'Ghetto Fabulous' ends as a wake-up call – that is, the protagonist is woken up in a prison cell to come back to reality, which is a double reality, because he was in a dream. What is fabulous about a ghetto? Nothing – it's all a dream as far the 'Ghetto Fabulous' video goes. Or everything, as far as this photograph by Ernest Cole goes – a photograph that looks so much like some scenes from the 'Ghetto Fabulous' music video.



Figure 24: Ernest Cole, 'Rented car is status symbol at middle-class marriage. Expensive wedding can leave couple broke for a year'. South Africa, ca. 1960s. From *House of Bondage* (Aperture, 2022). © Ernest Cole Family Trust

[64] Refers to the 1994 album title by The Notorious B.I.G.

[65] Refers to the first line in the rags-to-riches song, 'Juicy' (1994), by The Notorious B.I.G.

This is not specific to South Africa. As I note elsewhere, the glorification of the 'ghetto' has served as precursors perhaps best expressed via the so-called 'Afrodiasporic Space' through works such as "Ghetto Supastar (That is What You Are)", 1998, by Pras featuring Ol' Dirty Bastard and Mya and Ras Kass, 1988 and more (Hlasane 2024: 205).

This subsection is concerned with the manner in which the kwaito music video articulates the township as a construct, as a site where personal agency is simultaneously gained and lost. Yet, the persistence of the notion (or ethic) of 'Bambelela', as articulated by MM Deluxe (1990) and Mas Musiq & Aymos (2020), calls for a kind of 'hope' and 'optimism'. An aspect of Modisane's summary is apt inasmuch as it elucidates the notion of hope and optimism in the township and its lifeworlds, with regard to *Yizo Yizo:*

> The arrival of Grace Letsatsi, a motivated young female teacher turns the school around and for the first time, the parents, the school governing body, and the Student Representative Council work together to bring back order to the school. The hooligans attempt to reclaim the school but they fail as the community takes charge and ensures their arrest. (2013: 158)

The kind of optimism presented by Grace Letsatsi in this fictional township school represents a type of hope that resonates with the desire and commitment to create a habitable life under extreme conditions. The producers also recognised the importance of acknowledging the will to dignity: "In representing the lives of black youths attending township high schools, *Yizo Yizo* relied on recognizable signifiers of 'township-youth' experiences. Kwaito is one such example" (Ndlovu & Smith 2011: 5). This recognition, of course, is also present to serve the production itself:

> While all of these performers were famous prior to being cast in the show, one of the actors (Bonginkosi Dlamini – aka Zola) achieved notoriety following the series – arguably as a consequence of Yizo Yizo. This explicit relation between the text and secondary texts (horizontal intertextuality) not only solidifies the authenticity, but also adds to the popularity of the series. (Ndlovu & Smith 2011: 6)

Detour 4: Mafikizolo, *Marabi*

> It is through this detour that we follow an old-school Mercedes Benz down a street, with a *housey* soundtrack, driving Mafikizolo members. Where are they going? The song-text informs the listener that the destination is Johannesburg, and as the viewer can indeed see the lights, they have thus arrived in 'Gauteng Maboneng' (Gauteng the place of lights). Driving around what seems like a deserted industrial area in the heart of the night, they enter what reads like a dungeon, with peeling paint on the walls. As we follow Mafikizolo, they enter a basement interior, where the needle drops to a time in the early twentieth-century Johannesburg, the soundtrack switching to *marabi* sounds.

Now we can speculate with greater specificity about the location for this audiovisual 'period

piece'. Doornfontein? Vrededorp? Prospect Township? Setekekeng/Newclare? David B. Coplan (2007: 129) writes:

> As the Natives Urban Areas Act began clearing black people out of the newly proclaimed 'white' inner city, *marabi* culture was also driven out, and by the mid-1930's the death of black communities in Prospect Township and Doornfontein helped kill *marabi*.

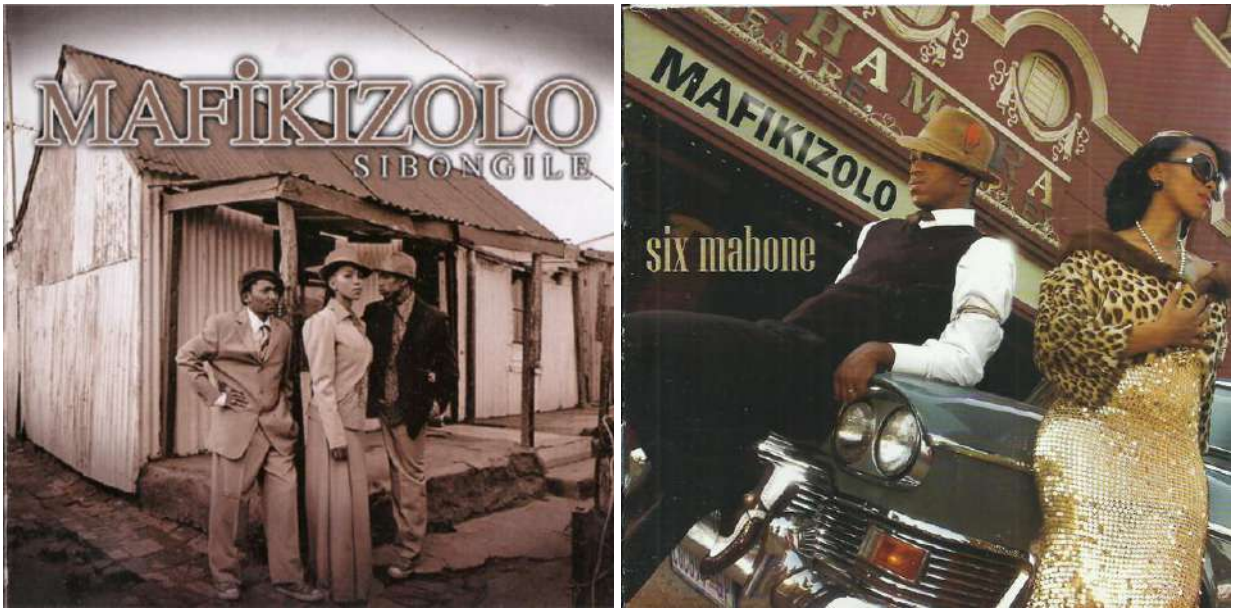


Figure 25: Left: The album cover for Mafikizolo's *Sibongile*; and **Right:** The album cover for *six mabone*. Both album covers recast visual history through site and location in complex manners.

Mafikizolo's 'Marabi' is an opener for the group's 2002 album, *Sibongile*. Between this album and their follow-ups – *Kwela* (2003), *Van Toeka Af* (2005), and *six mabone* (2006) – Mafikizolo have used the album artwork (and the music video) to activate the archives of *marabi* and *kwela* music styles through dress and choice of locations. As I discuss in section two, in the discussion of the music video for 'Kwela', the choice of Constitution Hill connects many complex issues. Indeed, the album cover for *six mabone* is a photograph of the group at the entrance to the Alhambra Theatre, located at 107 Sivewright Ave, New Doornfontein, announcing a MAFIKIZOLO performance, as seen on the sign. While the Alhambra Theatre first opened in 1977, decades after the 'death' of *marabi* culture in Doornfontein, Mafikizolo presents an interdiscursive visual storytelling that maps the trajectory not only of black music but also, as Coplan (2007: 129) posits with regard to *marabi*, "a social situation and a cultural outlook". Mafikizolo are revisiting what was, in the early twentieth century South Africa, a "setting and a symbolic expression of the birth of an urban community among the African working class" (ibid.: 129).

Peterson (2000: 118) cautions, however, that "[o]ne should [...] resist simply romanticising *marabi* and other forms of ghetto life. *Marabi* culture, over and above its positive qualities, was equally socially restrictive and latent with aspects of dehumanisation". I would argue that despite their borrowings, Mafikizolo, in their lyrics to 'Marabi', are heeding a call like that of Peterson. As a message from a mother to a child who is leaving (the village) for Johannesburg, Mafikizolo sings:

O ba bone botsotsi ba Jozi [beware the criminals of Johannesburg]

Yet, despite the warning from the parent in the village, they go straight into a late-night concert – "a style of *marabi* called *ndunduma*, which became a name for this kind of affair, attended mostly by recent arrivals from the country who wanted to be 'town boys', and came to acquire some urban culture" (Coplan 2007: 127). Mafikizolo's 'Marabi' music video narrative – the move from the village and straight into a *marabi* party – is a straightforward illustration of how *marabi* "[m]elodies could come from almost any direction, from indigenous African songs to hymns, African-American music or simply popular songs […] with a *marabi* rhythm pumping underneath, accented by shakers made of tin cans filled with small stones" (ibid.: 114-115). Their defiance against a parent's warning is also rationalised by the proximity of *marabi* parties – or rather their slum-yard locations in the inner city – to "employment, stores, and other urban amenities", as well as to "centres for the preparation and sale of liquor and beer, laundering, and other informal but essential home industries" (ibid.: 111). The centre of the hustle.

It is not only the song-text that shows Mafikizolo's complexity in re-reading *marabi* culture. The two album covers above indicate that, through their repertoire, they are alive to both the gloriousness (the shimmering glitz on the cover of *six mabone*) and the decay (the derelict housing structure on the cover for *Sibongile*). Peterson (2000: 117) expands:

> *Marabi* encompassed the social and recreational activities of the lower classes. Life in the slumyards was without exception harsh and regimented. People lived in overcrowded, dingy corrugated iron rooms amidst poverty, squalor and the lack of sanitation. Life was lived under the constant fear and threat of arrest under the country's numerous discriminatory and influx control laws.

Mafikizolo's sonic texts as well as their visual narratives are therefore an interesting intervention used to comment on the past and the present insofar as spatial planning and urban/rural romanticism are concerned. They address issues of dispossession, gender dynamics, nostalgia, flight, resistance, and memory. On Mafikizolo's 'Marabi', Hlasane (2020: 207) writes what he terms an 'interlude' in the text 'Dangerous Combinations and Skeem Saam Foundations – The Most Beautiful Black City in Africa', and I quote at length:

> Interlude: All roads lead to Johannesburg
>
> Mafikizolo's 2002 album, Sibongile, with its very Afropop sound opens with a tribute to Marabi music, the song itself accordingly titled 'Marabi'.
>
> *Namhlanje u ya hamba*
> *O bekele eGoli o bekela eGoli mntanami*
> *O ba bone ba tsotsi ba Jozi*
> *Qapela mtwanami*
> *O ye eGooooooooli*
> *Mina ngihamba ngi sbekeli eGoli*

Mina ngihamba ngi sbekeli eGoli. [Trans in footnote[66]]

> 'Marabi' is shaped along lost landscapes scattered in the shadow of memory, it sounds like a dirt road soundtrack headed for the national road N1, in the back of a taxi carrying dreams of family in a dual life, urban and rural. 'Marabi' evokes yearning and heartache, longing and nostalgia; it evokes a feeling of distance and far away love, of landscape and attachment. This ambience is created particularly through the songs opening, with its finger claps, saxophones, vocals, lyrics, driving bassline, and penny whistles.
>
> It is not driven by a bass drum or bass kick; the essential instruments in most dance songs and overused by the music industry. Instead, its pulse is propelled by vocal harmony of a time in the faraway place of childhood choirs from the village, with eyes on the city of gold. It is a perfect entry into an Afropop album, as it pays allegiance to other people's memories before exploiting them for their cultural value. Mafikizolo was the Afropop poster group of the 2000s, deeply focused on a study of Johannesburg, connecting Doornfontein to Sophiatown and elsewhere, not only through their sound, but also the carefully researched CD covers, stylings, and video locations.

Nhlanhla Nciza, a member of Mafikizolo, is wearing a t-shirt by the boutique fashion brand, Stoned Cherrie, with a print of a *Drum* magazine cover featuring Miriam Makeba, connecting the links to Sophiatown and black radical artists and activists. At the same time, Stoned Cherrie, a boutique fashion house that had a store in Rosebank, and that charged R300 for these t-shirts circa 2002, represents a lifestyle way higher than the 'working-class' makers and followers of *marabi*. Coplan cites H.I.E. Dhlomo, a "mission-educated" critic, who wrote that *ndunduma* and such are "night clubs of the lowest order … attended by degenerate young elements, the newly arrived country bumpkins, and the morbidly curious" (Dhlomo in Coplan 2007: 127). At the same time, Dhlomo appraises the capacity for the *ndunduma* concerts to nurture and produce innovative *marabi* (ibid.: 111). Since Mafikizolo's video is framed as a period piece, and they drive around the inner city at night in a Mercedes Benz, it suggests that they are wealthy, yet the wealth would not necessarily shield them from the Urban Areas Act that, despite its failure to "retard the growth of an urban black working class", could still enforce "harassment, instability, neglect, and denial of basic rights" (Coplan 2007: 111).

It is also interesting that the characters in the music video to Mafikizolo's 'Marabi' are 'listening' to a *house*y soundtrack before the needle drops to a *marabi* sound. That the year is 2002 in South Africa, a time when kwaito was struggling for attention alongside the rise of house music, is of great interest – since Mafikizolo, as an inherently kwaito group, made a *house* album (*Loot/Lotto*, later remixed by New York house duo Masters at Work) in 2000, before switching to the genre then known as *Afropop*, which they used as an opportunity to perform this archival activation of seminal South African musical styles from the early to late twentieth-century South Africa. After Mafikizolo's stint in *Afropop*, they 'returned' to *house* with their huge 2013 hit, 'Khona'. As we

[66] 'Today you depart / departing for Johannesburg, my child / watch out for the criminals of Johannesburg / watch out my child / go to Johannesburg / I'm leaving for Johannesburg / I'm leaving for Johannesburg.'

will 'see' in the next detour, the examples under discussion (including Mafikizolo's 'Khona', DJ Ganyani's 'Xigubu', and Mahoota vs Vetkuk's 'Bayete') all carry a *house*-music sensibility, while infusing it with distinct South African indigenous narratives, and their music videos are located in the 'village'.

Detour 5: Brothers of Peace's 'We Muhle'

If the car-rental company, First Car Rental's listing of South Africa's "top ten cultural villages" is anything to go by, there is certainly at least one cultural village in each of the nine provinces. The directors of Brothers of Peace chose one – Lesedi Cultural Village – based in the province of Gauteng, as the location for their video of 'We Muhle'. In this sense, the distance to the village was literally cut short in this kwaito music video. It makes sense, since most of the cultural villages based in their respective provinces would most often represent the ethnic group/s of that particular province, for example, the Bakone Malapa Open-Air Museum in Polokwane, part of the Polokwane Art Museum, represents a clan of the larger polity of Northern Sotho people (of which Bakone are one of many).



Figure 26: Promotional material for the Lesedi Cultural Centre.

Lesedi Cultural Village, on the other hand, was created to "celebrate the **cultural diversity of the people of South Africa**" and, as such, "features five traditional homesteads, each representing a different culture: Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, Ndebele and Basotho"[67] (emphasis in original). Zulu, Xhosa,

[67] According to the First Car Rental website listing: https://www.firstcarrental.co.za/news/travel/lesedi-cultural-village.html.

Pedi, Ndebele and Basotho represent four of the eleven 'official' ethnic groups in the "diversity" of South Africa.



Figure 27: Still from the music video for Brothers of Peace's 'We Muhle', filmed at Lesedi Cultural Centre in Gauteng province (2012).

As I indicated above in relation to the Northern Sotho ethnic group represented as 'Pedi' in the description of Lesedi Cultural Village, that group is diverse – representing Balobedu and Bakgalaka, amongst others. *South African History Online* expands: "Northern Sotho, or Sesotho sa Leboa, is one of South Africa's 11 official languages, and consists of up to 30 different dialects, one of which is Pedi. Much confusion surrounds this term, as Sepedi, the language spoken by the Pedi people, which has been often referred to as Northern Sotho, which is incorrect."

Gcobani Qambela (2021: 3), writing about the films *Inxeba* (2017) and *Kalushi* (2016), contends that in cinematic representations "the city is shown as limited in its ability to provide access to full personhood and manhood without a return to the rural and 'traditional'". The music video for 'We Muhle' is a clear example of this inadequacy of the city to provide certain manhoods, this time problematically represented by the performances of women who, in Zulu custom, are supposed to be 'pure', i.e. virgins. The 'extra-filmic' reading of Bruce and Oskido as urban-based practitioners of popular culture, provides a lens through which we can read their return to a 'rural' environment to make up for what is missing in the city.

> The activities in the video include but are not limited to: weaving mats; engaging in art and craft; drinking *umqombothi*

> served by maidens who kneel as they serve; playing of *maskandi* guitar, in addition to 'traditional' instruments such as marimba, mbira and drums; herding of livestock; grinding maize; sharpening of spears, etc. In all of this, all the characters are dressed in 'traditional African' clothes and accessories, as per the mandate of Lesedi Cultural Village, to be representative of amaZulu, amaXhosa, baPedi, amaNdebele and Basotho. In a project to frame what they term the 'New South African Man' (NSAM), Qambela (2021: 5) notes: "Despite being city-based, he prides himself in being culturally rooted, and he shows this through various choices he makes, which include occasional returns to rural contexts and homestead for various cultural and traditional practices, such as the initiation of boys." Bruce and Oskido, 'city-based' men, are seen engaging in many of the activities listed above as part of a performance of being 'culturally rooted'.

Brothers of Peace are not the only popular-culture outfits that perform this return to the rural through the music video – a few other examples being Mafikizolo ('Khona', 2013), DJ Ganyani ft. FB ('Xigubu', 2013), and Mahoota vs Vetkuk ft. Adam M & Professor ('Bayete', 2010). In fact, the music video for 'Bayete' features cameo appearances by Bruce and Oskido, as well as similar tropes and motifs; for example, women kneel to serve *umqombothi* to men. In fact, the music videos for both 'Bayete' and 'We Muhle' were produced by the same company, Gorilla Films. However, the video to 'Bayete' 'switches it up': the video doesn't remain in the 'cultural village', unlike the video to 'We Muhle'. Instead, unlike the video to 'Xigubu', the scenes in the music video for 'Bayete' alternate between the 'cultural' village and the club, and the beach and other metropolitan locations, while also introducing DJ equipment and mobile electronic music-playing devices, such as iPods, on mobile speakers (at the beach). What the three videos have in common is the so-called 'western' musical instruments (the bass drum in 'Xigubu', which finds its parallel is 'sghubu' in 'We Muhle' and 'Bayete'), the guitar in 'We Muhle', and the DJ equipment in 'Bayete'. This 'mixing' of cultures is interesting when read in relation to a similar strategy in the film *African Jim* (1949):

> [...] while the film's strange and inaccurate mixing of different ethnic South African dress codes, architectural forms, and locations (including Ndebele, Swazi and Zulu styles) is indicative of ignorance on the part of the filmmakers, this could be read as a critique (however unwitting) of the newly formed apartheid system, which was seeking precisely to segregate and thereby regulate the different groups. (Dovey & Impey 2010: 63)

Ignorance cannot be a claim for a cultural village's mixing of ethnicities, an endeavour that is informed by rigorous research, and which falls squarely into the narrative of nation building. What is not surprising, of course, is the exclusion of white culture (English-speakers and Afrikaners, who are 'officially' part of the (South) African demographic) in the cultural villages. Insofar as Brothers of Peace is concerned, it is even more interesting, as the choice of location thus complicates the routes and roots of kwaito – although they took a *sho't left* as compared to, for example, the music video for 'Bayete'. The music video for 'Bayete', by taking place in a cultural village and on a beach, indicates that the trip from Johannesburg to Durban's coast did take place.

This music video for ‘Bayete’ follows the song-text and music video for T’zozo and Professor’s song, titled ‘Woza eDurban’ (2011). The song and music video, representing the convivial meeting of Johannesburg and Durban’s key music labels, declare that to have a good time, one must “come to Durban”, known as “Africa's Playground” or the “Miami of Africa”.

Having said all this, when nationalism meets gender, the effect can be devastating, as seen in this video to Brothers of Peace’s ‘We Muhle’. In this ethnically schizophrenic setting, of a cultural village in search of a submissive and beautiful bride, Oskido and Bruce’s outfits code-switch across different ethnic groups’ apparel until, towards the end, they settle for western clothes, represented by the white suit, representing their executive urban selves. At this point, the shirtless (innocent?) boy who is learning to play a ‘traditional’ music instrument (mbira) alongside his mentors (i.e. Joburgers Bruce and Oskido), is sitting on the lap of Oskido, thus indicating how heteropatriarchal values are passed on …

SECTION TWO: Lebo Mathosa in *situated lens-based performances*, and her intersection with gender in the kwaito music video



Figure 28: Lebo Mathosa as Madibuseng in the music video for 'Madibuseng', for the song of the same name by Trompies (1996).

The two main music videos under discussion in this section are special. The videos are for the songs 'Madibuseng' (1996) by Trompies, and 'Oyi Oyi' (1997) by Arthur Mafokate (referred to as Arthur from hereon). As music videos for a) a male artist (Arthur), and b) an all-male group (Trompies), Lebo Mathosa (referred to as Mathosa from hereon and, interchangeably, Madibuseng) is presented as embodying a title that she bestowed upon herself: 'Drama Queen'[68]. In both videos, Mathosa does not sing, but performs as a character. The videos provide the viewer with two starkly different perspectives on the figure of Mathosa. While she has agency in both, how she is treated by the men and others in the video – and how she responds – is complex. In addition to the two videos, we will read Mathosa's music video for 'Siyasiwisa' (2005). In this way, the detours into 'Siyasiwisa' (2005), and the "extra-filmic association" presented by the figure of Mathosa in 'Oyi Oyi' (1997) and 'Madibuseng' (1996), will come to bear fruit in generative ways (Rijsdijk & Haupt 2007: 34). In 'Siyasiwisa', Mathosa does not perform anything close to 'dramatic', in contrast to her performances in 'Oyi Oyi' and 'Madibuseng'.
The music videos for 'Madibuseng' (1996) and 'Oyi Oyi' (1997) are interesting when read from a chronological perspective. 'Oyi Oyi' (1997), for example, continues the storyboard of 'Madibuseng' (1996) – in 'Oyi Oyi' (1997), the liberated Madibuseng, i.e. the character in the

[68] *Drama Queen* was the title of Mathosa's last album, in 2006. In fact, the nickname 'Madibuseng' for Mathosa emerges from her character in this music video. The name or phrase 'Madibuseng' evokes the meaning, in that the bearer is a female who is a 'good time' person.

song and video for 'Oyi Oyi', is captured by an emotionally immature figure[69] (played by Arthur). In 'Madibuseng', the main character 'calls the shots'. This makes the video for 'Oyi Oyi' regressive.

As such, we will start by reading the music video for 'Madibuseng' (1996), followed by a reading of 'Oyi Oyi' (1997), with the reading of 'Siyasiwisa' (2005) intervening in between. In this regard, Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 354) write that: "In Trompies's Madibuseng [...] and Arthur's 1997 Oyi Oyi [...], Mathosa unsettles the Madonna/Whore trope and proposes instead the fluidity between the desire and taboo, attraction and repulsion that is central to the dynamics of 'forbidden-fruit'."

In the following sections, we will read some of the more salient, normative motifs of heteropatriarchy, and how Mathosa's performances challenge the "dominant discourse of mononormativity regarding partnerships, infidelities and jealousy" (Ligaga 2020: 91). Citing Ani Ritchie and Meg Barker (2006), Ligaga reflects on the "possibility of an alternative discourse shaped by the development of 'polyamorous identities, relationships and emotions'" (ibid.: 91), which, Ligaga argues, are emerging as a discourse that can trouble the dominant discourse of monogamy as reproduced in mainstream media (2020).

Further, in the sections that follow, we will also look at cinematic strategies that subvert dominant narratives and forge self-representation within carefully scripted environments. These strategies explore the slippages that dwell in the gaps, and that surface contradictions and spotlight ambiguities.

In the mid- to late 1990s, Lebo Mathosa remained a figure that embodied such strategies: while she drew heavily on the past, she lived fully in the present, and therefore, today, is a figure that is seen as a model.

Mathosa lived in the time of Brenda Fassie, whom she idolised from childhood, and who later became her peer. She also lived in the time of Busi Mhlongo, whom she channels with intensity in the live concert rendition of Mhlongo's 'Umentshisi' (2019). One YouTube commenter wrote a post on 'Umentshisi' (2022), requesting, "can you please upload her performance with Brenda singing Too late for mama from the same concert" (Mihlali Rennie). The said performance is of Lebo Mathosa ft. Brenda Fassie, doing Fassie's hauntological and yet hedonistic 'Too Late for Mama'. Another commenter, going by the name of Tshepang Mokgara, wrote: "Oh wow Madibuseng channeled Mam Busi so beautifully". In one concert, she not only embodied the spirit of Mhlongo, an older generation to her and Fassie, she also 'featured' her childhood icon. Three generational conversations between disruptive women, in song and in life. Mathosa (and Brenda) are remarked on by another commenter, B D: "These 2 women had the SA music industry by the balls that term [sic]". The intensity of the term "by the balls", itself disrupts heteropatriarchy and undermines it substantially. "During her interview with Dali Tambo, Mathosa emphasised the fact that historically many Black performers in South Africa have been poorly compensated for their performance Labor," writes Livermon (2020: 133). The 'industry' in question is indeed a male-dominated environment. As Hlasane (2020: 207) frames it, Mathosa "worked hard, shifting labels

[69] The performance of the jealous boyfriend evokes the saying 'hurt people hurt people'.

to define what she does, negotiating a brutal task in the music sector historically controlled by racist, patriarchal, sexist, unjust, and often white, businessmen".

Dina Ligaga's (2020, 2017 and 2014) elucidations of the 'good time girls', inform the framework of *situated lens-based performances* in the following sections, that read the kwaito music video as it articulates and intersects with (re)constructions of gendered normativities. Building on Hlasane and Peterson's (2022) notion of "cruising with Lebo Mathosa", this section centres Mathosa amongst and as part of women and men, while she stretches how we read her contribution for how we understand gender. As Livermon (2020: 137) claims: "Part of Mathosa's appeal is also to queer men and women, who appropriate her brand of femininity in their constructions of selfhood." The following section will also therefore consider ways in which Mathosa 'queered' the industry, on the one hand, and society on the other (and in general, by virtue of her active insistence on shifting the role of women from the realm of passivity to being active, public and political figures). Importantly, Mathosa's public political work underscores the importance of intergenerational conversations, and places her as an artist who comprehends the danger of ahistorical commentary. In the music videos that we will read, as well as through the paratextual detours, we will see how Mathosa evoked the historical inheritances that link the contributions of black women to culture and politics.

Trompies' 'Madibuseng' (1996)



Figure 29: Lebo Mathosa as Madibuseng in the video for 'Madibuseng' by Trompies (1996).

Trompies' massive hit of 1996 speaks about one 'Madibuseng', a complex woman who 'drives' the four men 'crazy'. Comparing Madibuseng to a robot (traffic light), she changes colours, which is to say, she is not easy to box or capture. Writing about Brenda Fassie and Busiswa Gqulu, Siphokazi Tau (2021: 31) considers women like Madibuseng as "The strong black womxn […] seen as difficult to love especially by men of her community and race". 'Madibuseng' constructs for the listener and the viewer what Dina Ligaga (2017: 230-231) calls a "rogue woman" – someone who is "wayward, problematic, and undesirable – a rule breaker" (Ligaga 2014: 3); and defines the "good time girl" as "young, educated, beautiful, fun loving, wild, likes to 'party', is 'up for anything' and is willing to trade her body for money" (ibid.). Although seen as 'undesirable', it is this woman who, in the music video for 'Madibuseng', has infatuated four men in her community. In this video, she gets to choose, and they must perform. Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 354) write about 'Madibuseng':

> This situated lens-based performance subverts representations of polygamous norms in hetero-normative romantic love and courtship. In this video, as Livermon (2020, p. 138) argues, Mathosa continues to be the party "taking pleasure in the spectacle. It is the male body that was on display, sized up for the feminine gaze and dismissed when Mathosa was finished with him".

Set up like an audition, the whole music video is camera conscious. Let's read:

> The first man arrives at her beautiful house. He looks into

the camera to fit his spottie – and gains some confidence – before he swaggers towards the door, hiding the surprise flowers behind his back. She opens the door in an orange outfit. She assesses him from feet to face, showing little expression of interest, but lets him in nonetheless. They both sit, on opposite sides of Madibuseng's red couch. She is scrutinising the flowers with no enthusiasm. In fact, she throws the flowers back at him. Madibuseng is not impressed. He performs for the camera and is dismissed.

The second man approaches the door empty-handed. As if in doubt, he stops halfway and looks back. He knocks on the door. Dressed in yellow, Madibuseng opens the door and rubs her eyes with an expression of both boredom and slumber. The message is clear, as he closes the door behind him and returns back to the street from whence he came, to join his group.

The third man arrives driving a yellow *gusheshe*. The position of the car, filling the entire foreground of the video, shows all the promise. He swaggers, almost dances, towards the door with so much confidence, he is certain. Madibuseng opens the door wearing a green sexy number, looking way more alive than before, her face adorned with accessories: beads dangling over forehead and earrings flowing to shoulders ... and that smile. She mouths 'come', and hand-gestures him into the house. This is the first time we see such enthusiasm. He is made to wait on the red couch to the point of foreboding boredom. She appears from the back. Caught unawares, Madibuseng reclines him on the couch and feels his body, caresses him, almost kisses him, in full control, until she stands back. He is out of the house, shaking his head in confusion and shock at Madibuseng's mixed messaging.

The fourth man arrives in a red Toyota Tazz. Less confident, the car only fills half of the foreground of the screen. But he is at least smiling when he knocks at the door. Opening the door in a red outfit, Madibuseng is a bit more agitated. After what seems like a vocal exchange that doesn't go well, Madibuseng gestures a 'talk to the hand', and closes the door. He knocks again with audacity. She opens the door with anger. She walks into the house leaving the door open, as he looks at the camera with disappointed frustration.

But at least he is (reluctantly) being allowed to walk in. Biting his nails, he sits on the edge of the red couch as Madibuseng, standing, reprimands him. Then she kicks him, as if to say, 'How dare you force yourself into my house?'

> Madibuseng slaps him. He bites his nails again, looks around, and heads for the door. He jumps into the frame of the three other rejected compatriots on the pavement, busy discussing how 'impossible' Madibuseng is. After which, Madibuseng, in her yellow outfit, joins them on the street alongside the yellow *gusheshe*, dancing together, with the red couch closing the narrative by itself – 'red for anger, red for danger, red for fire, for passion'.

The video for 'Madibuseng' (1996) is a creative intervention into music-video making in South Africa. As Ligaga (2014: 3) writes, narratives of 'good time girls' are often "presented as spectacle, to be read and consumed as entertainment, but also to act as cautionary tales against certain kinds of behaviours". In the music video for Madibuseng, the "cautionary tales against certain kinds of behaviours" are subverted (ibid.: 3). In it, we see the salient motif of popular-music videos – the car losing its normative charge, while also establishing new meaning. This is in contrast to how the normative would predict the scenario, i.e. that one of the competing men would be in the driver's seat with Madibuseng in the passenger seat, parading through a neighbourhood.

In the music video for 'Madibuseng', we see another subversion of an 'archive' that is perhaps less known. Back in the early 1990s, a popular song was used to warn against the dangers of HIV/AIDS. The song, 'Sesi Portia', included lyrics that reprimanded one 'Portia', whose many men come to her house each day of the week, each driving a different kind of a car, from a tractor to a motorcycle (and even a bicycle, which is not considered a legitimate vehicle, but is used in the song to shame Portia, who takes on any man as long as they 'drive'). 'Sesi Portia' is synonymous with an "economically independent young woman who was unmarried but sexually active presented as a social threat that needed to be disciplined" (Ligaga 2017: 231).

To flip the 'Madibuseng' script, so to speak, would entail the viewer seeing the men entering Madibuseng's house, but not observing what happens inside it.[70] In 'Sesi Portia', the community that chastises her has no idea whatsoever what happens in the house. It is thus not only shocking but ironic that she, Portia, is represented by the song as "the bearer of sexual diseases and the cause of broken marriages", as Ligaga (2017: 231) might frame the scolding of renegade women. The men who enter her house, like those in Madibuseng's video, are the ones not only spreading the rumours but the very diseases they are gossiping about. On the melodrama of "scandal, rumor and gossip", Ligaga (2020: 89) posits that "[t]he reliability of gossip is on whether what is said circulates among people who understand what the gossip is about". Despite her minimal description, Sesi Portia emerges as a rare figure. Sesi Portia resists the imposition of morality; it is the men who are made – through explicit description, albeit substituted by their material status – into 'shameful' individuals known by the community that sings about them. Sesi Portia and Madibuseng could just as well choose to perform that which society expects and imposes on them, which is to say, they could be drawn to the "allure of senses-of-life that are brokered through the adoption of anti-social practices and identities" (Hlasane & Peterson 2022: 350). Ligaga (2014: 6) further writes about a

[70] This would be the view of the 'community', or whomever is watching from the street. This is the basis of the storyboard for *Sesi Portia*, the second essayistic video in the trilogy forming part of this study.

> story of a university woman who confesses to having intentionally infected a large number of men with HIV. This story erupts every two or three years, and each time the woman is from a different university in the country. In one account, a female student from Moi University is said to have deliberately infected 124 men in 2001 as a way of getting her revenge for being lied to by an older man who then infected her with the HIV [virus].

One of the commentaries on the 'Madibuseng' YouTube post interprets that it's "[a] song about Bi-Polar" (Neo, 7 years ago). Another thinks that the song is about "Multiple personality disorder". While these two comments point to mental illness, there are other comments that are rooted in the "articulation of a specific masculinist ideology" (Ligaga 2014: 8), such as "Red ... means that time of the month (by 'David Chanakira', the comments accompanied by laughing and fire emojis), and that of 'meep', who comments that "when they didn't want to call it PMS lmao #Madibuseng!!!!!!!!!". Yet, we have seen in the video to 'Madibuseng', from whence these readings surface, that Madibuseng is a complex character who invites deeper reading. Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 354) write that "[...] as suggested by the ending of the video, Madibuseng dances triumphantly next to the immobilised yellow BMW325i [...] in the street: a matriarch with multiple-partners on her own terms".

In this way the video for 'Oyi Oyi' is much less progressive when read alongside that of 'Madibuseng'. Madibuseng (read Mathosa), a complex figure, is reduced to a 'cheater', who is reprimanded and chastised in 'Oyi Oyi'. Yet, the character in 'Oyi Oyi' refuses to be captured. In it, much like in 'Madibuseng', Mathosa and "her performances are an unacknowledged space of same-sex desire and feminine pleasure, feminine pleasure constructed with the knowledge that the heterosexual male subject can look but cannot touch" (Livermon 2022: 137).

Arthur Mafokate, 'Oyi Oyi' (1997)



Figure 30: Left: Lebo Mathosa as the 'cheating girlfriend', pushing away the 'jealous boyfriend' (Arthur Mafokate); and **Right:** Mathosa finding momentary solace among a group of queer women on the set of the music video for 'Oyi Oyi'.

Esinako Ndabeni (2018) reads a moment in 'Oyi Oyi' when Lebo Mathosa climbs into a convertible car as if to drive away, only to cross over to the other side, as she is busy 'escaping' a flabbergasted Arthur Mafokate, the jealous boyfriend. Ndabeni reads that moment as a possibly unscripted action – one slipped into the video by Lebo Mathosa herself. While this may be true, there are deeply troubling violent actions that take place by Mafokate, such as the pulling of

Mathosa's hair. The premise of the video to 'Oyi Oyi' (in as much as the lyrics inform the storyboard), is that the character played by Mathosa is having an affair (or affairs – if the video to 'Madibuseng introduces the possibility of polyamory), and thus warrants the violence imposed on her (body) by the boyfriend (played by Arthur). To the boyfriend, wearing an overall that bears his initial – 'A' – with a crown and 'kwaito' below it (read 'King of Kwaito'), the girlfriend's actions represent "the problem of unregulated female sexuality" that "required taming" (Ligaga 2017: 228). What is comical is that, given that 'Oyi 'yi' follows 'Madibuseng', as King of Kwaito he had 'won' Madibuseng from and over the four Trompies men. What is ridiculous, then, is that he is now cheated on, because Madibuseng is untameable. Even more odd is how Madibuseng, in this video, appears "in a context in which violence consistently disrupted the lives of women", which is very different to the resolutions we read in the video for 'Madibuseng' (Ligaga 2019: xv).

In the fan video (edited by the YouTube poster), 'Arthur Mafokate – Oyi Oyi #TrackOfTheDay', the poster has edited the video to focus on one scene in the music video. The focus here is on Lebo Mathosa evading Arthur Mafokate, avoiding him by moving across the convertible from one door to the other. The video is comical. In a never-ending loop, the cheating girlfriend enters the car from the driver's door and exits through the front passenger door, and back again. Never driving away, never sitting. On and on it goes. The jealous boyfriend just follows, vocalising his expletives. The girlfriend doesn't say anything in return. She just remains in motion, i.e. she sets the agenda. In the main video she moves around the warehouse in which the other subjects continue dancing, musicking, idling and watching the violence unfolding with little to no intervention. In fact, there are scenes that suggest that the 'jealous boyfriend' is encouraged – by both the female and male characters in the video – to exert violence on the cheating girlfriend as part of his reaction to her infidelity as it affects him.

At one point, the girlfriend approaches a group of women in the warehouse, and for a moment they appear to offer an intervention, reprimanding the 'jealous boyfriend'. This group of four women are separated from other groups of people in the video, and are represented as homosexual, as lesbians. The symbols that appear to represent homosexuality are a combination of costumes ('butch' identity and masculine dress), body styling (bald head), and their actions (same-sex couple embracing in a sensual manner). These symbolic signs should be read also in relation to how the group is separated from other groups in the video. As the 'cheating girlfriend' approaches this 'deviant' group for refuge and solidarity, they show, through hand gestures and movements, that they don't agree with the actions of the 'cheating boyfriend', and through those actions welcome the 'cheating girlfriend' into their circle. The 'cheating girlfriend' does find some reprise in this group, which monetarily shows some resistance to the 'jealous boyfriend', and in that moment the 'cheating girlfriend' dances seductively in front of them as if to send the message, 'I choose who I love'. But this moment of reprise and solidarity does not last. Nonetheless, it is a notable moment, as Livermon (2020: 142) expands:

> Many of the critiques of Mathosa's sensual-sexual performative are also inherently heteronormative, for they fail to recognize the multiplicitous desiring subjects who may be the audience. Mathosa herself was very aware of this, and on repeated occasions reminded interviewers that while she appreciated her heterosexual male fans, she also had a lot of gay fans and that they cannot be forgotten in the construction of her appeal.

Indeed, such a moment in 'Oyi Oyi' could easily aggravate the violence. Of course it shouldn't, as Livermon (2020: 146) reminds us:

> It would be a misinterpretation to read Mathosa's performance as leading to or being the cause of sexual violence. Such an interpretation is disturbing on two fronts, for it invests Mathosa with hyperagency while simultaneously evacuating all agency from the individual who is the rapist.

Indeed, at another point, Queen – the singer of the song's hook – interferes and slightly pushes the 'jealous boyfriend' away. However, her lyrics do not subvert the main narrative: they still chastise the 'cheating girlfriend'. It is important to note that, in general, the other parties' inaction in the video for 'Oyi Oyi' justifies the boyfriend's "need to discipline the female body in public" (Ligaga 2017: 233). Ligaga reminds that "[m]ost narratives of good time girls, as they appear in popular culture, are cautionary tales, issuing warnings of punishment and even death" (Ligaga 2014: 3). In the main video, Mathosa sits on a couch to rest momentarily, only to be disrupted by the 'jealous boyfriend', who pokes, shakes and drags her. Through all of this, the 'cheating girlfriend' continues to perform what Ligaga terms "subtle acts of defiance that characterize this 'evil' woman" who surfaces the "transgressive performances of women who self-represent on digital media platforms" (Ligaga 2017: 232). What happens when some of these "transgressive performances" occur in real life? To answer that would be beyond the scope of this research, methodologically speaking, but we could look at examples in the broader realm of kwaito visual culture that dovetail with the behaviours of 'jealous boyfriends'.

Detour 6

> In the telenovela, The Wife (2022), a violent taxi driver (Mqhele) pursues a journalist (Mahlomu) in the most violent manner. The journalist at that time had a boyfriend, a gentle Sandile, a medical doctor. Soon after Mqhele starts dating Mahlomu, he and his brothers assault the now ex-boyfriend, Sandile, and force him out of what was then their (Sandile and Mahlomu's) shared apartment in Yeoville, Johannesburg (Episode 6, Season 1).
>
> The first assault was a result of Mahlomu not picking up a call from Mqhele while out having fun with her brother and her friend/colleague (Episode 9, Season 1). In fact, she switched off her phone so Mqhele could get that she is "imbokodo" (her own woman): "I want him to see that my life doesn't revolve around him." To make up for this assault, Mqhele buys Mahlomu a brand-new car (Episode 13, Season 1).
>
> In episode 21, Mqhele virtually rapes Mahlomu by way of violent sex, to relieve himself of childhood traumas. After a night out with her brother and another friend/colleague to celebrate her newfound pregnancy, she again misses a phone call from Mqhele (Episode 29, Season 1). The following day,

> needless to say, Mqhele assaults her again, this time so violently that she miscarries (Episode 30, Season 1). He did not know she was pregnant. Mahlomu takes herself to the hospital, and is treated by Sandile (Episodes 31 and 32, Season 1). Throughout this treatment, out of frustration, anger and confusion, Mahlomu is draw by Sandile's gentleness, and develops a kind of rebound. In Episode 33, Mahlomu and Sandile go on a date, and in Episode 35, Mahlomu goes to Sandile's house unannounced, and they make love.
>
> Despite being disciplined – violently – by his brothers (Episode 35) after Mahlomu reported the abuse to them, Mqhele kills Sandile (Episode 39, Season 1) after he follows her and sees her walking out of Sandile's house. Before the murder, Mqhele tells Sandile: "You forced yourself into my territory."

Ligaga (2020: 90) unpacks how women like Mathosa, as the 'cheating girlfriend' or a 'Madibuseng', are "[r]epresented through moral narratives with cautionary messages", and how "these women's behaviours are exposed in the most dramatic manner in order to present them as scandalous". This scandalous treatment and representation is applicable to 'Oyi Oyi'. However, in both 'Oyi Oyi' and 'Madibuseng', it is discernible to read how "[i]t is, nevertheless, possible to offer a counter-reading of these stories by focusing attention on the behaviours of the cheating woman as transgressive" (ibid.: 90).

A generous reading of Mathosa in 'Oyi Oyi' renders her a 'transgressive cheater'. She gives the 'jealous boyfriend' the opportunity to admire – but not touch – her body in 'sexual-sensual' choreographies as part of her refusal to be 'captured' (Livermon 2020). As he follows her throughout the video, trying to grab or touch her, she keeps moving, dancing and pushing him away. Despite never saying a word, her facial expressions indicate her disapproval. But he remains relentlessly possessive because, even when cheated on, he keeps calling her his girlfriend "My…" (Arthur 1997). The song-text is informative of a "specific masculinist ideology" (Ligaga 2014: 8). It reads:

> *So' iclever wena?* [so now you are aware?]
> *Ey, my vuvu uyalojala?* (my vuvu you are now cheating?]
> *So oya bonabona ne?* [so now you are aware?]
> *Ey my vuvu*
>
> (Arthur: 1997)

The above lyrics represent two claims. The first claim is represented by the term "My vuvu, my zuzu". In it, the 'jealous boyfriend' demonstrates his toxically possessive disorder that has thus far proven to be violent. Even more, in one scene, he flings a wallet – representing money – in the face of the girlfriend. This scene, accompanied by the phrase "o skhabara cash man" – suggesting that the girlfriend loves and is after money – surfaces the second claim, represented by the song-texts "So' iclever wena?" and "So oya bonabona ne?" The second claim suggests that the 'cheating girlfriend' was naive before meeting and dating the 'jealous boyfriend', who takes ownership of

‘grooming’ the ‘cheating girlfriend’. Now that she is ‘aware’, how dare she cheat! However, if we read ‘Oyi Oyi’ as a music video that comes after ‘Madibuseng’, we know that the naivety claimed by the ‘jealous boyfriend’ could very much have been a carefully scripted plan by the ‘cheating girlfriend’ (Madibuseng). Given that this ‘jealous boyfriend’ flags money, it is possible to imagine Madibuseng as a woman on a clear mission, who employs strategies of her own making to achieve her ambitions.

The end of the video shows the female vocalist reciting the reprimanding lyrics, while pointing her finger at the face of the ‘cheating girlfriend’, whose face expresses disappointment. The vocalist’s intervention is therefore met by Mathosa with disdain, as compared to the intervention by the lesbian group earlier in the video. Mathosa’s look of disapproval, as well as her performance in the video, represent a *refusal* of what Ligaga (2020: 127) frames as the “adoption of proper gender roles that celebrate the desire for a woman to be pleasant, genteel, moral, subordinate to men and willing to be of service to others” – a frame that, in this scene, is thrown at the vocalist, just by means of the ‘cheating girlfriend’s’ facial expression.

In ‘Oyi Oyi’ and ‘Madibuseng’, Mathosa is convincing in playing out the stereotypes of black womanhood, but she does so in a manner that disrupts such stereotypes, and opens up many possibilities of being that remain central to new femininities emerging, at least in South Africa. It is no surprise that Mathosa ended up on two prime-time television series (*Generations* on SABC1 and *Scandal* on eTV). Her performances in ‘Oyi Oyi’ and ‘Madibuseng’, as well as her music video oeuvre, demonstrate her control over her *image*, as well as her astuteness in the handling of her *business*.

Lebo Mathosa in 'Siyaziwisa' (2005)

Before we engage with the 'afro-diasporic' something, we will look at Mathosa's strategies in the video for her own song, 'Siyaziwisa' (2005). In this video, we see her in the driver's seat of what has been reported to be her own car, in a street in Moretele Park in Mamelodi, with one of her girlfriends in the passenger seat. The car is immobile, and Mathosa is seen dancing and lip-syncing, with her hands on the steering wheel[71].

This performance of control complicates, or is complicated by, her statement in an interview with Aryan Kaganof (2003), in which she observes that the music industry has no female producers; that "every producer you meet in our country is male …" As Peterson (2019: 8) reminds us, the "black archive is partial and many of its nationalist curators are ill at ease with other subjectivities as well as feminist and queer perspectives". The reading of Mathosa in her own work in this section is invested in how she complicates the black national archive, and what she contributes to it. Commenting on the black national archive, Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 358) note that:

> Moozlie has built an interesting video archive in terms of her mobilisation of the car. In Tse Blind by Ma-E (GhandaGhanda TV 2018) she is cruising with her 'magents'; in 'Vatel' (MoozlieVEVO 2018) she is chauffeured from home to the spaza shop and back, and in S'funukwazi (MoozlieVEVO 2019) she is simply uninterested in the car and the men who drive them. This subversion of patriarchal cruising – Livermon's (2020, p. 138) "reversal of traditional roles" – acts as a challenge of gendered power dynamics of the street, including catcalling and jackrolling.

As it turns out, in Moozlie's complex music-video oeuvre, there are gaps and shortcomings. Much of those are not of her making, or are they? For example, is she the mastermind behind the looting in 'Tse Blind' (2018)? Is she responsible for Ma-E's gun signal in the video for 'Vatel' (2018)? What's with that objectifying 'sexy' camera looking at her behind in 'S'funukwazi' (2019)? Having said all this, the car follows Moozlie in her creative imaginings, and as Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 360) write:

> By the end of 2020, in the video for "LaLaLa", she [Moozlie] is behind the wheel of a red Gusheshe, with her girlfriend in the passenger's seat, both of them buckled-up. In some of the cut-aways and in the closing scene it is very clear that the dress, and especially the hair and head wrap, is a nod to Boom Shaka's women.

The move to 'drive' the narrative is important, as long as it does not remain only symbolic. But it can also be ignored (i.e. the impulse to 'drive', as Moozlie has indicated in the literal sense, but which Madibuseng has taken on in the figurative sense in the video to 'Madibuseng'). It is this figurative sense that Mathosa thus takes on in the video for 'Siyaziwisa'. Much like in 'Oyi Oyi', the video starts with children (or a single child in the case of 'Oyi Oyi') looking directly into the camera, followed by heavy traffic leading to the parking spots for the Moretele Park Jazz Festival, the instigating location for this 'impromptu music video', made on the eve of the famed festival.

[71] A Toyota RAV4, red in colour, is reported to have been Mathosa's last car.

The YouTube post describes the video as an impromptu happening ahead of Mathosa's performance at this festival, which used to take place at the foot of Thabeng ya Mogale alongside the Moretele River in Mamelodi, Tshwane (formerly Pretoria)[72]. The video evokes a rawness in its handheld quality, but also in its inserts of 'ordinary' occurrences in a typical township:

A young man pushing a car to jump-start it; a young boy selling merchandise to motorists (Mathosa fitting sunglasses); one of Mathosa's dancers riding a wheelbarrow; someone spinning a 'top' on their palms; two boys showing off their dance moves; Mathosa on her cellphone, giving directions to prospective festival goers; hand-painted advertisements on a rock, announcing: "JUMPING CASTLES 084 469 6454/805 7701" (805 7701 – leaving out the area code, because this is as local as it gets). All these vignettes feature, accompanied by the environmental sensibilities, before the song even starts – this is a *fabulous ghetto* in which nothing is hidden, despite or in spite of the fact that it is a neglected place in which 'Siyaziwisa of kanjani'. Peddlers merchandise their wares to 'tourists' thanks to the annual festival. Here people 'take matters into their own hands', and into those of the tourists at the festival. Mathosa's (2005) lyrics are instructive:

> *Maophila ekasi* [when you live in the township]
> *Ao qome* [you don't have pride]
> *Sphush ilife* [we make life]
> *S'petcha mchaena* [you gamble]
> *Udlale idice* [you gamble – referring to 'dice']
> *Ukulova inginga* [idleness is a problem]
> *Use your mind and go and solve it* (Lebo Mathosa: 2005)

Self-determination is the message in Mathosa's lyrics vis-à-vis the fabulosity that accompanies the imaginary of the township. The song-text itself is about gathering communities and inserting, en masse, a black public life of knowledge and creativity into collective memory. It is also a lament on idleness; an ode to the hustler phenomenon that defines township lifeworlds. It is a call to groove, to hustle, to dance as if all these acts and practices can exist simultaneously and in harmony. Mathosa's articulation of self-determination aligns with Ligaga's (2022: 288) reminder to comprehend "narratives of success and aspiration in Africa [...] against a background of difficult economic, social and political contexts". For example, Mathosa's song-texts speak of females who should be empowered to wear *scebezane* (a miniskirt) and show off their *umzimba ne mabele* (body and breasts) to seize attention and make everyone follow suit, yet the video is nowhere near raunchy or showing skimpiness. This is not to say that there is anything 'wrong' with skimpiness. Kelly Khumalo (2019) discredits the hypocrisy surrounding undue media reports about her claim to her own virginity as a 'Zulu' custom practitioner. In the webisode titled *Behind the Story: Kelly Khumalo* (2019), Khumalo is asked by the host, Pearl Thusi, why people "love to hate Kelly Khumalo". Khumalo responds by recalling the famous adage: "To whom much is given, much is expected", and that it is tricky to "remind people of what they fail to do with their own lives" – here referring to the practice of Zulu virgins wearing 'revealing' clothes as a norm. In response to this hypocrisy, typical of popular opinion, Khumalo went on to write a popular song, titled 'Itshitshi' (2006) (virgin) – a figure that in Zulu tradition is free to wear a miniskirt – a substitution of 'traditional' gear – in public.

[72] See Chapter Three for a detailed discussion about the location, its histories, and how this study interlinks with the site.

Xavier Livermon (2020: 134) writes about Mathosa and the indecent publishing of her performance on stage in which a photographer captured her (allegedly) wearing no underwear under her skirt. It is important to note that Mathosa disputed the photograph, as Livermon (ibid.: 134) notes: "On a radio interview with y-fm, she insisted that the picture was doctored, and that as a woman and a professional she would never go onto the stage unprepared. This would be to disrespect her work". Livermon (2020: 136) contextualises the incident, describing that:

> over the past few years there was much discourse about young Black women who wear miniskirts without underwear, and the inappropriateness of this behavior – both the wearing of miniskirts, and the nonwearing of underwear. The idea is that, in revealing their bodies, young Black women are constructed as disreputable, inviting sexual attention and sexual violence.

Much has been written about this 'invitation of violence' onto bodies of black women based on how they dress (Livermon 2020; Ligaga 2017; Tau 2021). Ligaga (2020: 26) writes about how "[h]eteropatriarchy [...] excludes sexual identities seen as different, while ethnocentrism elevates values of one cultural group over others, and so on". The much-publicised and widely contested assault of a woman wearing a miniskirt by men at a taxi rank in Johannesburg in 2009 (see Tau 2021), is a meeting of heteropatriarchy and ethnocentrism. The claim by men is that women are not permitted to wear certain types of clothes in public.[73] Peterson (2007: n.p.) reminds us about the limits and dangers of heteropatriarchy and ethnocentrism:

> One way to measure the faultlines of our 'new' ethnicities is the frequency they are accompanied by the dictates of tribal and political aristocracies and patriarchies that are increasing their violence and subjugation of women, often motivated, they tell us, by their respect and deference to 'culture'.

Mathosa's lyrics about miniskirts are also an important footnote to the history of her career and that of Boom Shaka, her group with one other woman (Thembi Seete) and two men (Theo Nhlengethwa and Junior Sokhela). The women of Boom Shaka gained the spotlight for their range of talents and personality features, including but not limited to: their songwriting, performances, outspoken attitude, and sense of style as far as fashion is concerned. In terms of fashion, they were deliberate and provocative, and miniskirts and sexy outfits formed part of their trendsetting repertoire. As such, Mathosa's lyrics mobilise different "ideas of survival, success and aspirational scripts that define the work of the female cultural entrepreneur" (Ligaga 2022: 288).

As mentioned, the video includes vignettes of all types of hustles and recreational activities playing out on this one street in Mamelodi, at the foot of the big cultural-entrepreneurial event that is a jazz festival. It is important to note that the video, described as 'impromptu', had no preparation (in terms of wardrobe, activities and the 'script') for how it would unfold. As such, this *situated lens-based performance* is a record of life as it unfolds. The 'slices of life' when the sounds from the community enter the music soundtrack are important in this record of its unfolding, and enhance its situated nature.

[73] Citing culture and custom.

In the 1997 album by Brothers of Peace, a duo by Kalawa Jazmee co-founders and producers, Oscar Mdlongwa and Bruce Sebitlo, with the endearing song title 'We Miss You Boom Shaka', begins with a clip from a radio interview in which the women of Boom Shaka speak about the group's move from the label, and some of the tensions that informed their choice. In the sampled interview, the group members are engaging their creative directions and impulses, and how such have been suppressed or redirected by the "they" referred to. The question of intellectual property, commonly referred to as 'royalties', is an area of concern that this section will not be able to address at length with integrity, important as it is when it comes to popular cultures, especially those believed to be 'communal' or pro-black. However, it is important to build context in order to appreciate Mathosa's transgressions in her image and business affairs. The group Boom Shaka is an interesting case through which to discuss the role of women in cultural work and/or popular culture, particularly in the disruption of oppressive normativities. Boom Shaka, as the radio interview suggests, and indeed the very impulse of the song to be created [We Miss you Boom Shaka], is indicative not only of kwaito's role and place in the trials and tribulations of black cultural production at the intersection of popular cultural and mainstream dissemination, but also the agency of Lebo Mathosa in her self-determination in exploitative industries. As Livermon (2020: 135) writes, "[…] Mathosa emphasized the fact that historically many Black performers in South Africa have been poorly compensated for their performance labor".

Hidden in plain sight, the Boom Shaka album, titled *It's Our Game (no need to claim)* (1996), is copywritten to Kabelo Songs, belonging to Don Laka, who is credited as the sole producer of the album, despite the fact that, as the credits further show, the "vocals [were] written and performed by BOOM SHAKA" (Boom Shaka 1996). It is no surprise that, as Livermon (2020: 135-136) informs us, "Mathosa noted that joining the industry as a young teenager left her vulnerable to financial exploitation, and despite all of her success she made little money off of the Boom Shaka enterprise."

In 'Siyaziwisa', Mathosa is continuing her articulation of self-determination. Ligaga (2020: 84) reflects on research by Mary Mwangi (1996), which shows "that men were linked to public roles, whereas women tended to take on submissive or passive roles". While Ligaga (and Mwangi) write about the politics of representation in a Kenyan context, their reflections can apply to a South African context. Mathosa's life work, on and off-stage, attests to this. Indeed, her articulations in the videos 'Madibuseng', 'Oyi Oyi', and in the lyrics and video for 'Siyaziwisa', can be read as transgressions of subservient representations of women. As Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 353) observe, "In Siyasiwisa [...] her dance crew is all women. She leaves women on screening [sic]: doing it themselves, for themselves, for everyone."

Mathosa understood, enacted and enunciated the importance of both representational and structural politics facing young (and old/er) black women in cultural work. Livermon (2020: 134) further underscores Mathosa's forthright and brazen engagement with the male-dominated industry: "She spoke assertively about the need to control her *image* and the *business decisions that surround her artistic work*, pointing out that she did not intend to die penniless" (emphasis my own). Mathosa's self-representation, in which the *image* can be "deviant" when and if it wants to be, and *business decisions*, strive to be 'proper'. Mathosa carved out a space with/in the gaps and slippages "in a complex history of gender power, patriarchal hegemony and heteronormativity" (Ligaga 2020: 24). Writing about the intergenerational phenomenology between Brenda Fassie and Lebo

Mathosa, Livermon (2020: 136) observes how Mathosa "used the notion of work to disidentify with the presumed understanding that her performance must be automatically linked to drug and alcohol abuse".

Mathosa demonstrated that it is possible and okay to be many things at once, as a woman in popular culture. As a performer, she grasped the fact that her *image*, tightly linked to her body – she could sing, she could be a video character, she could dress skimpily if she chose to – was simultaneously her tool to critique political public life, as well as for entertainment, for artistic expression, *and* as a business asset. All are embodied in her as a public figure, and Mathosa, as Livermon (ibid.: 135) suggests, used these as "conscious manipulations of understandings of Black women's bodies, used to entice and entertain and critique". Livermon's articulations on Mathosa segue with Ligaga's (2020: 128) contention about women like Madibuseng, that "[w]hile their bodies remain vulnerable in the spaces they occupy, their defiance creates space for imagining possibilities for freedom".



Figure 31: Lebo Mathosa (left) and Thembi Seete (right) – key members of the group Boom Shaka. Image sourced from *Quick Read* magazine. Seen here, they wear make-up and braids, with Mathosa sporting a nose piercing and ring.

Kwaito, for all its qualities, is replete with problems that are inevitable as a result of patriarchal capitalism. Elsewhere I noted how Mathosa considered kwaito to be mindless music how (2013: 181). While this reading is contestable (see Peterson 2003: 203-206), Mathosa has an unfazed rationale, which is that she is "more of a writer, I sing and I write my own songs" (Hlasane 2020: 181). Mathosa's statement "I sing and I write my own songs" brings into question the copyright issues that battled her younger and naive self in the industry (ibid.: 181). Further, it speaks to impositions that can happen in the industry in terms of what can be written (read said) in industries such as music. Mathosa's statement is further justified when she makes it clear that her criticisms of kwaito, and her departure from it (despite her consumers still considering her the kwaito 'drama queen') are acts of love in its multitude; love for self (development), love for black music (that

also need to develop with her).

Here it is perhaps important to listen to the Boom Shaka song titled 'Black Natural Woman' (1996), from their second album, performed entirely by the male member of the group, Junior Sokhela. As the credits inform, all "vocals" were "written" by BOOM SHAKA (Boom Shaka 1996). Junior Sokhela sounds out a woman "with no powder … No *Ponds*: Natural" (ibid.). This woman is definitely not a representation of the women of Boom Shaka, who applied make-up and wore wigs; Mathosa and (Thembi) Seete are nowhere near the women sounded out by Sokhela. Did Boom Shaka (as a unit, credited on the CD as 'writers') really write these lyrics? Ambiguous. It is this ambiguity that elucidates what it means to 'cruise' with a figure like Madibuseng. I quote at length what Peterson and myself (2022: 353) write about this notion of 'cruising' with a 'good time girl':

> The notion and practice of cruising – as we hope to show – links a range of ideas, yearnings, liminalities and repertoires that erase, recast or exceed the normative. Analytically, cruising will also facilitate pointing out the dialectics and articulations between the layers and complexities that inhere in the constellations that go into the making of kwaito, its creative narratives and its modes of being lived. The focus will be on how cruising allows us to briefly map and navigate different processes and relations between matters as diverse as: women as producers in the music and their ability to create and own the content, styles and circulation of their work; the performance and occupation of spaces inside and outside the township; developing new techniques and aesthetics in both the content and styles that informed the kwaito-music video and, finally, shifting, playing and messing up all kinds of boundaries and borders within kwaito.

As we draw this section to a close and build towards the very male-centric articulations in the *geo-philosophical ontologies* and their link with race in the kwaito music video, it should be clear to the reader that women are and have been as much involved in questions of nationalism [as men in the South African music industry], and that their engagements deeply challenge the 'pitfalls' thereof.

In this section, I have analysed three music videos to explore the manner in which five men (one solo male artist, Arthur, and a four-man group, Trompies), 'cruised' with Madibuseng, a 'good time girl'. In this 'cruising', all five men failed to 'capture' or tame the 'the good time girl' of their choice. While 'cruising', the car – a key object in the heteronormative music video – has been rendered immobile in the moments when Mathosa engages it, failing to perform what is usually seen and expected in the music video. This immobile car is central in the video for Mathosa's 'Siyaziwisa'. The mobilisation of an immobile car is not, however, the only strategy to disrupt heteronormative patriarchy in the kwaito music video. Mathosa complicates the notion of 'cruising', and in that spirit, we will close this section with a detour to the music video for the song 'Gugulethu' (2019).

Detour 7

In the music video for 'Gugulethu' (2019) by Prince Kaybee, the video opens with a cutaway scene in which a man is driving the quintessential automobile in the kwaito music video, the *gusheshe*,

that we see in 'Madibuseng' (1996), this time bearing the colour red. We see the front section of the car with personalised number plates, SLAMS-WP (and later we see what looks like the same car with the same passengers, bearing a different number plate, CL 2125). In the passenger seat is a woman. The fifth cutaway, after three cutaways showing signposts to parts of the Western Cape, and scenes of black people drawing water from a street tap, we see the image of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela with her fist raised high, in a mural. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was an important anti-apartheid activist, and in post-apartheid South Africa, a politician. The second part of her surname comes from her marriage to Nelson Mandela, the most well-known of the anti-apartheid activists, and later the first black president of South Africa. She was perhaps the single most important woman in the liberation struggle to be (reluctantly) recognised as a liberation struggle hero, not because she was married to Nelson Mandela (indicated by the later use of a double-barrelled surname) but for her own positions that she achieved. In fact, there is an 'informal settlement' named after her (and the headquarters of a recently formed party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), is also named after her). In this way, the music video for 'Gugulethu' sets an intertextual articulation of 'the struggle continues', and places one of the most important women of the liberation struggle as part of its introduction.

The 'cruise' continues, and through it we get to see many other visuals of the continuing struggle, in HD. In this video, again emphasising its HD-ness, nothing is hidden. All the 'good' and the 'bad' of Gugulethu (the township) are laid bare as part of claiming the space – to live in, to thrive in, to dream in, to make art in, to leave – in between the gaps, the slippages, which are demonstrated in the beauty of the agency claimed through choosing to see the township differently. Gugulethu, like Mamelodi, is a township that gifted South Africa during the liberation struggle, not only through militancy but also through and with popular culture and cultural work. In these 'cruises' through the music videos for 'Siyaziwisa' (2006) and 'Gugulethu' (2019), what we as the viewers see is a post-apartheid articulation of subject-making vis-à-vis the township.

The distinction between a township and an informal settlement is important here. Townships are a construction of apartheid – in which inadequate housing with poor to no support structures were built on the outskirts of cities and towns as 'shelters' for the labour (i.e. black labour) servicing the industries and domestic spaces of an elite minority. While informal settlements (usually shacks, at first) are agentic land occupations by black people. Both are 'legacies' of apartheid in the expanded sense, although the so-called 'informal settlements' emerged largely in a 'post-apartheid' South Africa. The distinction between these two is indeed blurry, as kwaito visual culture and the kwaito music video have conflated – or rather complicated – the differences between the two. The scene from the video for 'Gugulethu' is an example. The scene is that of the so-called 'informal settlement', intercepted with various scenes straddling the township and the so-called informal settlement, and yet the lyric's refrain:

> *Impilo yase lokeishenini* [township life]
> *Imnandsi* [it's joyful]
> *A'ifaini na ya se tolopeninini* [incomparable to the town/suburb life]



Figure 32: Screenshot from Prince Kaybee's 'Gugulethu' music video showing an unattended-to (neglected) drainage system in the township.

I close this section with the reading of the video (and lyrics) for 'Gugulethu', due to the similar strategies employed in the video for 'Siyaziwisa'. I do this for various reasons. First, the music video for 'Gugulethu' is for music by a male artist – Prince Kaybee – featuring a female vocalist, Indlovukazi[74]. I believe that Indlovukazi, as vocalist, wrote the lyrics[75]. In my belief in the rights of the vocalist-writer Indlovukazi, it is clear that the video follows the lyrics, although the beats are made by the 'producer' of the beat. In this scenario, we can see – in plain sight – how 'borrowings' occur, in which the cinematic production 'borrows' from the lyrics, essentially making the lyrics the 'script', in which two women are set up in competition with one another in the video ('produced' by Kaybee). One woman, who is slim, 'fit' and 'sexy', competes with the 'big'-bodied vocalist, who is 'fully' dressed, and who sings and performs standard moves, reprimanding the *gusheshe*-driven woman not to 'dare confront' Gugulethu residents – telling her that in this township, 'bo'makhwelane ba yaphilisana' (neighbours are neighbourly).

The unattended-to drainage scene (Figure 32) in the video for 'Gugulethu' is a clear example of the apartheid *babalaas* that forms the backdrop to this 'competition'. Despite its HD nature, the scene is full of despair and, as we shall encounter, this despair is partly challenged in the music videos under analysis to follow. To do so, we must consider the presence of white characters in kwaito visual culture as a strategy to centre whiteness (racism) as the culprit of the unattended-to

[74] Nothing is lost in this strategic collaboration between a 'prince' and an 'Indlovukazi' (queen).

[75] My 'belief' builds from the Boom Shaka saga, one that followed Lebo Mathosa, and continues to follow other female 'vocalists' who are also 'writers' in the industry – as was again recently made public, not for the first time, by the writer of the now world-famous 'Jerusalema' song, Nomcebo Zikode.

drainage ‘system’ in the township, and in black life.

SECTION THREE: On apartheid *babalaas* or *geo-philosophical ontologies* and their link to race in the kwaito music video

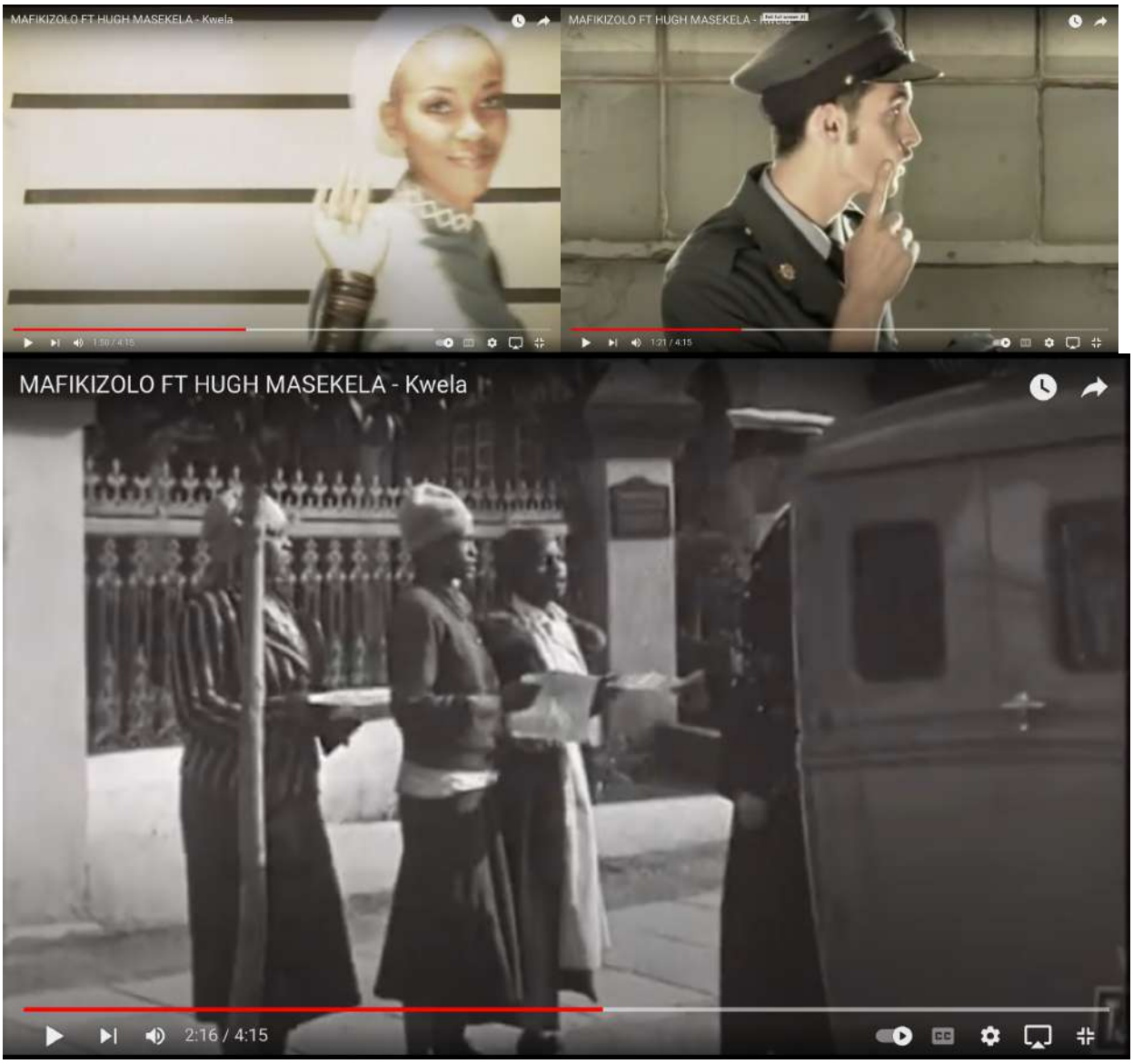


Figure 33: Scenes from the music video for Mafikizolo's 'Kwela Kwela' (2003).

This section will read the music videos for 'Tabalaza' (Donald Duck 2008) and 'Kwela' (Mafikizolo 2005). The music videos for 'Kwela' and 'Tabalaza' represent two of a few such videos in which white characters enter the kwaito storyboard. As music created and practised by black youth in South Africa, a country with a majority black population, it is rare to find white characters represented in kwaito visual culture. What do white people do in the kwaito music video? As mentioned earlier in my introduction to this study, white people do a lot in the kwaito music video, behind the scenes. To engage the question, therefore, we can start by listening to selected kwaito song-texts, which gives us an idea of what white people do in black life. V. Njabulo Zwane (2019: xxvii) writes that "history teaches us that changes in legislation do not necessarily translate into material changes at the level of the everyday lived experience". Consider the

introduction to the song ‘Traffic Cop’ (1994) by Brothers of Peace, a dialogue between an Afrikaans police officer and a black male driving a car:

AFRIKAANS TRAFFIC COP
Jou meneer [You sir]
Waar is die kar se papiere? [Where is the car’s registration?]

BLACK MALE DRIVER
E mfowethu, kumula amagogolo [my brother, remove your goggles]

AFRIKAANS TRAFFIC COP
Jong di gesteel die kar? [Did you steal the car?]

BLACK MALE DRIVER
Kunini ngikusthela [How long have I been telling you?]
ang’siyigintsa lento man [I’m not a gangster man/this thing is not stolen]

AFRIKAANS TRAFFIC COP
Waaag! Wag a bietjie [Wait a bit]
Meneer van der Merwe [talking on the phone]
Is a NTN9x4T Rooi Jetta on your computer? [is NTN9x4T, a red Jetta]

“[...] the appearance of a Black male [in South Africa] in a BMW 325i or VW Golf/Jetta VR6 immediately brought to mind the figure of the *tsotsi* [criminal/gangster]”, writes Zwane (2019: xxix). Furthermore, “[i]n an increasingly consumer-capitalist society like the one that South Africa had (from the 1960s) become, the fact of owning and driving a car meant the achievement of the highest level of social mobility – in all senses of the word” (ibid.: xxvii). The dialogue above is an example of what Zwane (2019: xxx) calls “a refusal to carry the burden of representing criminality as defined by the dominant anti-Black social imaginary”; a refusal that can also be heard in Arthur Mafokate’s ‘Kaffir’ (1994). Both ‘Kaffir’ and ‘Traffic Cop’ were released in 1994, a temporal marker representing South Africa’s beginning of democracy.

Like ‘Traffic Cop’, ‘Kaffir’ starts with a re-enactment from “lived experience manifested as culture” (ibid.: xxix). Similarly, ‘Kaffir’ starts with an intro that features a dialogue between an Afrikaans male (although the impersonation is much less convincing compared to that in ‘Traffic Cop’) and a black male:

AFRIKAANS MALE BAAS
Jairus, Jaurus?

YOUNG BLACK MALE
Baas? [Boss]

AFRIKAANS MALE BAAS
Kom hier kaffir kom hier! [Come here kaffir]

YOUNG BLACK MALE
Ek is kom baas [I am coming boss]

AFRIKAANS MALE BAAS
Jy's kom [You come]

YOUNG BLACK MALE
Baas

AFRIKAANS MALE BAAS
Hoekom nie my kar [why did you not wash the car?]
Hoekom?

YOUNG BLACK MALE
... [inaudible]...imoto ... [inaudible] [car]

AFRIKAANS MALE BAAS
Wat? [What?]

YOUNG BLACK MALE
Ai ungambizi uKaffir ... [Don't call me kaffir]

AFRIKAANS MALE BAAS
Jou donner jy's ... cheeky
Jou fucking kaffir, bliksem

It is significant that in both dialogues, the car is central. However, this is different to the dominant visual narrative that centres the car as an object of material upward mobility in kwaito (and *hip-hop*). Instead, the car is an object of contention and struggle. Zwane (2019: xxix) insists that:

> the discourse of aspiration in the literature of kwaito is both useful and limiting at the same time. This discourse is useful because it allows us to understand the materiality of things within a particular structure of capitalism. But the discourse's limited place for ideology results in its lack of attentiveness to lived experience manifested as culture.

'Traffic Cop' and 'Kaffir' challenge the oft-repeated statement by many kwaito artists who inadvertently de-politicise the genre with statements such as 'We were tired of political messages in music – we wanted to dance and celebrate freedom' (*VUMA: A Music Revolution*: 2009). Released two years before Letta Mbulu's 'Not Yet Uhuru' (1996), 'Traffic Cop' and 'Kaffir' are clearly political texts that foreground the perils for black people, as represented by YOUNG BLACK MALE and BLACK MALE DRIVER. While the songs definitely invite black people to dance and celebrate freedom, they also remind both black people and the likes of AFRIKAANS MALE BAAS and AFRIKAANS TRAFFIC COP that it is 'Not Yet Uhuru'.

Moreover, 'Traffic Cop' and 'Kaffir' are interesting because their intros serve as soundings from black life as lived under surveillance and supervision – infantilised – by an oppressive race, despite

the banning of apartheid and the advent of a democratic dispensation. The use of dialogue in the intros invites white people into black culture as a strategy to undermine the assumed power demonstrated by AFRIKAANS MALE BAAS and AFRIKAANS TRAFFIC COP. As Bhekizizwe Peterson (2019: 5) reminds:

> Narrative and the imagination, then, even in their flights of fantasy, are important catalysts in the production of knowledge, ideology and identity, especially because of the dexterous ways in which they allow for complex calibrations of the articulations between time, space, social life and action.

The resistances and refusals by YOUNG BLACK MALE and BLACK MALE DRIVER are consistent with the much-lauded statement that 'the struggle continues', inviting different continuous types of actions in the listeners – for the oppressed and the oppressor alike. The newly freed must continue to dance without forgetting a past that still exists in the present. The oppressor may refuse to dance, but may never forget that the 'struggle' and its resistances shall continue. In this way, 'Kaffir' and 'Traffic Cop' perform the notion that "movements in the musical sense accompany movements at the level of the lived experience" (Zwane 2019: xxix). For Zwane, "movement or displacement (whether forced or otherwise) is central to the formation of black subjectivity" (ibid.: xxvii). It is at this point that we move to representations that refuse white supremacy in the music videos to 'Tabalaza' (1998) and 'Kwela' (2003).

.

Donald Duck, 'Tabalaza' (1998)

> **1 INT: Entrance of a shop-floor in a factory.**
>
> A **WHITE MALE BOSS** and an **UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 1** are in conflict because the **WHITE MALE BOSS** accuses the **UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 1** of petty theft. The camera zooms in on the faces of both men.
>
> **WHITE MALE BOSS**
> Wie se cellphone is dit?
> Kom hier jou &^$#$((*&
> Het jy dit gesteel?
>
> **BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 1**
> Askies ne jou baas ne?
> And jou misses ne?
>
> The camera changes to a hip-level shot. We can see **WHITE MALE BOSS** and **BAASBOY. WHITE MALE BOSS** is wearing a black suit. **BAASBOY** is wearing a white suit, which he is adjusting in a manner that ascertains both his importance and his discomfort at being called out as a *baasboy*.
>
> **BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 1**
> Saam met jou Baasboy ne?

Le s'ka tlo nkwela staff
Ek soek my two slaai hierso

With these piercing words of defence and resistance, and his final body movement, it is clear that **BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 1** quits on the spot, or not! The lyrics begin:

Iskhathi so'k thesha
Iskhathi so'k vuka

2 INT: Entrance of a shop floor in a factory, now identifiable as *GROSS & Co.* 'corporate clothing manufacturers'.

A **BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 2** wearing a helmet is clocking his hours, performing the trope representing those "Good Africans ... who knew their place as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' for South Africa's industrial modernization project" (Zwane citing Plaatje 2019: xxvii).

3 INT: Reception of the *GROSS & Co.* shop floor.

WHITE MALE BOSS is busy at reception, and in the background we see **UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 3** running past **BAASBOY**, who is now wearing overalls, and is sweeping the floor – and therefore now **UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 4**. **UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 3** is clearly late for work. **WHITE MALE BOSS** drops a brochure on the reception table, flags his hands, and mouths his disappointment, suggesting that this is not the first time. **UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 3** explains himself, mouthing what can be discernible as "this won't happen again", as the lyrics repeat:

Iskhathi so'k vuka
Iskhathi so'k thesha
Iskhathi so'k shesha
Iskhathi so'k tabalaza

WHITE MALE BOSS is not impressed, pointing at the clock, as **BAASBOY** observes. **UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 3** mouths what could be discernible as resistance, close to "put yourself in my shoes next time". At this point, **BAASBOY** enters a dream state, and is back in his white suit.

4 EXT: An unidentified, smoggy township.

People going about their morning routines, pylons in the mid-ground, mine dumps in the background amidst the dust.

5 INT: Smoggy township exterior.

WHITE MALE BOSS as **UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 3** is fast asleep, with an artefact by his bed that reads:

THANK GOD, I'M A BLACKMAN, AMEN.

From the album *Who's Wrong, Who's Right* (1998), a conceptual project by Eugene Mthethwa going by the alias Donald Duck, the video to 'Tabalaza' (1998) is largely set in dreamland. We enter an Ubuntu consciousness-raising churchy kwaito mini film. The morality lesson is starkly in line with the album title (and the cover art), demonstrated through a white suit-wearing black male as baasboy (house nigger), until an empathetic switch reverses the race roles. In this dreamland, the white male wakes in the bed of his black counterpart, and feels what it means to be misconstrued based on race and class conditions.

The video is reminiscent of the SABC 1 'Ya Mampela' (c. 2004) advertisement, which aimed to help others "take another look at Mzansi" by switching the race/class stereotypes, featuring one Mapaputsi's quintessential kwaito beat.

The ad starts with a white male in bed, with a soundtrack of barking dogs, and the instrumental version of Mapaputsi's 'Kleva' (2003). He reaches for his Converse All Stars, finishes his morning routine, and looks at the mirror to fit his spottie, before he heads out. He joins the street of sound and smog. White people ekasi are going about their daily business; school children are heading to their places of learning in their uniforms; and a Township Tours bus is driving black tourists into ekasi, cameras freely pointing at the protagonist and children running after the bus.

He gets to the frenzied taxi rank, witnessing Metrorail and other modes of transport along the way. The taxi passes through and makes a pick-up stop at a suburb somewhere on the way, where he witnesses an upper middle-class black family's morning routine in which two black children in school uniform are escorted to their chauffeured SUV by the white maid.

He arrives in town, and we see white amapantsula busking for their lives as he steps onto the pavement where white hairdressers are already busy at work making braids for their clients. As he stops for the black woman driving a car out of the parking lot, she winds up her window and declares: "You can't be safe enough with white males in this city." He walks into a store, and the shopkeeper looks at the police's 'wanted' poster, and doesn't waste a moment to call the police. The police arrive and it's not him – "They all look

the same," says the shopkeeper.

He leaves, and meets his crew at a petrol station – they pick him up in a Gusheshe and drive off, dropping him at his township home to Mapaputsi's 's'ghubu sa kleva' (2003).



Figure 34: Scenes from the SABC 1 'Ya Mampela' commercial (c. 2004).

The video for 'Tabalaza' (1998) is engaging on several levels. BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 1's opening scene is assertive, and carries conviction, grounded by refusal. He is standing up to a white male and a black male in a white suit, as literal as that is. In that moment of confrontation and resistance between a black and white male, BAASBOY/UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 4, acting as a figure that is somewhere between an invisible judge, angel and preacher, is assessing the situation – one that is untenable – and so he chooses a comical refusal: a dream flight.

In this dream world, black people are affluent – with white nannies, and black tourists who are driven around the township in double-decker buses whilst white kids run after them, begging. White males are suspected of being 'most wanted' by shopkeepers, and when the cops don't recognise any similarity with the figure in the reward advertisement, the whistle-blowers settle with "They all look the same". In this way, with its heavy biblical tones, 'Tabalaza' (1998) lays bare the post-apartheid dispensation; the rainbow nation short-circuits the urgency of empathy. However, BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 1 will not have it – because he stands for his 'two slaai hierso' (Donald Duck 1998).

BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 1's 'Tabalaza-ing' ethic does not settle for a mere piece of the pie, but two slices at that – rendering the 'stealing' of a cellphone insignificant in the broader scheme of things.[76] After all, there is no evidence that the cellphone was stolen. The answer to "Wie se cellphone is dit?" could very well have been responded to with a simple "It's mine" by BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 1. But that wouldn't fly, because WHITE MALE BOSS doesn't pay him enough to be able to afford one, a known fact between both parties! Read another way, it could be assumed to mean 'black people don't own cellphones' in 1998 – too modern, too mobile, too dangerous.

Of course, this video has problems beyond its biblical framework. It perpetuates the perception of black life as less than desirable. It chooses to remain in the township to make its point. When it leaves the township, it is only to go to the inner city of Joburg, another space that was deserted by white capital and the black bourgeoisie. It does not consider the suburb, where (most) upwardly mobile black professionals, including kwaito stars, live and work. The inner city is an extended township; still a place of hustlers or bohemians. Thus, even when the tables have turned, the joke is still on the same target, and the gaze remains unchanged. Much like the SABC 1 advertisement and its punchline invitation to "take another look at Mzansi", it is only rhetorical and populist if the structural problems remain unchanged. Thus, the entire video becomes haunted by Jakarumba's conviction and utterances in his delivery.

The shapeshifting BAASBOY, who changes from one state – as BAASBOY, to another – as UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 4, is interesting. He possesses a double-consciousness as a *house negro* and a *field negro* in the white industrial complex. But he escapes both by entering a dream world in which he becomes a narrating BAASBOY (with the white suit intact) – but not the mute one in the factory, now that he is in the township haunting (or protecting/consoling?) WHITE MALE BOSS as BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 3.

In this township setting, BAASBOY/UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 4, in his narrating, is urging his kin to 'Tabalaza' in a way that certifies neoliberal policies of employability via hard work in the white capital's vocational industries. Here 'Tabalaza-ing' discourages resistance and advances stoic subservience by way of chastising idleness and the senseless drinking of alcohol. Despite all the systemic injustices, all that BAASBOY/UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 4 asks of WHITE MALE BOSS is to be kinder to those who are late for work due to *babalaas*. That the hangover is induced by the inhumanity of such exploitative and debilitating labour practices is of no concern, because such consciousness will cost him his status. The 'dream' for BAASBOY/UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 4 is for his 'slaai', i.e. not a quest for the total freedom of the oppressed. Rather, his 'dream' is for the oppressor to become the oppressed, or at least to *feel* oppression, in the hope that the register of the oppressive grammar will shift. This dream is not sustainable – for the labour of black males in this industrial

[76] Recently (in 2021), a black male who invented a service that was first introduced in 2001 by Vodacom – a giant cellphone network provider – won his case to the tune of millions of rands after many years of legal battle to be properly compensated for his invention that Vodacom had implemented without due diligence and monetary compensation, and which earned the company a great deal. "The High Court has ruled that Vodacom's 'Please Call Me' inventor, Nkosana Makate, is entitled to 5% of the total voice revenue generated from the micro-text service from March 2001 to March 2021", https://www.news24.com/fin24/companies/a-big-relief-court-orders-huge-payout-for-vodacoms-please-call-me-inventor-20220208.

complex is disposable and dispensable – and that is why it is BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 1's resistance that haunts BAASBOY, who in turn emphasises it with UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 3. Like the mask and the boy in Ousmane Sembene's *Black Girl* (1966), BAASBOY follows WHITE MALE BOSS as UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 3 in his (UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 3) township incarnation.

As we shall see when reading the music video for Mafikizolo's 'Kwela', the kwaito music video is one of many "occasions when art exercises an influential role in setting the limits and possibilities of political and socio-economic imaginaries and interventions" (Peterson 2019: 6). The video for 'Tabalaza' places men – both black and white, both the oppressor and the oppressed – at the centre of these "political and socio-economic imaginaries and interventions" (ibid.: 6). But where are the women on the factory floor? This omission of women and queer identities in kwaito, and in representations of public life, is a huge limitation. The video for 'Tabalaza' is also conscious of the limitations of the said "political and socio-economic imaginaries and interventions" (ibid.: 6). For every dissident subject (BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 1 and, to an extent, UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 3 and UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 4), there are the subservient subjects that maintain the status quo (BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 2, UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 3, and UNIDENTIFIED BLACK MALE EMPLOYEE 4).

But it would be disingenuous, and ungenerous, if not degenerative, to suggest that the insistence on using the township location as a site of narration in the kwaito music video is without deep consideration, or that it offers little critical intervention. In the scenes of choreography in the music video for 'Tabalaza', we see two important articulations.

The first is the 'skero' dance routine, linking the history of *isipantsula* to previous dance practices from decades before[77]. We also see a dance routine that kinetically narrates the *babalaased*/drunkard's movements. The choreography surfaces and reminds the viewer of the capacity for *isipantsula* to narrate complex sociopolitical issues and legacies facing the black community. Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 356) touch on the 'Tabalaza' video in their text 'Matters of Kwaito and why Kwaito Matters':

> The kwaito music video has been, and remains a black public archive of kinetic intergenerational knowledges. Take for example the video to K.O's (Cashtime Life 2014) Caracara that references a popular 80s dance style called 'skero' (scissor – the feet movement enacts a 'cutting' of sorts), the video itself referencing Donald Duck's 1998 Tabalaza (Donald Duck 2015). The reference is not only in the dance moves, but also in the choice of location, a V-shaped corner shop, and the formation of the dance ensemble. The dance styles in kwaito music videos have been about both introducing and reflecting what the community of practice is interested in doing and its commitment to continuous invention.

The dance styles in kwaito music videos have been about both introducing and reflecting what the community of practice is interested in. For example, Boom Shaka introduced the 'Madiba Dance',

[77] The music video to Sipho 'Hotstix' Mabuse's 'Burn Out' (1984) references this dance routine, as observed by *pantsula* dancer and choreographer Teboho Diphehlo.

imitating a famous dance style by then State President Nelson Mandela. 999 Studios, led by Arthur Mafokate, engaged a dance movement from the DRC in the form of 'kwasa-kwasa'.[78] In 1997, Bongo Maffin revived Miriam Makeba's 1966 continental and global hit, 'Pata Pata' – touch touch – the song being about a sensual dance.

> *Pata Pata is the name of dance*
> *We do down in Johannesburg where*
> *And everybody starts to move*
> *As soon as Pata Pata* (Mirima Makeba 1966)

Makeba's intro, in the fashion of the other intros mentioned earlier (note that intros are 'a thing' in black music), is representative of another common feature of black music from South Africa: namely song and dance as a combination, as the one is inseparable from the other. What is key with regard to Makeba's entry, for my study, is how the dance represents what encounters the black 'body' experiences ('body' placed in parentheses here because, in fact, the notion of a 'body' in black cosmology is problematic – in which 'body' symbolises the corpse, i.e. a dead, mute, unbreathing and inactive human, far from what the discussion is about up to this point).

The second intervention, linked to the first, is again focused on the insistence to remain in the township – the very heart of apartheid's shameful legacies, and a site from which not only to understand the struggle and its continuities but also to surface and underscore as the birthplace of artistic practices such as kwaito and *isipantsula* (in terms of Donald Duck and the music video under discussion), as well as many other artistic expressions (across the visual arts, music, literature, etc.). As Hlasane (2022: 216) writes in relation to the music video for 'Ghetto Fabulous' (2003), "The township experience is depicted as a part of and a participant in public archiving and history writing".

The video for Mafikizolo's 'Kwela' faces both different and similar challenges and limitations to that of 'Tabalaza' in their interventions and imaginaries. Where the video for 'Tabalaza' raises the perils of black subjectivities through the bodies of black males in 'present-day' South Africa, 'Kwela' evokes the historical oppressions faced by black people, from apartheid into contemporary democratic South Africa. As we shall see, consumption of alcohol is a link between the two song-texts and their visual manifestations. Linked to alcohol consumption in the black community, is also dance. In fact, the manner in which Sipho 'Hotstix' Mabuse performs in the video to 'Burn Out' (1984) is considered a contravention of by-laws.

> Before we get to the Phefeni Youth Club, Sipho 'Hotstix' Mabuse *staff rides*[79] onto a train ride from the CBD. The streets are full. Beautiful women dressed in Xitsonga dress apparel are dancing to 'Burn Out'. It must be a Friday. They are dancing 'traditional' styles alongside *isipantsula*. All in preparation for the ballroom style of dance at Phefeni Youth Club. In this train, it is refreshing to see black people fashioning their identities in ways

[78] The music video for this song actually addresses xenophobia in very interesting ways.

[79] Staff riding (also known as train surfing) is the act of climbing onto or off a moving train, usually, but not always, for free. Staff riding has also been employed as *pantsula* dance choreography, known as *spharaphara* – named onomatopoeically to evoke the sounds of feet descending from a moving train. *Staffrider* magazine's risk-taking identity borrowed from this practice. The contributors were called 'staffriders'.

that are different to what can be seen in the film *Tsotsi* (2005), in which the train is a place of violence. Without any romanticism, we see something close to Santu Mofokeng's *Train Church* (1986), in which people preach, pray and dance.[80] While the train itself – Metrorail in this case – was introduced to move black labour between the townships and the CBD, what we see in the entire video is black people outside of labour, instead practising leisure.

The costumes of all the revellers are incredibly beautiful and diverse – one of the revellers is wearing what looks like a police hat. On arrival in Soweto, the pleasure of music and dance alternates between the interiors of Phefeni Youth Club and the backyard of an unidentified Soweto home and the streets. With regard to the use of the street in popular culture, Hlasane (2023: 216) writes about how the music video for Zola's 'Ghetto Fabulous' (2003), and the lithographs, *Cadillac* (2005) and *Wedding Day* (2005) by Tommy Motswai, "are works that claim the street as a key site of knowledge production and dissemination.

These works mark the street as a site to proclaim triumph over social death. As a critical intervention, Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 357) concur, but do not romanticise the (township) street, instead asserting in their reading of one particular music video that "[t]he street as a territory of boys – eg, soccer dominates over netball – is seen in 'S'funukwazi (MoozlieVEVO 2019) as a site for the negotiation of public intimacies and private alienations".

Hlasane and Peterson (ibid.: 357) further urge us to depart from binaries when reading both the township and black popular culture (that emerge from and surface the tensions and complexities of the township). They, for example, appreciate that the (township) street, as a site, can shift in multiple ways, such as how, in the music video under their discussion, the (township) street "has turned from an otherwise idle negotiation of recreation and rehearsal/performance along with their territorial im/balances into a mini street bash with visiting guests".

Who's Wrong Who's Right? asks Donald Duck's album title. It should be wrong when Sipho 'Hotstix' Mabuse (1984) sings: "*I've been watching you/Every day of my life …*", and the scene in the video shows him holding a school-uniform-wearing character (a girl child) by the hips. This scene is disturbing, unless, given the benefit of the doubt, the girl child is his daughter. The train as a location becomes just as violent as we see it in *Tsotsi*. This music video for 'Burn Out' is part of the archive that the kwaito music video expands upon, or draws from, or both. That the 'watching' has to do with the woman 'messing around with all the other guys', links quite well (if problematically) with the narrative in 'Oyi Oyi' (1997), which is not only telling but informative for how we deal with the emotional intelligence of black males in South Africa. One of the people 'messing around with all the other guys' in this video is a school-going child. Indeed, Brenda Fassie has dealt with this in the video to 'Zola Budd' (1988), but addressed this type of scenario differently, as Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 357) read it:

[80] The art collective MADEYOULOOK created a project called *Sermon on the Train* (2009 to 2011), informed by and building on Mofokeng's *Train Church*. MADEYOULOOK conceived of *Sermon on the Train* as a project in which people would read academic texts to the public on the train.

> In Ag Shame Lovey (Kateeba 2014) the video is a situated lens-based performance that foregrounds forms of art education, despite the denial of access to such for black school children in apartheid South Africa. Beyond access to artistic education, Brenda also suggests a radical pedagogy. The video suggests that Brenda's dance-hall/classroom is a safe space. Love meets freedom to aspire in her classroom in which everyone is 'gonna get there'. It is significant also that the 1980s is a decade of states of emergencies in South Africa. The narrative of Ag Shame Lovey (Kateeba 2014), turns its back on 'political' messaging and rather takes pleasure – song and dance – and turns it into activism (the artist as educator), self-pride (Black Consciousness ethos) and a radical pedagogy (love and dreams in the classroom).

The Phefeni Youth Club, in which the video for 'Burn Out' by Sipho 'Hotstix' Mabuse is set, is one of the so-called community cultural centres. These centres, as Hlasane and Peterson (2020: 357) observe, are as the Chimurenga magazine team argue, synonymous to the 'shebeen as a college of music' … like a connecting thread in black popular music, from the shebeens with their marabi cultures to formations of independent black record labels in post-1994 South Africa. Phefeni Youth Club, which is where ballroom dancing occurs in the township, is used with cinematic intent to dissociate the township from parochial belatedness. The video to 'Burn Out' starts with the cine-kinaesthetic mapping of the dance practices of southern Africa (*isipantsula* – largely credited to Gauteng province, meets Xitsonga dance and dress – largely credited to Limpopo province), before it gets to ballroom dancing. It is thus interesting to see that the video for K.O.'s 'Caracara' (2014) continues these intertextual, intergenerational, interspatial and inter-genre articulations, as it borrows from and builds on the cine-kinaesthetics of 'Tabalaza'. Still, the scene changes between the interior (ballroom) and the exterior street bash (multiple dance styles) to foreground how the township is a place where cultures meet – a metropolis.

Mafikizolo's 'Kwela' (2003)

'Mafikizolo', as a term, translates in English from Zulu/Nguni as 'new-/latecomers'. Outside of the origins of the naming behind the kwaito/*Afropop*/*house* group, linked to the Kalawa Jazmee label, it is significant, in terms of naming, that the group collaborates with veteran musician Hugh Masekela in the song 'Kwela' (2003). In my long-form meditation on the relationship between music, space and club cultures in Johannesburg between 1960 and 2020, titled 'Dangerous Combinations and Skeem Saam Foundations: The Most Beautiful Black City in Africa?' (Hlasane 2020:193), I write (and quote here at length):

> Almost a decade after South Africa's transition to democratic governance, the musical trio Mafikizolo monumentalized their country's historical Kwela music genre in a song named 'Kwela' (2003). As in the song, the accompanying music video features veteran trumpeter Hugh Masekela. He is shown entering a fictional prison cell, where he encounters the original three members of Mafikizolo [Tebogo Madingoane, Nhlanhla Nciza and Theo Kgosinkwe]. The video is a feast of archival material alongside site specific intergenerational dialogue. Shot at Constitution Hill, the video presents an historical re-enactment of random arrests for 'dompas' violations – the infamous reference book used to regulate and control movement of black people within urban centres of South Africa. In Mafikizolo's video we experience it all: the sonic textures of the time, anecdotes of encounters with security police, the city under construction, protests in front of the Great Hall at Wits University, burning tyres on the street, and soldier drills in symmetrical formation.
>
> In this video is the subversive role, place and agency for song and dance in South African society. Throughout the re-enactment of mug shots and questioning, all the poses and moves point to the Pantsula dance practice. Not that of gangsterism, evident in other narratives such as in the film *Mapantsula* (1988), but that of dance, dress and determination. In a single moment of intergenerational dialogue and dance between Mafikizolo and Masekela, power is suspended when the police on duty opens the cell door into his bewilderment, being faced with a challenging song and dance, and closing it behind him to the sounds of 'Ek is die Baas' [I am the boss].

Back to the name of the group: to be a 'newcomer' is significant in that this group returns to a genre from the 1950s (*kwela*) while featuring an elder (Hugh Masekela) in the song named 'Kwela'. In the song-text, Mafikizolo (2003) writes to 'mama' that the police, with their kwela-kwelas: "Bazo fun' i-dompass. Bazo semoshel' ibumnandi" [they are seeking the pass, they are denying us pleasure] (Mafikizolo 2003). Mafikizolo's bandmates, Brothers of Peace (BOP) in 'Mapodisa (S B V)' (1996) used the intro to their song-text to include an impersonation of a woman speaking in Afrikaans-accented English: "I'm tired of these black people. They make too much noise. I'm going to go to the police" (Brothers of Peace: 1996). To that, they respond with "bitsa maphodisa!" (call the police!) (Brothers of Peace 1996). This response evokes the protest text: *Asibasabi, siyabafuna!*[81] In the same album, BOP include another version of the song, titled 'Mapodisa', with the refrain: "cwalisa abrogate uze nabo emizini wami" [impress upon the police

[81] 'We are not afraid of them, we want them!'.

and bring them to my home] (Brothers of Peace 1996). The video to Mafikizolo's 'Kwela' (2003) stresses, amongst and beyond other music-related issues, the importance of: a) political education, b) 'transgenerational melancholia', and c) a refusal of ahistorical activism.

'Transgenerational melancholia'

Masekela enters the holding cell without the police. What is his role here? Is he the lawyer? In this intergenerational collaboration, he arrives with a message from the past, of 'mamas' arrested for brewing beer, handcuffed for making a living (Mafikizolo 2003). His gaze at the unimpressed police is priceless. His first words when he enters the holding cell of the arrested are: "bayadela la amaphoyisa" – how dare they intimidate and disrespect our mothers! (Mafikizolo 2003). Masekela lists the names of (Walter, but what about Albertina?) Sisulu, (Nelson, and what about Winnie?) Mandela, and (Oliver, what about Adelaide?) Tambo, as those who would know all about the 'kwela-kwela', i.e. who would act as witnesses to this historical injustice (Mafikizolo 2003). But what exactly is this historical injustice? In this case, it would seem to be song and dance or pleasure – *ibumnandi* – one of those environments in which "young blacks seek to humanise their experiences of the pleasures and pains of urbanity" (Peterson 2003: 197).

On the one hand, kwela is the name for this Mafikizolo song, and a genre named partly after the infamous police vehicles that would be used to arrest black people for their (lack of) the *dompas* during apartheid South Africa. Masekela, on the other hand, is one of those artists who staunchly supported young black people in their development of kwaito[82], the first post-apartheid musical genre to emerge in South Africa, despite and in spite of the formal industry's gatekeeping, because, amongst other justifications tabled, black people must listen to the message:

> *Gaan julle werk* [come work you all]
> *waar julle pass?*[where is your pass?]
> *jy must geres* [you must work]
> *ek is die baas* [I am the boss] (Mafikizolo 2003)

Mafikizolo's song-text tells the listener that black people do not qualify for the work of imagination and intellect – "jy maak geraas!" (you're making a noise). Bhekizizwe Peterson (2003: 208) argues that the kwaito generation put on a "legal hustle". Peterson (2003: 208) further unpacks the 'entrapment' of black youth:

> One major form of entrapment is survival in the ghetto. The choices that face black youth in kwaito seem to span negotiating (not choosing) between differing versions of hustling, layered with identities that are framed by machismo. Hustling, it is agreed, is the institution of a 'defensive space' where defensive strategies can be adopted by the wretched of the earth. This strategy constitutes a way of securing the means of life in a society where it is still common to refer to young people as the 'lost generation' or where the endless debates and concerns about 'law and order' act as euphemisms for greater and more vicious

[82] Masekela is not without reproach, for he was widely criticised for his critique of black women's choices in fashioning their identities, especially with regard to their use of weaves, a critique that dovetails with Brothers of Peace's critique of Boom Shaka's women in their 1996 'We Miss You Boom Shaka', as discussed in the introduction to this study.

policing of young black men in general, and not only those involved in criminal activity.

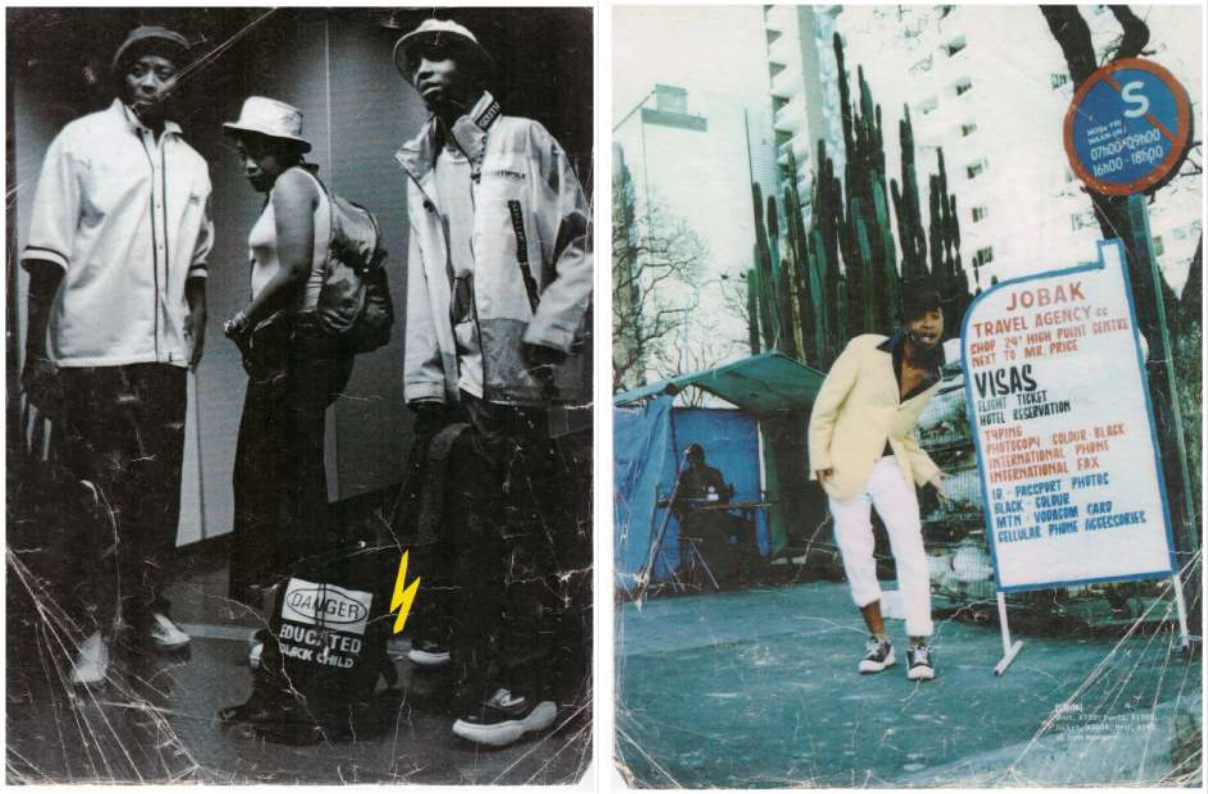


Figure 35: Reproductions from *Y-Mag* fashion shoot, October/November 1998. Courtesy of SLY Media.

This "vicious policing of young black men in general, and not only those involved in criminal activity" has informed how kwaito visual culture simultaneously 'plays' with and challenges real and symbolic criminalisation of black people (ibid.: 208). Later, I discuss a fashion shoot that appeared in *Y-Mag* (October/November 1998), in which several members of the kwaito generation pose in Hillbrow, touching on themes of black love vis-à-vis the symbolic and structural criminalisation of black people, and black youth in particular. An incredibly innovative and rich fashion spread, it is introduced by an image and text, and continues in spreads that create a rich intertextual tapestry of fashion and texts:

> **Illegal Search (keep on in searchin')**
>
> What the hell are you looking for?
> Can't a young black man make money no more?
> Or is it my job to make sure I'm poor?
> Can't my clothes look better than yours?
> Keep a cigar in between my jaws –
> I drink champagne, the hell with cost.
> Never sold coke in my life, I do tours.
>
> *(Y-Mag*, October/November 1998)

The editorial – written like a rap music verse, observes standard poetic conventions of rhythm and

flow, with rhymes. Later, I also discuss the music video for Thebe's 'Ungawa Kum' (1998), in which pioneers and producers in kwaito are being profiled at a mock police station. The group Alaska also released an album with a song titled 'Accused' (2000). In this manner, manifestations of this play with criminalisation, led Hlasane (2022: 207) to contend that "[t]he prison, as seen in the kwaito music video, is synonymous with social death". At the same time, the multiple refusals of this 'social death' persist in kwaito visual culture. What is significant, however, is how the genres that build on kwaito disassociate from this narrative, and instead consider other

> more standard narratives of belonging, resilience, hopefulness and imagining alternative emancipatory, and even utopian futures, is the narration of recurring thematic tropes that are textured by, draw upon, and persistently work through a complex engagement with the politics and aesthetics of melancholia. (Peterson 2019: 2)

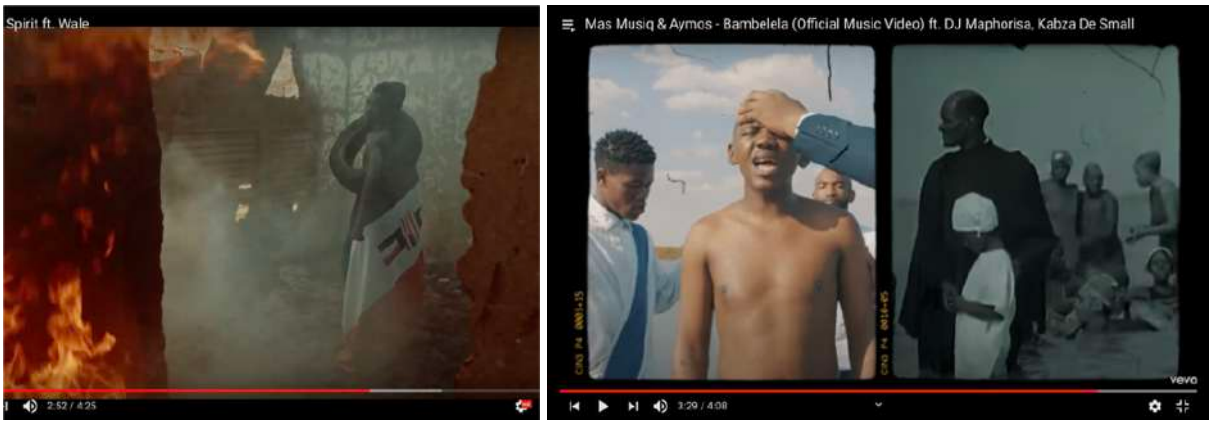


Figure 36: Left: Video still from the music video for Kwesta's 'Spirit' (ft. Wale), 2018. Courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment Africa (Pty) Ltd.; **Right:** Video still from the music video for Mas Musiq & Aymos's 'Bambelela', 2020. Courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment Africa (Pty) Ltd.

The stills from the music videos above (Kwesta's 'Spirit' – left, and Mas Musiq & Aymos's 'Bambelela' – right) are examples of what Peterson (2019: 2) describes as a "complex engagement with the politics and aesthetics of melancholia". The menace of the 'necklace' pinpoints apartheid as being the cause of most of the problems that the 'post-apartheid nation' still faces, along with religion and its multiple aftermaths. At the same time, the necklacing evokes the traumatic horror that led to the death of Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuave, who was burnt alive by a mob during the so-called xenophobic violence of 2008 in South Africa, at an 'informal settlement' named Ramaphosa, east of Johannesburg (Tromp: 2015).

Political education

Constitution Hill, fondly referred to as 'Con Hill' today, is a heritage museum that is also the premises for the Constitutional Court, the highest court in South Africa. The site is historically infamous for its role as a prison for political prisoners. 156 people arrested for high treason in 1956 were held in custody at this site, at a section known as the Old Fort (Ben-Zeev, Gaylard, Smuts & Venn 2006: 18).

In an article in *The New York Times* on 20 December 1956, titled 'Africans' Singing Drown Out Trial', it is stated that "From 5,000 throats outside came the harmonies singing 'Nkosi Sikeleli

Africa' (God Bless Africa), drowning out the proceedings in the hall", and that "J.C. van Niekerk, the public prosecutor, tried three times to open case but was prevented by the noise". In the end, the session was adjourned.

At the Narrative Enquiry for Social Transformation (NEST) conference in 2022, Uhuru Phalafala, in her presentation titled 'Erotics of Revolution', asked: "Why do South Africans sing during protests? And why do they move towards enemy lines without bullets and guns?" Peace Kiguwa, the chair of the session, spoke of how that question led them to the notion/question: 'Why do caged birds sing?' For me, this question immediately evoked Fela Kuti's insistence that "music is the weapon of the future". At that same time, I remembered Ntone Edjabe's rebuttal that "music is not the weapon, the weapon is the kalashnikov"[83]. From this thought, my meditation slowly recalled Phaswane Mpe's inscription as an epigraph in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) that goes: 'Motho ke sera seo fela se rego ge se rakeletšwe se lahle marumo se hlabane ka leleme …', translated by Mpe as "A human being is a beast that when cornered throws away weapons and fights with the tongue …" It turned out that in the hall for the Treason Trial, a day after the 'world-famed' adjournment described above, the treason-trial accused were placed in a wire cage (Ben-Zeev, Gaylard, Smuts & Venn 2006: 22). In response, "The defence team … threatened to walk out unless the cage was removed. "It was dismantled the next day", writes Ben-Zeev et al. (ibid.: 22). Here Kiguwa's remark returns with a renewed force. How can you *not* sing when you are not only oppressed but also dehumanised? Could the apartheid functionaries be so absurd that they resorted to using a wire cage to soundproof the singing 'natives'?

In *Bahlabelelelani – Why Do They Sing?: Gender and Power in Contemporary Women's Songs*, Nompumelelo Zondi (2020: 96) writes: "Through the communal medium of songs women learn to cope with, and escape from, their entrapment". Due to the singing by the 'negroes' outside the hall, men and women of 'all' races, 'escaped' the courthouse on 19 December 1956 at the Drill Hall, only to return to holding cells at the Old Fort. The press used the term 'singing box', in reference to the combination of the singing accused and the vehicles – not so different to the kwela-kwelas – transporting them between the two sites (Ben-Zeev et al.: 2006: 22). In a twist of irony, Liz Gunner writes as an opening to their text 'Jacob Zuma, the Social Body and the Unruly Power of Song' that "It is not often that a politician or public figure is so closely associated with a song that it becomes almost a part of his/her skin" (2019: 1). It is indeed not often. 'Madibuseng', as already discussed in this study, is one such black woman.

Refusal of ahistorical activism

Peterson (2003: 206) notes about kwaito that:

> For all the frequent suggestions that kwaito is paralysed by a shopping-mall complex, where what matters is the latest musical, fashion or other trend, there is often more than enough in kwaito to also indicate a sophisticated grasp of the present and a need to re-member the dis-membered past.

It is therefore disturbing to see the recasting of the 'kwela' tradition in song through youth in the

[83] 27 August 2022, The Library of Things We Forgot to Remember, Johannesburg. Informal DJ and oral session.

new genre called *amapiano*. Examples here are 'Khwela' (2022) by Classic Deep with Six40, and 'Khwela Khwela' (2021) by De Mthuda. Both recast 'kwela' for the materialistic erotics of the car – as the thing that 'picks up' women: "He nana ungalali/Mina ngizofika nge khwela khwela" (hey baby dont sleep/I will arrive with khwela khwela) (De Mthuda 2021). In other words the car, as a trope of masculinist performances of unhinged mobility and power, returns within a tradition of intergenerational trauma, now employed in a context where high levels of gender-based violence and injustice exist. In the case of De Mthuda, the use of the term 'nana' is deeply problematic. While it translates easily to 'baby' – as used in heteronormative romantic relationships, and which has become unisex in its use – in vernacular it refers to an actual baby, i.e. to infants and toddlers. With reference to Classic Deep with Six40 (2021), the use of 'stoko' – to be 'picked up' – is a term used specifically in relation to 'women'; and is even more problematic because the term 'stoko' is borrowed from 'stock' – i.e. objects that can be bought, stored and transacted. The term 'stoko' comes from the streets, and was made popular by Cassper Nyovest: "stoko sa lekgowa" in Kwesta's song 'Ngud' (2016). In Mapara A Jazz's 'John Vuli Gate' (2020), the title and phrase refer to a disturbing scene in the film *Tsotsi* (2005), when a woman, with her infant in the car, is frantically calling her husband 'John' to open the electric *gate via the intercom of their house, while would-be hijackers are lurking in the background.* It is important to remember Peterson's (2003: 206) caution that "where kwaito musicians have tried to appropriate public history under new contexts and for contemporary purposes, their interventions have not met with general public approval".

With reference to 'Kaffir's reception, "despite its explicit denunciation of racism in its lyrics, underlined with a politically correct hook in its chorus", the song "raised the ire of sections of the black community" (ibid.: 206). The difference between the recasting of the term 'kaffir' in Arthur's case differs directly from the two versions of 'khwela' mentioned above – including, even, in an etymological sense[84]. While the *amapiano* versions – as part of a new genre dominating the musical landscape in 2022 – share the same sensibility with Mafikizolo's intervention of 2003 in their quest to "renew past musical milestones, updating them to make them sound fresh in the present, while simultaneously capturing the creativity and aura that made them hits in the past" (ibid.: 206), their fault lines lie in them re-entrenching problematic social problems, while completely disassociating from the political charge of the original contexts that the song, and the reality of kwela-kwelas, represent. *Amapiano*, built on the foundation of kwaito, thus represents what I mentioned earlier to be 'apartheid's shameful legacies as a site from which not only to understand the struggle and its continuities but also to surface and underscore it as the birthplace of artistic practices'. The *amapiano* versions of 'kwela' effectively intervene in the tensions of intergenerational artistic articulations.

Zondi (2020: 104) relates the tense political period on 6 March 2006, when the former state president, Jacob Zuma, was appearing in court for his rape of Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo (referred to as Khwezi). A group named Izingane Zoma performed a song in support of Zuma. The song, according to Zondi:

> […] declares that the first president of democratic South Africa, Nelson Mandela – in the song referred to by his clan name, Madiba – had said that Zuma would become president

[84] 'Kwela' vis-à-vis 'khwela'.

> of the country at the end of his presidential term of office, and that charges against Zuma must therefore be withdrawn so that he can take up his role as president.

Izingane Zoma – consisting of women – was countering the members of the 1-in-9 Campaign against gender-based violence, who:

> sang at the top of their voices a song ordinarily sung at political rallies but this time directed at Zuma:
>
> *Lent'oyenzayo, ayilunganga*
> *Lent'oyenzayo, ayilunganga*
>
> What you are doing is not right
> What you are doing is not right (Zondi 2022: 104)

These song-based contests and conflicts – this "fighting with the tongue", as Liz Gunner (2009: 21) argues, using "song as debate and as a discursive presence within the public sphere and the body politic" – took place outside the Johannesburg High Court where the Zuma rape trial was taking place and being broadcast on national television. While the singers may not have the textual evidence, or the materiality of what takes place inside the court – a largely oral arena – available to them, they have the embodied weight that goes with protest. Their bodies – without which there would be no singing at the 'top of their voices' to 'drown out' the court hearings – are on the line, made even more charged by the very naming of the 1-in-9 Campaign, which references statistics that claim that only one in nine women who are raped in South Africa report their cases to the police.[85] In this case, then, the song has larger implications in the event of a conviction. It is not a question of whether the song is the weapon or metaphor – the song and the body that sings are one, represented by two groups in opposition. It is interesting to think with Zwane (2019) about [car] 'spinning', in which the car and the driver are read as one, in contradistinction to Hlasane and Peterson's (2022) reading of a driver cat-calling a woman on the street.

Musila (2022: 3) citing Barber asserts how "[p]opular song is a signature genre of collective political mobilisation, owing to its inbuilt capacities to galvanise collective effects, and its memorability, which facilitates circulation of memory across time". Both songs, by Izingane Zoma and the 1-in-9 Campaign, have the "power of music to generate and nurture affective networks" (Musila 2022: 3). Musila (ibid.) writes that "[d]espite scepticism about their reach in addressing systemic challenges, affects hold significant potential for subversion". The affective actions – on the occasions under discussion here, as one of many historical and contemporary examplars – have great influence on direct action, and are, in fact, part of that direct action. Simamkele Dlakavu (2022: 247) writes evocatively about this power of affective action, citing a poem by popular poet Koleka Putuma as an epigraph, because "Her words have been plastered on posters and T-shirts during the country's most recent and prominent anti-Gender-Based Violence (GBV) marches and

[85] The 1-in-9 Campaign writes: "According to popularly cited statistics, one in three women will experience sexual violence in her lifetime. According to the South African Medical Research Council, only one in nine rapes are reported to authorities. It was, initially, the latter group that the organisation supported", https://awdf.org/wp-content/uploads/1-in-9-Campaign-1.pdf.

protests".

The political and cultural mobilisation around the plight of Khwezi (and many abused women and children in South Africa) has gained strength since the establishment of the 1-in-9 Campaign. The conflictual borrowings in this discussion represent what Musila (2022: 3) sees as the "generative ambiguity of popular forms and the adaptability of the affects they evoke". Both groups used songs to evoke affects that have resulted in effects, that speak not only to individual perpetrators but also the state's inaction/s. Jacob Zuma eventually became the president of South Africa (in part due to the efforts of Izingane Zoma). His successor, Cyril Ramaphosa, later addressed gender-based violence in a number of public addresses (in part due to the 1-in-9 Campaign). *Who's Wrong Who's Right?* asks Donald Duck's album title. What remains disturbing is how the black male remains 'not guilty' in gender-based violence in communities and environments where white males don't feature or enter. In this way, the symbolic presence of white males in 'black environments' serves to sanitise 'white male innocence'.

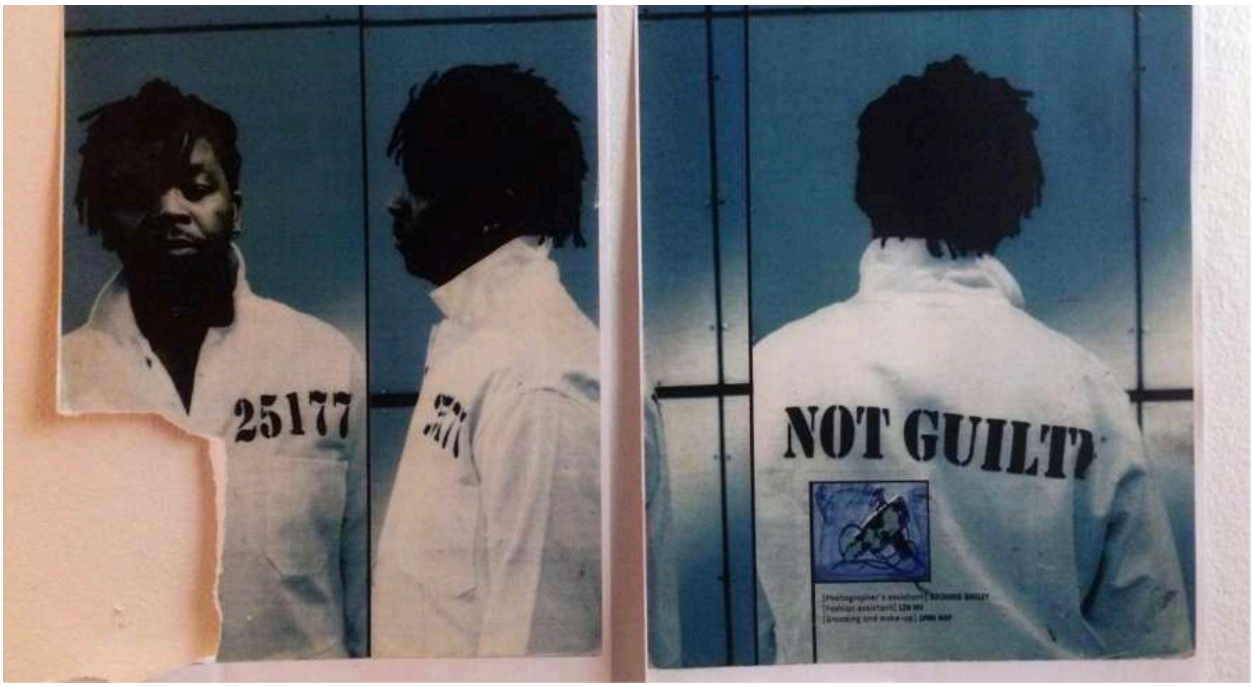


Figure 37: Reproductions from *Y-Mag* fashion shoot, October/November 1998 Courtesy of SLY Media (colour photocopy by Rangoato Hlasane).

The music video for Thebe's 'Ungawa Kum' (1998) is presented as a short film starring 'THE MAN', featuring the 'USUAL SUSPECTS', and 'created by Tsotsi'. THE MAN opens the boot for one of the USUAL SUSPECTS to look (at the loot) in an unidentified palm-treed location. This scene in particular precedes another of Thebe's videos, for the hit 'Buta Boot' (2000), in which the boot of a car is the site of the sound system that serves to create a party anywhere the car can reach – in this instance, in the video for 'Bula Boot', on an outskirt of the city. The difference between the video for 'Bula Boot' and 'Ungawa Kum' is that 'Bula Boot' is about the pleasure of music and dance, while 'Ungawa Kum' is pitched as a Hollywood-style 'mafia' genre movie.

However, what then is interesting is how the car boot is a reference to the legal hustle of kwaito pioneers, who started their intervention into the music industry selling cassettes from the boots of

cars before the formal industry recognised their lucrative potential and offered them distribution deals. As such, the USUAL SUSPECTS in the music video for 'Ungawa Kum' include the co-founders of Kalawa Jazmee Records (and the label's then producers), a black record company that started from so-called humble beginnings in the late to mid-1990s in South Africa. The humour is intentional – Thebe, the main narrator in the song, is in the foreground with the classic microphone in front of him, while the USUAL SUSPECTS are at the back, akin to a police line-up for photographing identikits and/or identification by witnesses. They appear, as the photography captures them, as:

> *Ufun' uTshidiso* [producer at Kalawa Jazmee Records]
> *Ufun' uMindlos* [co-founder/producer at Kalawa Jazmee Records]
> *Ufun' uSkizo* [producer at Kalawa Jazmee Records]
> *Ufun' uSebitlo* [co-founder/producer at Kalawa Jazmee Records]
> *Ufun' uOskido* [co-founder/producer at Kalawa Jazmee Records]

Why depict them as criminals? As the song title suggests, 'What do you want from me?' Hlasane and Peterson (2022: 350) write about how

> [t] he figuring of black men as threats to white society served to rationalize forms of social violence against black men spanning structural violence, subjugation, imprisonment and physical annihilation. These are all factors that partially account for the allure of senses-of-life that are brokered through the adoption of anti-social practices and identities.

If black youth cannot be accepted into the realms of 'legal hustle' (Peterson 2003), then they may as well show you what the opposite looks like. These "allure of senses-of-life that are brokered through the adoption of anti-social practices and identities" are persistent in kwaito visual culture and the kwaito music video (Hlasane & Peterson 2022: 350). Another group that flips the script on criminality is Alaska. Their 2000 album, titled *Alaska 2000* (2000), includes a song dearly loved in the South African songbook, titled 'Accuse'. In it, they perform as criminals who were betrayed by their *achuses* (friends/accomplices). In the video, they plead not guilty, as demonstrated by their costumes (yellow overalls printed with the words 'NOT GUILTY' at the back).

The video to 'Ungawa Kum' ends with the song 'Senganga', and the text "to be continued". Indeed, what is 'continued' is the self-defence demonstrated by persistent pleadings of 'not guilty', as demonstrated in much kwaito visual culture and its paratexts. Take for example the fashion spread in *Y-Mag* (November/December 1998), in which Oscar Mdlongwa poses police-profile-style in 'not guilty' overalls (Figure 37). Perhaps the 'to be continued' lies in the music video to 'Bula Boot' (2008). The boot contains a sound system or, as is visible in the video, a speaker system. The number plate to this vehicle locates it in Gauteng (HTW 637 GP).

> The video starts with the opening of the boot to a Mini Cooper on the outskirts of the city – not too far out of the city. A throng of young women are excited by the contents of this boot. Before that, the 'owner' fixes one part of the sound system in the boot, before driving through empty factories of the city and embarking onto the highway. It must be a Sunday.

> It turns out he didn't manage to fix the sound system, though, because, as the lyrics go: "go shota sound" (all that is missing is the music). Thus he drives around the city on a Sunday to seek someone who can fix the sound problem. And yet, he and his revellers dance and sing around the Mini Cooper.

It is clear that kwaito visual culture, despite many of its shortcomings, plays with the "allure of senses-of-life that are brokered through the adoption of anti-social practices and identities" in ways that demonstrate an astute grasp of a) political education, b) 'trans-generational melancholia', and c) a refusal of ahistorical activism (Hlasane & Peterson 2022: 350).

With regard to the music videos for 'Kwela' and 'Tabalaza,' the interplay between political education, 'trans-generational melancholia', and a refusal of ahistorical activism, are articulated through dance and dialogue as narrative forms. The collaboration between Masekela and Mafikizolo represents what Peterson (2019: 3) calls "trans-generational melancholia". This 'trans-generational melancholia' reflects in a salient way how the "black archive is partial and many of its nationalist curators are ill at ease with other subjectivities as well as feminist and queer perspectives" (ibid.: 8). If it wasn't for Mafikizolo's demographic composition, in which there is a member who identifies as a woman, we would be left with quite a male-centric visual culture as far as this section's focus goes. As such, a question for me is, why did I choose these archives for analysis if and when there is more diverse representation in the archive? Clearly, I got deeper into the (black) male dilemmas. Consider this:

Sho't left: 'Hlasela' by Ma-E (2016)

> If we take seriously that the video to 'Ungawa Kum' ends with the text 'to be continued', and so does the music video for 'Tse Blind', perhaps a brief reading of the video *Hlasela*, for the song of the same name, would be generative as we return to Peterson's 'allure of senses-of-life' that are articulated through the "adoption of anti-social practices and identities" (2003: 207). In it we see the crimes and their justifications. In the music video for 'Hlasela', Ma-E alternates between being on the side of a deserted road, and in prison. This alternation is mirrored by his white t-shirt, which momentarily changes colour to orange, signifying that at any moment he might be imprisoned. In the prison yard, he is wearing civilian clothes that also switch to orange. In other scenes, he is wearing the orange outfits. This tells us that he is inside momentarily, but also tells us that he's not a prisoner for life, as the lyrics go "bhekezela sgebengu" (be patient/persevere criminal) because "your family needs you" [translated from the original].
>
> The other character in the music video is depicted as a committed family man, with a wife and girl child. He is seen

fetching his child from school, as the lyrics go:

> *Mshana unga wari* (nephew don't worry)
> *Mama unga khali* (mother don't cry)
> *Ngi sebenzela nina* (I do this work for you)
> (Hlasela 2016)

At home, the wife is doing domestic labour, as he is in the courtyard preparing a dangerous object (a hosepipe spiked with nails, used to flatten the tyres of a vehicle during a robbery or assault). The child comes to spend some time with her father, but the mother comes to take her away – offering a disapproving look to the father – because the child doesn't know what the mother knows. To be honest, the object, while dangerous, looks creative.

This creativity, later in the music video, leads to the assault and death of another man at the hands of this father. After the car of the unidentified man was spiked and halted, the driver was assaulted by the family man, after which he was killed. The video does not suggest any kind of robbery, and as such the murder could be linked to something else – sinister or otherwise – such as revenge, as the song-text suggests:

> *Bazitshela ukuthi seng' file* (they tell themselves that I am dead)
> *But ngigidlile* (meanwhile I'm just sleeping)
> *Bheka manje seng' fikile* (look now I'm here)
> *Ngiyakhumbula bathi mina wouldn't be here* (I remember they said I wouldn't be here)
> *That's not your flow mfana okopile* (you plagiarised)
> (Hlasela 2016)

The lyrics suggest a kind of rebuttal to 'haters' (critics). Indeed, the 'trailer', as it were, does not hint at any other motive and, as such, it is rather extreme to murder someone for plagiarising lyrics.

The music video, framed at the beginning as a 'movie trailer', ends with the family about to pray before they eat supper. They seem like a happy family, with the wife reprimanding the father to join hands. With no clear idea of what the father had done during the day, the music video ends with 'coming soon'. What is coming soon? The outcomes of 'bhekezeleing'? Or a black family that thrives without crime? Or a life in prison for the black male?

Chapter Three

SESASEDI SA TSODIO

(2021 to 2023)

Dir. Rangoato Hlasane

Essayistic video

https://vimeo.com/536295512

Password: Please email rangoato@gmail.com



Figure 38: [Inserts/Fold-Out, in print version]. Reproduction of banner, printed in silkscreen monotypes and cynotype on calico between 2019 and present. This work remains unfinished, and was created as always work in progress that is simultaneously a script, a treatment, notes for screenplay and orientation for the cinematography, editing, colour grading and special effects for the essayistic videos. Photography by LightFarm Johannesburg.

Chapter Four

SANDLA HAMBA – SANDLA BUYA[86]: THEORISING FROM/WITH THE GROUND

> "We must stop talking about IKS [indigenous knowledge systems], from that … *varsity* level, and *le ka* English, *e kima*! (Mabena 2022)
>
> "[...] African popular culture is vital and fluid; its production and experience blend together planning and serendipity; and different elements will be foregrounded in different contexts of production and circulation." (Musila 2022: 2)
>
> "A critique of Eurocentrism and coloniality is necessarily built in to the process of tapping into the African knowledge archive and engaging with the ontological narratives of African people." (Nyoka 2020: xii)

The first epigraph I have inscribed above, emerged as a reflection by Ntate Ngaka Ephraim Mabena on the evening of 29 May 2022 at Mothong African Heritage, Mamelodi, Tshwane[87], at the mountain known (to the community of Mamelodi) as Thaba ya Mogale, officially known as part of the Magaliesberg mountain range, which spans the North West and Gauteng provinces of South Africa. The occasion was the screening event of *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, the essayistic video that forms part of this research submission. Ntate Mabena, the co-founder of Mothong African Heritage, was the respondent to the essayistic video. What followed this impassioned utterance was an affirmative response to an audience member's request: to take the opportunity and seize the positive energies of that evening in a moment of silence for the people of the KwaZulu-Natal province, who had just gone through a devastating flood over a month before. Many of Ntate Ngaka Ephraim Mabena's reflections that evening related to human beings' relationship with the land. As such, the moment of silence was more than appropriate – we encountered what Musila (2022: 2) posits as the "vitality" and "fluidity" that inform the core of African popular culture. We communed at that moment to consume an essayistic film, and ended up performing a collective ritual that connects the dead, the living dead, and those yet to come, amongst many other serendipitous acts.

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[86] This isiZulu phrase, literally translating to 'a hand that offers shall receive', intersects with the Sepedi phrase 'go fa ke go fega'. Both signify the ethic of 'paying it forward'.

[87] Tshwane is the capital city of South Africa. Mamelodi is one of the townships of Tshwane, created by the South African apartheid government. Most of its residents were forcefully removed from other parts of the country. Mamelodi is recognised as one of the 'jazz capitals' of South Africa, and it is a topographical link to a mountain range known as Magaliseberg. For a period of time, Mamelodi hosted the famed 'Moretele Park Jazz Festival'. Moretele is the name of the river running below the Magaliesberg mountain range, and along Mamelodi, as it meanders.



Figure 39: Meetse, the technology of life. Still from *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* (2021).

The second epigraph is taken from Grace A. Musila's descriptor and qualifier of 'African popular culture', drawn from the *Routledge Handbook on African Popular Culture* (2022) that she edited. The moment of silence described above, offered for kin of KwaZulu-Natal at Mothong in Gauteng, is one of many "different elements" that "will be foregrounded in different contexts of production and circulation" in African popular culture (Musila 2022: 2). Musila's descriptor is bold, elegant, transhistorical and powerful, and that moment of silence at Mothong is an application of how African popular culture makes visible how "its production and experience blend together planning and serendipity" (ibid.: 2).

Read with Nyoka's epigraph, their purchase proposes not only a move beyond "tapping into the African knowledge archive" but indeed also does the work of "engaging with the ontological narratives of African people" (Nyoka 2020: xii). In fact, Musila refers to the attitude we should adopt in the process of "generating theoretical insights from the lived experiences of African people" (ibid.: xii), even if from that "varsity level" (Mabena 2022). It is important to note that Ntate Mabena does not reject academia – but he calls on academia and the government to come down to the ground to work with sites such as Mothong African Heritage and knowledge-holders within the indigenous knowledge systems paradigms (Mabena 2022). As Ntuli (2020) informs reader, "Mabena spends most of his time on the mountain maintaining the plants, and on some days he is in his office documenting all that is to be learned" as part of the writing of his forthcoming book. In 2019, Stephen Selaluke mentioned that "Mothong is in partnership with Unisa [the University of South Africa], the University of Pretoria, the Tshwane University of Technology, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and the Department of Science and Technology". Beyond the government and institutions of higher education, (Selaluke (2020) add

that "[s]chools occasionally bring pupils over to learn about plants and animals on the mountain and the significance of conservation", and critically, beyond institutional knowledge production and dissemination, Ntate Mabena sees Mothong African Heritage as a "site where the public can learn and traditional healers can share their knowledge" (Ledwaba 2018).

The third epigraph appears in Bongani Nyoka's *The Social and Political Thought of Archie Mafeje* (2020). What draws me to this pivotal point by Nyoka (drawing on Mafeje's life's work) is the long-contested notion and construction of 'the African'. For the purpose of this limited study, we will approach the notion of the *living* 'African knowledge archive' through a set of generative definitions within the broader realm of 'African popular culture'. I do this not so much to evade the "critique of Eurocentrism and coloniality", but indeed to advance the outstanding and ongoing work that centres "ontological narratives of African people" (Nyoka 2020: xii) with the knowledge and appreciation that Eurocentrism and coloniality seep through much of what counts as 'African' today, especially within the realm of popular culture. As Ntate Mabena mentioned, when the apartheid government gave 'power' to the liberation struggle in South Africa, it made sure that it was a 'poisoned' power (Mabena 2022).

This poison metaphor becomes interesting to read into television as being akin to an 'atomic bomb' via Henrick Verwoerd (1999). Nyoka is calling for the move from "talking about decolonising knowledge to the actual process of doing so" (Nyoka 2020: xii), allying with Ntate Mabena, who not only echoes Nyoka's words but lives them. Ntate Mabena's (2022), Musila's (2022), and Nyoka's (2020) formulations resonate with the focus of this chapter, framed around the creative component towards this degree. In Ntate Mabena (2022), Musila (2022) and Nyoka (2020), I find an elegant theoretical framing that articulates what Bhekizizwe Peterson (2019) advanced as the Black Public Humanities.

Mabena's emphasis on the *how* in the engagements with the oral history tradition, i.e. his distrust of that "*varsity* level, and *le ka* English, *e kima*!" approach, brings us closer to Ato Quayson's (1997) argument of the "interdiscursive". Quayson (1997: 16) defines the 'interdiscursive' as a term to "describe the discernible relationships that inhere between literary texts and the field of conceptual resources". As we have seen in chapter two, the kwaito music video intercepts the spaces between a variety of texts, in a manner that surpasses both the written and the oral – as a mediator of *living* experiences.

Entering the echo chamber: Black Americans as African Americans, according to kwaito gospel

On the ground, i.e. beyond the gates of academia, an enduring popular phrase that has emerged through kwaito is '*ga se mo States mo*'. Sesotho for 'this is not the [United] States' (of America), the phrase can be attributed to Brothers of Peace's 'Okae Molao' (1996). It can also be heard in Kwesta's 'Spirit' (2018), featuring African/American rapper, Wale (the collaboration in itself is a deepening/complication of the phrase *ga se mo States mo*). It can additionally be heard as a chorus and refrain in Cassper Nyovest's 'Hase Mo States' (2018). It is a statement that highlights the solidarities, contradictions, ambivalences and ambiguities of 'Africa' and its (sonic) diasporas. It articulates a position that may sound/read as antagonistic, while in its essence represents an affective affinity and collective recognition of a shared struggle. This attitude is not only

interesting but also 'fresh', when we think about the *how* in the "critique of Eurocentrism and coloniality" in relation to the "tapping into the African knowledge archive and engaging with the ontological narratives of African people" (Nyoka 2020: xii). Add to that, the 'States' in *ga se mo States mo* should be read not with reference to the USA (cultural imperialism) only. As such, the statement expands what is understood as 'African' today.

In this way, *ga se mo States mo* aims to eschew and evade the tendency to corner black culture through geo-specific lenses, while also escaping language's tendency to represent the unintelligible for the purposes of simultaneously exclusionary and assimilatory ends. The online platform *Msansi Taal: The South African Taal Dictionary*[88], an online dictionary of South African colloquialism, includes *ga se mo States mo* (written as *Hase mo State*s), and defines it thus:

> Direct translation: this is not America.
> The phrase has a couple of meanings depending on the context in which it is used, but the general meaning is that you don't have to be pretentious or feel pressured to live up to western influences because this is South Africa and not America.
>
> The term was popularised by Kwesta in his track Spirit and most recently Cassper Nyovest with his track Hase Mo States.

As can be seen, the genealogy described above, i.e. in *Mzansi Taal*'s definition, omits the Brothers of Peace's 'Okae Molao' (1996) reference. Nonetheless, appearing as a refusal to interpolation, *ga se mo States mo* evokes The Otolith Group's (2011) "dissatisfaction with sound, articulated by way of using sound, dissatisfaction with image, by way of using an image". This method, according to The Otolith Group (ibid.), is a form that "cancels the difference between these three practices; between curating, creating and criticising". It is a method of linking, of creating a constellation that "starts from what looks like criticism […] then begins to take on what looks like fiction". This trajectory, from 'criticism' to 'fiction', resonates with what Musila (2022: 15) asserts is "[a] useful approach to the interface between the local and the global is to historicise these exchanges while paying close attention to the fresh genres, practices and interpretations that blossom at these points of cultural encounter".

Kwaito, as argued by Brothers of Peace et al., is a constituent of such "fresh genres, practices and interpretations" that bloom at the meeting points of global black popular culture (Musila 2022: 15). This conflation of curation, creation and critique is what Hlasane and Peterson (2022) call "situated lens-based performance" – a method that complicates the hierarchies and binaries of performer/consumer, of creator/namer, of archive/memory, of orientation/experience, of feeling/knowing. 'Philosophising from the dust', young black South Africans mobilise popular culture to position their work, and to stake a claim in their contributions to global popular culture through the phrase *ga se mo States mo* – declaring that they too have something to say and something to offer; a gift of sorts. I quote at length, as Tendayi Sithole (2020: np) writes on the politics of the gift:

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[88] *Mzansi Taal* is "a South African general lingo dictionary for Tsotsi Taal, Spitori, Ringas, Scamtho, Afrikaaps, Gayle and more", https://www.mzansitaal.co.za.

> The paradoxical gift of blackness is, first and foremost, that blackness gives itself. The gift lies within blackness, but since blackness is dispossession, everything is a priori expropriated from blackness. Dispossession is, in short, nothingness. Thus, the paradox of the gift is the way it interrogates and explicates what the multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk calls *blacknuss.* To give beauty in the face of ugliness, to give from nothing and produce value while being devalued is *blacknuss* – the amplification of blackness as the radical gift, the paradox where value underpins the beauty that blackness is even when arrested by the gaze that deems it ugly. The beauty of blackness, *blacknuss* that is, signifies the making, remaking and unmaking of aesthetics where the materiality of the object is the intervention and invention of life. It is here where value is creation and also improvisation.

In my reading of Sithole's enunciation above, the phrase *ga se mo States mo* locates kwaito as an object that speaks back, with, and alongside. It's the *skeem saam* foundational ethic that does many things, like a dice game – 'sometimes i-pop, sometimes i-grab' (win and lose) – but a foundation nonetheless. When *motswako*, *amapiano*, *gqom*, *house* and *Afrobeat* pledge *ga se mo States mo*, the sonic lexicon simultaneously pays homage to and takes from kwaito. A gift and a gift – give and take. Like a dice, there are other perspectives and genealogies in this homage/borrowing: *Ga se mo States mo* starts as a homage and a 'but no thank you' to African American gifts, sans the cultural imperialism. To Brothers of Peace, 'Okae Molao' (1996) (translating to 'Where is the law?'), it frames the lawlessness narrative to underscore moral codes from township culture and history, tackling the sociocultural relations of black urban people. The dark side of the North American psyche is cited as the cause of 'lawlessness' in the late 1990s, according to 'Okae Molao' (1996), from which the phrase endures through various music genres – *motswako*, *amapiano*, *gqom*, *house* and *Afrobeat* – in South Africa. What remains fascinating is how black youth from South Africa give – for borrowings are gifts, i.e. when Africans, or other 'nations' for that matter, borrow from *hip-hop*, they are simultaneously giving a life to *hip-hop* – an 'intervention and invention of life' – to the black diaspora, yet they do so with unease and critical distance. In a sense, another way of reading *ga se mo States mo* is through the lens of *phetsolelo*, a term coined by Eileen E. Pooe and Shole J. Shole (2020).

Pooe and Shole (2020: 154) define *phetsolelo* as a "concept of translation as a means of recapturing what was lost", that links to a Setswana proverb, "Maropeng go a boela; go sa boelweng ke teng (It is always possible and desirable to return to one's ancestral ruins; the only impossible thing is going back to your mother's womb)". The phrase *ga se mo States mo,* as a 'thanks to African American black popular culture but a 'no thanks' to American imperialism', can be read as a claim to the ownership of *hip-hop* by African youth! In other words, if African Americans cannot return to the womb that is the continent of Africa, then the symbolism of *ga se mo States mo* is thus a *phetsolelo* of *hip-hop*.

Understanding that the term *phetsolelo* is derived from *phetsola* – meaning to "revert, flip, turn upside down; make a turn-around" (Pooe & Shole 2020: 154), (South) African youth use the phrase *ga se mo States mo* to flip the script on *hip-hop*, and in that way do what Pooe and Shole call a "postcolonialist translation" that is "not a one-way transference of cultural materials from the West intended to erase those of Africa, but an act of invention that produces a new original in another language" (ibid.: 155-156). I posit then that *ga se mo States mo* is a claim to black music as African music. In its apparent ambiguity, the phrase complicates nationalism, internationalism, and Pan-

Africanism with a sophistication that, following Pooe and Shole's argument and formulation of "postcolonialist translation", is "more than a literary translation", but enunciates "the political connotation of reclaiming and repatriating an African cultural asset that was appropriated by colonialists, exiled in a foreign culture or forming part of that culture's literary system by some default" (ibid.: 157). In this way, more than a claim to ownership of *hip-hop* by African youth, it is a claim to the descendants of African slaves; a reminder that 'Maropeng go a boela' – but since it is all provisional insofar as a return is concerned, the symbolic act that can do for now is that of repatriation: a dialogical, affective and yet provocative act of affective affinity. As Louis Chude-Sokei (2008: np) attests:

> Africa – as imagined centre around which echoes collect and from which they disperse – is central not only because it is the "secret code" and the "ground-bass" (this latter being an important metaphor for reggae) but also because it is where the de-centred and lateral economies of black Diaspora culture inevitably end up!

Chude-Sokei foregrounds 'bass' as being central to Africa's offering to *reggae* (this dovetails with the discussion in Chapter One about the persistence of bass in kwaito and its continuities). At the same time, Chude-Sokei precedes Musila's (2022) multi-directionality of borrowings:

> [...] it is no accident that continental reggae producers and West Africa sound systems are beginning to engage with Diaspora by way of a sound that has always asserted its island origins simultaneously with an Africa pedigree and by way of an African American influence. (Chude-Sokei: 2008: np)

Indeed, these borrowings between Africa and its diaspora are not limited to kwaito, *hip-hop* and *reggae*, as Keorapetse Kgositsile in conversation with Uhuru Phalafala reflects on the intersection of *jazz* and (African) poetry:

> Black life has been about surrendering to the mysteries of the unknown, into movement and flow which are counterpoint to the hard and industrial; the military, prison and mining industrial complexes built upon conquest, coercion, and control. Movement is the condition of blackness, Black performance is black history, and history is in our rhythms: we move, we move. We resist because our mouths know fire and ritual, we riot because our melanated bodies are passages of spirit refusing captivity. We are insurgent because history fans our spirit, motioning us forward. We resist because our spirit is set alight by our ancestors' memories of the future, the hearth of the homelace fires our bones so we may remember vernaculars of our spirit
>
> When we resist we sing and dance that knowledge
> When we toyi toyi to charge our timeless spirit to rebirth
> (Phalafala 2021: 9)

Phalafala's prose inscribed above represents what Kelley (2000) would term 'poetics of anticolonialism'. It is akin to "revolutionary graffiti painted in bold strikes across the great texts of Western Civilization" (Kelley 2000: 28), itself an outcome of what Césaire and his likes enabled: "a hand grenade tossed with deadly accuracy, clearing the field so that we might write a

new history with what's left standing" (ibid.: 28), such as Phalafala's prose. Phalafala's cleared ground is echoed by her literary father, Keorapetse Kgositsile, who connects the *geo-ontological philosophies* after she probed:

> Papa, as you know I'm interested in the relationship between Black South Africans and Black Americans in the 20th century, not only through literature, but also through other Black expressive cultures such as jazz and poetry, and through their forms of protest. (Phalafala 2021: 10)

Kgositsile responds, sharing that his ilk "grew up listening to a lot of both South African jazz and its African American counterpart" (Kgositsile cited in Phalafala 2021: 10). Kgositsile then immediately emphasises that "when we talk about South African jazz essentially what we mean is jazz with a South African accent" (ibid.:10). This emphasis is vital for Kgositsile:

> It is very important because although jazz as we know it originates in the United States, someone like Amiri Baraka would argue that the development of African American music is a continuation of African music in changed conditions across the Atlantic. (ibid.:10)

Within a complex set of dynamics in nationalist global popular culture, the *ga se mo States mo* phrase can be seen as "resilience" that "sits side by side with calls for resistance against unjust national and global power politics" (Musila 2022: 4). *Ga se mo States mo* resonates with what Musila (2022: 4) considers "artistic celebrations of national identity – a remarkable phenomenon considering the dwindling fortunes of nationalism across the continent". I find Musila's term "dwindling fortunes of nationalism" intriguing, and it has been generative to think about how much "ontological narratives of African people" (Nyoka 2020: xii) persist in kwaito visual culture, and in particular, in the kwaito music video.

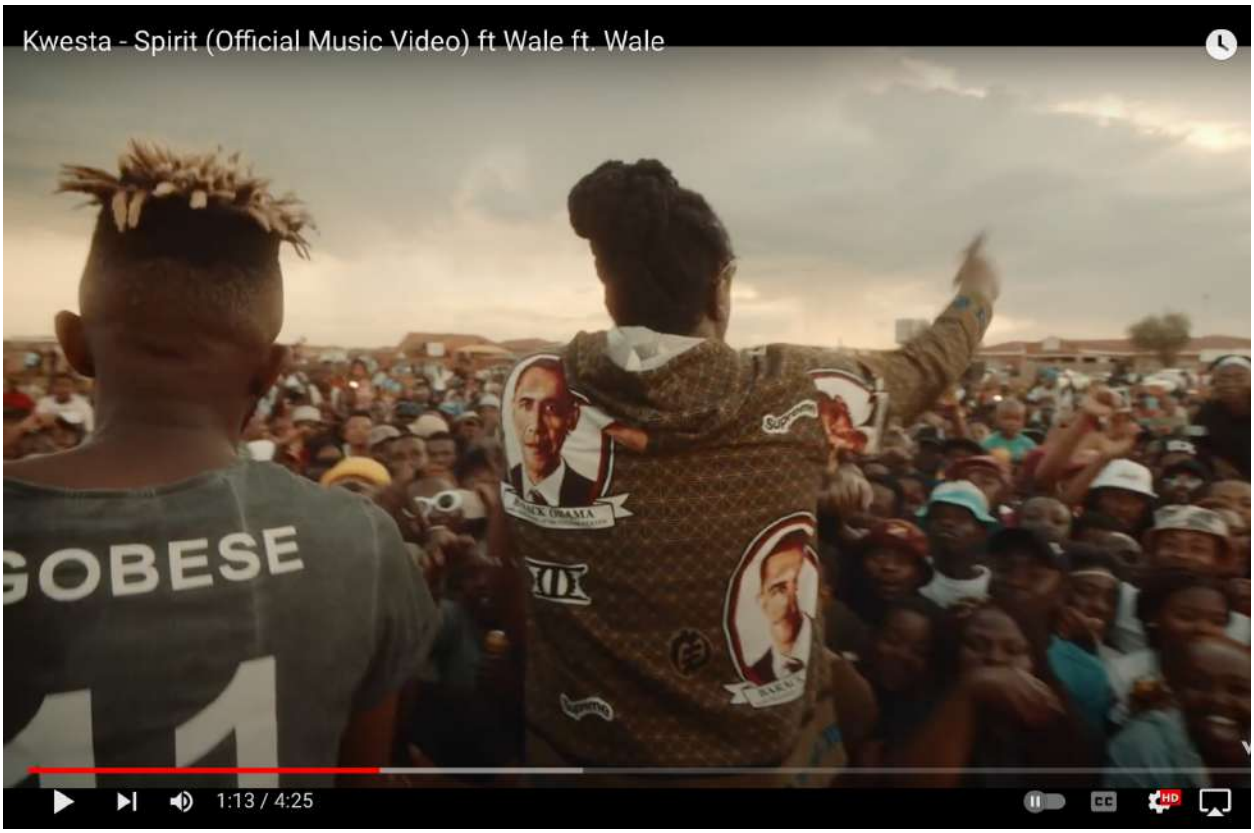

Figure 40: Still from the video to Kwesta's 'Spirit' (2018). Courtesy Sony Music Entertainment (Pty) Ltd.

It is worth thinking about how kwaito visual culture flips this dearth of nationalist grammar as an opportunity to re-map the topographies and visual markers that constitute black cultural work within global popular culture. Kwaito visual culture continues to redefine its visual vocabulary, to contradict, complicate and reconceive of nationalist visual ideas and identities. Kwesta's 'Spirit' (2018), with its sonic-text refrain of *Ga se mo States mo*, has virtually become a classic in kwaito visual culture.

The video to 'Spirit' (2018) places a global sports figure – Scara 'Black Jesus'' Ngobese – who made jersey number eleven famous in the middle of a township myth and legend, represented through the jersey 'number 11' worn by Kwesta, walking past a mural of the first black president of South Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla 'Madiba' Mandela. This particular scene is a double homage: to Ngobese, who put Katlehong – Kwesta's home township, east of Johannesburg, 'on the map', and to Mandela, born in a village outside of Mthatha in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, who became a world icon. This appraisal of villages, small towns, townships and ghettos (a key discussion in Chapter Two) as geographies where 'heroes are born', intercepts with and complicates the notion of global citizenship, as the sonic-lexicon borrows from kwaito while Kwesta emerges, and largely positions himself, as a *hip-hop* artist.

The sonic-text pays homage to '*kasi lam*' (my home/township), and narrates in a call and response to Wale, representing Nigeria and the USA. Wale (wearing a sweater with a print of Barack Obama) is a first-generation American in his family, with parents born in Nigeria. His collaboration with Kwesta is one example of African Americans who look to 'Africa' for

inspiration and collaboration. The video doesn't give Nigeria any screen time – only to African American social life and historical disjunctures, such as are represented by references to a visual culture surrounding Barack Obama, the era-defining first black president of the United States, who is also a first-generation American of Kenyan descent. The video suggests that *kasi la* Kwesta is *kasi la* Wale – or that South African black sociopolitical life resonates with a postcolonial Africa, on the continent and beyond. As Kwesta posits in his song-text:

> *Lento ephekwe la e'lokshin* [This thing was 'cooked' in the township]
> *Sa igibeleli e'taxi joe* [Through a taxi]
> *Sa'i cwalisa emasurbabsini* [We export it to the suburbs]
> *A re mo States mo* [This is not the United States]

The song-text above states that "this thing was created in the townships and exported to the suburbs". From the township to the suburbs, "this is not the United States", Kwesta claims, while featuring 'an American' in the song and the music video without depicting the suburb in the music video for 'Spirit' because, as Kwesta's song-text claims further:

> *Lena ya magents e'stoksini* [This one is for the gentlemen in the township]
> *Abanga sicedi joe* [They have not killed us all]
> *Bathi sghubu sathi hei nia s'khinya* [They say *sghubu* is distracting, we say you are too sensitive]
> *Ha re mo Sates mo* [We are not in the United States of America]
> *Uzongithola e kas' lami* [You will find me at my township]

The video to 'Spirit' (2018) proposes that South African *kasi* culture can, and does, contribute to a black visual vocabulary and to the reshaping and re-evaluation of global black popular culture. Musila (2022: 15) reminds us that "[i]t is worth remembering that borrowings are not always one-directional".[89] Young Africans continue to propose new positions within the "dwindling fortunes of nationalism" (ibid.: 4), implicated in a global popular culture mechanisation.

It is important to note how clothes – or fashion – play a key part in kwaito's visual culture, in which the kwaito music video is a critical carrier of ideological messaging. The discussion above is largely based on what the artists wear in the music video: Kwesta wearing Ngobese's t-shirt, and Wale wearing a sweater with a print of Obama. Mandela enters the conversation not through dress but through public art – via a mural (in Chapter Two we see Winnie Madikizela-Mandela featured in a mural in Prince Kaybee's video for the song 'Gugulethu', a township in the Western Cape).

The music video for 'Spirit' is a rich document in the visual lexicon of the kwaito music video. In my reading above, I have not done justice to the range of thematics that are employed and enunciated in the music video. The thematics in the music video for 'Spirit' are so vast that they straddle not only genealogies but also eras and phenomena. What is striking is how seriously the thematics are articulated, and yet remain anchored in a 'playfulness' – religious rituals in 'natural' waters alongside 'Spring Day activities' is an example, as per the still referenced below.

[89] This multidirectional point about 'borrowings' is important, and I will keep returning to it throughout the study, as indicated in Chapter One, as well as in the essayistic video trilogy that forms part of this study.

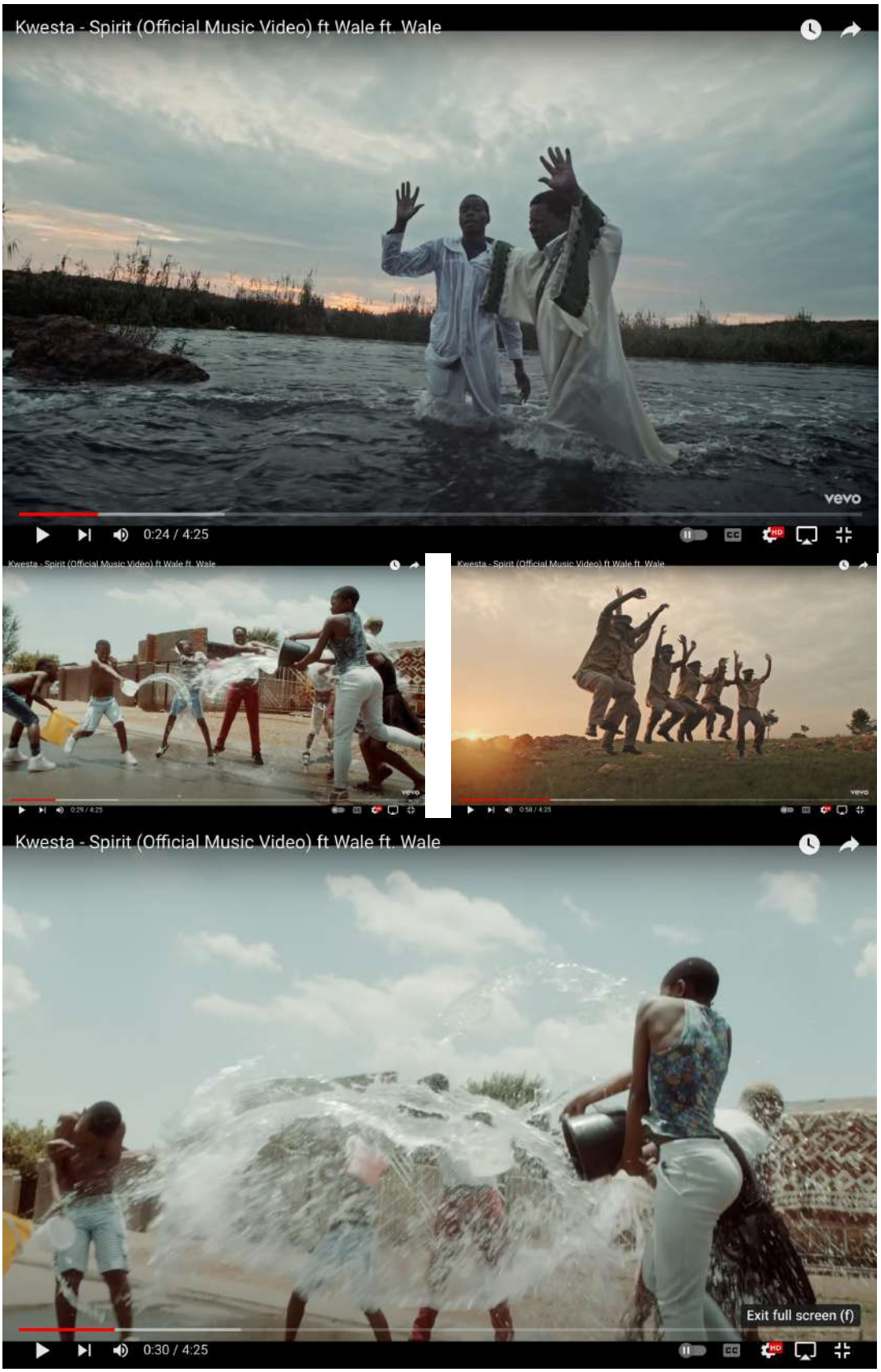

Figure 41: Stills from the video to Kwesta's 'Spirit' (2018). Courtesy Sony Music Entertainment (Pty) Ltd.

The music video for 'Spirit' is important in how it relates to kwaito visual culture, and in relation to Kwesta as a well-established *hip-hop* artist. As mentioned previously, this particular music video articulates a visual historical trajectory that, in its vastness, covers various genealogies, eras and phenomena of southern Africa. Further, Kwesta has set himself apart from South African *hip-hop*, as one of the artists who cites kwaito, through songs such as 'Ngud' (2016), 'Vur Vai' (2018), and 'Njandini' (2020) and, critically, through how his 'kwaito' meets *amapiano* and *hip-hop* through his collaboration with Kabza de Small and Masterpiece YVK in the song 'Kushubile Kubomvu' (2022), where the song-text starts with 'kwaito'. In the music material for 'Kushubile Kubomvu', both Kabza de Small and Kwesta are wearing kwaito visual culture's quintessential apparel – Dickies (American industrial apparel). I discuss Kabza de Small and Kwesta's collaboration in Chapter One.

Kwesta's 'kwaito visual culture' is an important example of how to mobilise Bhekizizwe Peterson's argument about the Black Public Humanities from the so-called 'Global South'. As a rapper who made *hase mo States mo* gain new popularity since Brothers of Peace's utterance thereof in 1996, he has managed to build a visual record that elucidates the ontologies of southern Africa in black popular culture in a way that straddles many disciplines (science fiction and crime in black communities through the video for 'Vur Vai' (2018), black community arts centres – or their erasure, for that matter – through the video for 'Njandini' (2020), to mention just two). These examples from Kwesta's music-video oeuvre are in fact encapsulated in the music video for 'Spirit', which articulates a bewildering number of themes in those split-second modalities that only a music video can, and this is what the kwaito music video does (to return to my opening question posed in the introduction to this study, and discussions in Chapter One).

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Drawing on Musila's (2022: 2) insightful formulation of African popular culture, that centres "principles of creativity, play, pleasure, learning and sociality", this chapter thinks alongside the making of my essayistic video accompanying this research submission. To follow in this chapter, I outline and further unpack the first[90] of the three essayistic videos that assemble the "African knowledge archive" and centre "the ontological narratives of African people" within African popular culture (Nyoka 2020: xii), while treading carefully to avoid speaking about "IKS … from that … *varsity* level" (although every now and then I will do so "*ka* English, *e kima*!" (Mabena 2022).

Sesasedi sa Tsodio (2021)

An essayistic video by Rangoato Hlasane and contributors

> An essayistic video on the kwaito DNA and its multiple, global umbilical cords. The video searches for and celebrates the musicality of leleme la MaAfrika – sonic and phonetic aesthetics of black world-making. The character of Tsodio as lyrical fiction/mythology travels through orature and storytelling in black musical and sonic histories of the past, present and future. Travelling banners, thinking and sounding with [and through] three locations – Meadowlands, Mamelodi and Mahikeng – serve as backdrops for these oral

[90] Of the three, the two essayistic videos accompanying this dissertation are titled *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* and *Sa Koša ke Lerole* and are the first two in the trilogy. The last will be realised as post-doctoral output.

histories, with 'people as libraries', on site. These situated lens-based performative conversations intersect and coalesce with vignettes of an unfolding score, grounded in Ndofaya, Mams and Maftown[91].

What if banners could sound? If *gusheshe* could see? If street names could chorus? Mountains could witness? Dams could heal? Static and strategic – as *situated optic performances* - could banners sound out narratives of conquest and naming, defeat and reclamation, defiance and ancestry, colliding in ante-hedonistic polyphonetics ...? From the street to the song, from the song back to the streets, this video essay borrows from the Tsodio narrative to manifest visual musicking objects of *mmino wa setšo* – music of *botho*, music of the people, cultural music, black music, world-making sound.

Meadowlands, Mamelodi and Mahikeng coalesce in temporal proximity in a situated lens-based performance through Tsodio, a symbolic sonic and visual cartography of Ndofaya, Mams and Maftown. The visuals in this video essay 'sounds', kwaito's foundational signature, along with its influences/conversations with black family music – mmino wa setšo. Kwaito and techno, or Africa and its diaspora, elucidate the human-object-spirit form in mmino wa setšo and how the collusion creates what we get to call music.

Ndofaya, Mams and Maftown are characters in this video for their contributions to a South African sonic history – oralities, linguistics, phonetics, music - as well as for their political narratives and historiographies. Ndofaya, Mams and Maftown share a history of migration through forced removals and defiance that is linked to, but not necessarily the cause of, their various cultural innovations. They also have a relationship with the southern African region, the rest of the African continent and its diaspora, and back to Johannesburg. Exploring the poetics of the late Keorapetse Kgositsile, Uhuru Phalafala (2016: 20) writes that "language is an active agent to signal movement and continuity in spatiality, bringing difference in relation through a lively enfolding process interweaving Africa on the continent with Africa in America [...] and past, present and future".

A fugitive runs from maphodisa a Leboa (as written by moletši wa harepa Johannes Mokgwadi in 1974). Tsodio runs to 'Gauteng ma phutha ditšhaba'. In this essayistic video, we speculate that he first finds refuge in Mamelodi ... and then Mafikeng and Ndofaya.

Paratext 1: Press release for *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, 2021

Sesasedi sa Tsodio takes a kwaito classic as a point of departure by way of zooming in on one song, 'Tsodio' (1999), made popular by the late Lebo Mathosa. Tsodio is a character in the song and in my essayistic video; a pursued and haunted character who murdered his uncle and is thus a fugitive perpetually on the run from a ghost and the police. The character – what I call a *song-*

[91] Referring respectively to Meadowlands, Mamelodi and Mahikeng, as renamed by the residents.

being – emerged from *mmino wa setšo*[92] repertoire (in the practice of kiba) and flowed into mainstream circulation through Johannes Mokgwadi (1974), first as a theme song for a radio drama on the then Radio Lebowa, titled *Mmotše go re ke mang*[93] (1974), from whence it gained mainstream (radio) popularity.

The conception, making, reception and consumption of this work – *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* – once more aligns with Musila's (2022:15) reminder that "borrowings are not always one-directional". The song 'Tsodio' travels from the communal property of *mmino wa setšo*, to radio-drama theme song, to popular recorded music – and from thereon from genre to genre up to the current[94] *amapiano*. Evading notions of plagiarism, the trajectory of Tsodio as a sonic/oral/aural artefact straddles intertextuality, allusion and homage (Barber 2022: xx). As Deborah James (1999: 90-91) attests on the Tsodio story:

> It is the topicality and popularity of the radio serial and song on which it is based which enables listeners to attach to this brief reference a range of meanings not set down in the text itself. The flexibility enjoyed by an audience in interpreting a song like this one is inseparable from an imprecision about where one genre ends and another begins.

Since mainstream circulation after Mokgwadi's recording in 1974, 'Tsodio' continues to transform its audiences into participants, engendering several iterations in the 1990s, including by Joe Shirimani (1998), but with Mathosa's 1999 iteration being not only the most popular but also the key reference to the Tsodio narrative in this video. More than a decade after the late 1990s, many more iterations of the song emerged: one, in 2012 (Thath'i Cover Okestra Vol. 2), another in 2017 (Papis Wyn Malatji), four in 2020 (The Tribe ft. DJ Starkev; Nape A. Phaahle; Greasythumb; and Deep Saints), three more in 2021 (KVNTA; Thabo Seremi Maila; and Mdu aka TrRP & Bognza ft. MhawKeys), and two in 2022 (Busta 929 ft. Focalistic; and Eddie Mashishi). As far as my *ongoing* research has found, there are therefore at least fifteen iterations of 'Tsodio'/'Tsodiyo'. Through *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, a first in this trilogy of southern African song-beings, our story nonetheless zooms into three of Tsodio's sonic speculations[95]:

In Johannes Mokgwadi's 'Tsodio le Khwembu' (1974), 'Bra Tsodio' with 'Bra Khwembu', his accomplice, steal a gun and kill Sehlapaseledu. They are on the run from Sergeant Lekalakala, and end up in Gauteng "maphutha ditšhaba"[96].

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[92] *Mmino wa setšo* refers to indigenous music of the Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa, standardised as Basotho (Batswana, Bapedi/Northern Sotho and Basotho). The term is complex, and as such also refers to music of *botho*, music of the people, cultural music, black music. As a term, it also refers to a music-dance compound.

[93] The title *Mmotše go re ke mang* is an address by the departed, who haunts Tsodio to *"*tell them who it was" that murdered him. It is important to note that Deborah James (1999: 90) records that the radio drama in question is titled *Tsodio.*

[94] At the time of writing this, the current South African music genre, i.e. the latest African popular culture insofar as music is concerned, is *amapiano*, and in that genre there are at least three iterations of 'Tsodio'/'Tsodiyo'.

[95] Most, if not all of the other 'Tsodio' interpretations will definitely make 'visitations' into this chapter and the written component of this study and its creative component.

[96] Translatable as 'Gauteng, the refuge for nations'.

For Paulina Mphoka, Tsodio indeed killed his uncle Matšhabataga, this time without an accomplice, and there is no mention of guns (James 1999: 89). However, for Mphoka, the story of Tsodio is not dissimilar to the experience of women, such as "Mosadi wa sepankana, o rekiša bwyala" – a brewer of beer during apartheid South Africa who is perpetually on the lookout for an unwelcome 'visitation' from 'Maphodisa a ka Lebowa'[97] (ibid.: 89). Men and women all evade the police, for their defiance and for the pass (*dompas*). This is why, for Mathosa's grandmother, at some stage 'everyone was Tsodio'.[98] After all, as Innocentia Jabulisile Mhlambi (2012: 192) reminds us:

> Historically, the South African police have not earned the trust and respect of black South Africans because, among other things, they have been viewed as security agents of the apartheid government.

For Mathosa, like Mphoka and Mokgwadi, Tsodio does not sleep. However, for Mathosa, Tsodio does not sleep because "okare o tshwere ke sepoko"[99]. Mathosa's version of the song does not mention murder, and there is no mention of the police being after Tsodio. Thus it is not clear if he is haunted by any ghost, since he did not kill; yet he does not sleep. When people are sleeping, Tsodio 'wa groova' – Tsodio is grooving. He also doesn't work – 'ke sebodu' (he's a loafer), who annoyingly visits people at their workplaces. Eish![100] *Ke eng ka*[101] Tsodio?

Tsodio is traversing *mmino wa setšo* across time and space, across generations. In that sense, Tsodio, this haunted song-being, can be said to be himself, haunting generations, or making 'visits'. Eve Tuck, writing with co-authors Haliehana Stepetin, Rebecca Beaulne-Stuebing and Jo Billows (2022: 9) in their evocative text 'Visiting as an Indigenous Feminist Practice', outline wide-ranging cosmologies of 'visiting' within the context of indigenous feminist ontologies:

> I have long been curious about the generative, almost poetic, recursive meaning of the words visiting and visitation. There is a slippage that can happen between them – visiting and visitation – that I find compelling. A visit, a noun, a chance or planned time set aside to be together. Visiting, an activity, something we are doing now or do so often we are always doing it. A present tense activity. A presencing. A visitation is a word that combines both the visit and the visiting – the occurrence in time, and also what we are doing in that time. Visitation is the word used for scheduled visits with those whose time is shaped by incarceration, by a family separation. Visitation is also a gathering that some communities have when a loved one has died. It is to offer comfort, to remember, to mourn, to show up. So, I am curious about the little hoop of connections between visiting as an Indigenous

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[97] The police of Lebowa, now Limpopo province of South Africa.

[98] Interview with Solly Mathosa, Daveyton, South Africa, 31 May 2013. Bapedi Champions, one of the prominent *kiba* groups in the Gauteng province, are based in Daveyton, in the Ekurhuleni municipality. They recently collaborated with Tshepang Ramoba, a drummer who is internationally known as a member of the BLK JKS, an alternative rock outfit.

[99] 'It seems he is haunted.'

[100] 'Eish!' is an expression of many things in South Africa, from excitement to frustration. In this case, I use it to express bedazzlement.

[101] The phrase *Ke eng ka …?* literally translates as 'What is it with …', and is almost always used interchangeably with *Eish!* to express the unintelligibility or ungraspability of something/someone.

feminist practice of meaning-making, presence, collaboration, and also as an Indigenous feminist form of collective grieving and mutual offering of comfort.

While writing from the context of North American indigenous feminist practices, 'visiting' down here in South Africa has a similar density of meanings, evoked in oral literature. Below are just three of many expressions that underscore the ethic of visiting:

Moeng o naka di maripa (a visitor does not overstay their welcome)
Moeng etla ka gešo re je ka wena (the visitor invokes the home/hosts to make the best meals)
Ke rena baeng, re kgopela go raloka le lena (we are visitors, here to play along with you)

In *Sesasedi sa Tsodio,* I frame the character of Tsodio as a *lyrico-ficto-mythology* that travels through orature and storytelling in black musical and sonic histories of the past, present and futures. Travelling banners (themselves conceived as offerings that accompany a 'visitor', as in *dirotwana*[102]), think and sound with [and through] three locations – Meadowlands, Mamelodi and Mahikeng – and serve as backdrops for these oral histories, with 'people as libraries', on site. These *situated lens-based performative* conversations trace Tsodio's multiple umbilical cords, and drive the essayistic video through a journey of sonic, optic and phonetic black world un/making.

I have specifically chosen three locations as speculative spaces of refuge for the fugitive, Tsodio, in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* (2021). In particular, and significantly, Meadowlands, Mamelodi and Mahikeng share a common history of linguistic innovation and phonetic prowess. These *locations*[103] – Mamelodi, Mahikeng and Meadowlands – form the triad of sites for in-situ storytelling in the film. Accordingly, I have been intentional in screening the film back in the places where it was filmed – to give thanks for the land and its people for the gift of filming there. But critically, also, to appreciate the reception and responses from those people as a tactic to open up possibilities of "planning and serendipity" (Musila 2022: 2) taking place, thereby enabling the in-situ storytelling to continue beyond the film itself, so that the work of art becomes a conduit for speaking about, narrating and debating issues proposed not only by the film itself, but of opening up dialogue around related concerns, and ongoing initiatives and conversations. The moment of silence mentioned earlier is one of many such concerns that surfaced as a result of the essayistic video and screening event. In a context in which "[our] practices are demonised" (Mabena 2022), the film and the screening event became platforms for "tapping into the African knowledge archive and engaging with the ontological narratives of African people" (Nyoka 2020: xii).

The essayistic video searches for and celebrates the musicality of *leleme* (spoken language) la MaAfrika. An illustrated cartographic audio play, the video essay searches for a visual grammar that detonates and decodes *sa koša ke lerole* ethic kinetic (and somatic) ways of knowing. We engage with the song-dance compound that is central to black musicking and appreciation of music. As such, kwaito is placed alongside *techno*, and the rest of 'black family music', from Johannesburg to Detroit and back – from the ground to the sound and back.

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[102] *Serotwana*, plural *dirotwana*, are functional object-based gestures that underscore the ethics of visiting. The most common is maize, an ingredient used to make porridge (pap), which is a staple diet in southern Africa.
[103] Here I am using the word 'location' to mean a film site, as opposed to the term 'location' as used to denote 'the township' – from 'lokasie' in Afrikaans, and 'kasi' in the colloquial, as coined by black South Africans.

The visuals in this video essay 'sounds' kwaito's foundational signature, along with its influences/conversations with black family music – *mmino wa setšo*. Kwaito and *techno*, or Africa and its diaspora, elucidate the human-object-spirit form in *mmino wa setšo*, and how that collusion creates what we get to call music.

The screening events for *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* were planned as a window through which to observe the surfacing of elements that, amongst others, are what Musila (2022: 2), writing within the broader framework of African popular culture, highlights as "creativity, entrepreneurship, artists' networks, socio-political commentary, leisure, edutainment, social order, sociality, self-making, etc., with each of these features fanning out to yet more layers of priority concerns for different actors, contexts and platforms". Indeed, at each screening event to date, these different 'elements' and features have surfaced.

From this point in the chapter, I turn my attention to the insights drawn from the *making* of the essayistic video, *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, as well as the concomitant *screening events* at the sites in which the filming took place, namely Mamelodi, Mahikeng, and Meadowlands, in that order. While the following treat the sites and the insights drawn therefrom as distinct sections, the knowledge that emerged from each site will make 'visitations' into one another. At the same time, every now and then, insights drawn from other sites of filming, and the screenings of *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, will similarly make 'visitations' into the chapter, if they haven't done so already. In addition, the insights from *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, the essayistic video itself, will also 'visit' the sections to follow. And finally, but not of least importance, I will make reference to and mobilise the elements highlighted in Musila's intervention, as described in the previous paragraph.

MAMELODI: *Ke tla poka, bjalo ka Tsodio* – Ntate Mabena on 'indigenous mathematics' in cultural work, amongst other pleas

Mamelodi, the hosting home for Solomon Mahlangu Freedom Square, is famous for the Moretele Park Jazz Festival. The four-syllabled name Mamelodi is derived from Sepedi: *ma-* connoting the feminine, or mother; *me-lo-di* for whistle, or the musical. In the late 1940s, black Mamelodi residents rejected the apartheid government-imposed rondavels. The government built them anyway, and used them as housing for students of the then Pretoria Bantu Normal College. The rondavels remain contentious objects up to today – dilapidated and destroyed – complicating ideas around primitivism and progress. One of the proposed functions for these rondavels today has been as lodging for festival revellers. These rondavels 'accidentally' caught fire at one point …

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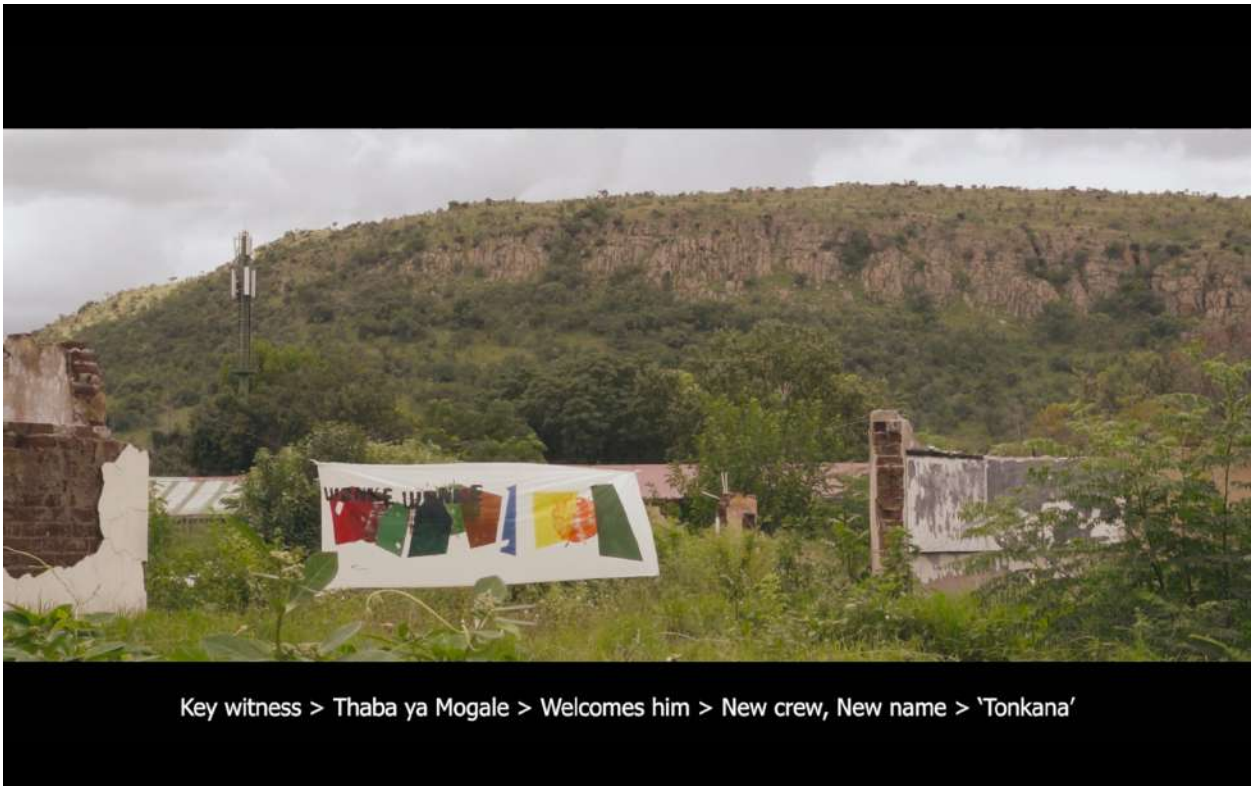

Figure 42: Still from *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* – frame filmed at the Rondavels in Mamelodi, with Thabeng ya Mogale in the background.

As mentioned previously, Ntate Ephraim Mabena is the founder of Mothong African Heritage, and he was the respondent to the *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* essayistic video at the screening event that took place on 29 May 2022 at Mothong African Heritage. Ntate Mabena is a "traditional doctor and former operative of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto weSizwe (MK)" (Ledwaba 2018). Mothong African Heritage is a site on the mountain in Mamelodi, in the Magaliesberg mountain range, named *thaba ya Mogale* (Mogale's mountain) by the people of Mamelodi. The site is an environment of biodiversity and indigenous knowledge systems. It is a complex site – the Mamelodi community call it not by the official name of Magaliesberg but by its historical

indigenous name, linked to a chief who ruled over the vast land connecting the mountain range: Mogale wa Mogale[104]. Lucas Ledwaba (2018) describes Mothong African Heritage as:

> a serene, peaceful space, in stark contrast to the chaos below in the township's streets, where taxis hoot endlessly, music blares from households and people mill about. The area around Mothong is also a haven for small creatures. On a good day, visitors can spot bushpigs, porcupines, rabbits, baboons, jackals and snakes.
>
> It features a large garden, where indigenous medicinal plants are being preserved, and a bird sanctuary. It also has a large open garden to cater for camping, cultural events and traditional ceremonies.

'Before' this serenity, however, the mountain was a dumping site. Ntate Mabena rehabilitated the mountain "along with his wife Mabel Mabena, also a traditional healer, and neighbour Mamorake Moila"[105] (Selaluke 2019). But the mountain was also more than a dumping site. Ntate Mabena states that it was "[a] haven for criminals" who "used to dump stolen cars, murder people and rape women on the mountain" (Selaluke 2019). And yet the story is deeper than dumping and criminality: "The former MK operative says this particular space also played a critical role in the political events and lives of Mamelodi" (Ledwaba 2018). Ntate Mabena "recalls that, in the 1970s and 1980s, it served as a hiding place for political activists on the run from the authorities" (ibid.), not dissimilar to Tsodio. According to Lucas Ledwaba (2019), Ntate Mabena "remembers many clandestine gatherings under the stars" on the mountain, "where activists received political education from senior comrades". Much like Pungwe nights of the Chimurenga war in Zimbabwe, "operatives used the space to hide coded messages and even arms for use in MK missions" (Ledwaba 2018). The 1970s and 1980s, as history would have it, would not be the only time that Thaba ya Mogale would host fugitives:

> After returning to BaPo lands Mogale was crowned Kgosi but had to remain in hiding in the Magaliesberg Mountains for some time until Mzilikazi was expelled from the Transvaal by the Voortrekkers in the 1830s. In 1837 Mogale settled along the Magalies River (called *nKgakhotse* before being named after Mogale).[106]

In a sinister twist of subversion, Thaba ya Mogale has even more stories to tell: "The spot later gained notoriety when the feared security police began using it as a place to interrogate and torture captured activists" (Ledwaba 2018).

Ntate Mabena was one of the activists tortured on the mountain (Mabena 2022). And today, he will haunt 'all of us' if the place turns into a dumping site again instead of a "school of excellence" (Mabena 2022). Haunt he must as, after all, he himself had been haunted: "[I]n the late 1990s, Mabena, who also lives in Section H [Mamelodi at the foot of the mountain], had dreams in which one of his elders ordered him to rescue this piece of land, clean it up and build a house of healing" (Ledwaba 2018). When Ntate Mabena asked the question, "Why me?", the ancestors answered:

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[104] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogale_Mogale

[105] The three are credited as founders of Mothong African Heritage Trust.

[106] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogale_Mogale

"[R]emember when the security branch took you from your home to torture you on the mountain? We were the ones to protect you" (Mabena 2022). *Sandla hamba – sandla buya*: a continuous loop of 'visitation' as a call and response.

From Mogale to Magaliesberg and back, or *Di sa kopaneng ke dithaba …*

Ntate Mabena, speaking at Mothong African Heritage, opened his response to *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* and its screening event with the words: "You have put this place, mo dithabeng tša Mogale, on the map". This type of mapmaking is central to Ntate Mabena's belief that "this film is bringing dignity to these mountains" (Mabena 2022). This remark is generous at the least, for it is Ntate Mabena, Mme Mabena and Mme Moila and the ancestors who can and should take the credit in mapmaking. They marked the land, the earth, and placed Mothong African Heritage on that map.

However, when read in one of the many other possible dimensions, Ntate Mabena implicates 'us all' in his lament: "We continue, even in the democratic dispensation, to neglect our natural environment and leave them as dumping sites" (Mabena 2022). Mothong African Heritage came to be because in 2001, "[i]nstructions from the ancestors … led a Mamelodi traditional healer … turn[ing] an illegal dumpsite into a heritage site" (Selaluke 2019).



Figure 43: Still from *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* – frame filmed at the corner of Sekhukhuni and Modjadji Streets in Meadowlands, Soweto.

According to Selaluke (2019), Ntate Mabena "decided to name the site Mothong because when people consult a traditional healer they say 'baya ko mothong' in Setswana". In this way, one of the manifold practices of *botho* in *Go ya ko mothong* is the communality in the response to "tapping

into the African knowledge archive and engaging with the ontological narratives of African people" (Nyoka 2020: xii).

Ntate Mabena related parts of a conversation he had with his son, Mongezi, ahead of the screening event: "You are going to watch a film," his son said. Ntate Mabena asked: "... ka nnete?" (for real?) (Mabena 2022). When Ntate Mabena finally watched *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, he said to Mongezi, "[Y]ou said I was going to watch a film", in reference to the "types of films we are used to …" (ibid.). Musila (2022: 14) cautions that we should interrogate the "extent to which indigenous artistic practices actually form the core ingredient in what, on the surface, appears borrowed". Speaking on *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* at the screening at Mothong African Heritage, Ntate Mabena emphatically echoes Musila: "It is un-African, listen to me – it is un-African to ignore such a beautiful place ya Badimo" because, in his view, the film "is mathematical – and it is an indigenous mathematics. It needs you … It means you must play with your mind" (Mabena 2022).

Further, to Ntate Mabena, both the screening event and the film are acknowledgements that "[w]hat I did on this mountain – I did justice", he said (Mabena 2022). In particular, with reference to the film, he remarked: "I am glad that when Tsodio a *tshaba* [flees], based on this film …", the first refuge was the mountain, and that the narrative "connects us … when we talk about indigenous knowledge" (ibid.). He used this narrative to ask: "Why do these places – *dithaba* (mountains), *dinoka* (rivers), forests and the oceans play such an important role?" (ibid.). Thinking with the narrative of the film, Ntate Mabena insists that for "Tsodio to find refuge on the mountain is a sign that we must take care of our natural environments" (ibid.).

It is perhaps important at this point to reflect on the narrative *option amongst others* to use a mountain – including Thaba ya Mogale, and Letlamoreng Dam – as locations and narrative sites for *Sesasedi sa Tsodio.*

In Sepedi, 'Di sa kopaneng ke dithaba' literally translates to: 'those that never meet are mountains'. It is a phrase that is used in multiple contexts. When people depart, the phrase is used to emphasise that they will encounter each other again eventually. When complete, the suffix 'le tšona di kopana ka meriti' literally translates to 'they meet through their shadows'. If they don't physically re-encounter, their spirits/auras might. Read, felt, experienced and known in reality, Thaba ya Mogale in Mamelodi connects Thaba ya Mogale in North West province to Gauteng province, according to indigenous knowledge system topography. Tuck et al. (2022:11), in reference to Vanessa Watts (2013), submit that:

> The land, and waters, and all of the more-than-human beings who make their homes in these places are complex constellations of life, made up of relations much older than us human beings.

Thaba ya Mogale is also complex in how it is used by many members of the community: healers, farmers, worshippers, initiates, hunters and more. No single creature is 'alone' at that mountain. Extending on his son's official welcoming and housekeeping remarks, Ntate Mabena deepened how we understand the complex ecosystem and biodiversity of the mountain:

> Even though I asked Mongezi to go welcome *sechaba* [the community/guests] … already there are people who already welcomed you … These trees are part of ourselves. When you climb up on this mountain, the first people that are to welcome you are the insects that are down here, are the trees that you are seeing here. When I walk here every morning, I hear *sehlare sa mabilo se re – dumela* Ntate Mabena! *Ke kwa sehlare sa mahlatswa se re*, Rre Mabena, dumela![107] (Mabena 2022)

Ntate Mabena's deep-rooted articulation of his relationship with vegetation on the mountain is in fact more than funny, but rooted in his commitment to a *reciprocal* ethic. And "[t]hats why I'm about to write a book called, *When the Mountain Calls on Me*", Ntate Mabena announces (Mabena 2022). Chelsea Ntuli (2020) writes: "As a traditional healer, Mabena said his role was not just about fetching plants and not giving back." His visits to the mountain are therefore not empty-handed or merely extractive – Mabena visits the mountain *a swere serumula*. Deborah James (1994: 89) writes about the visiting ethic in *kiba*[108] – when dance groups visit each other:

> The men's song *ke rena baeng* (we are visitors) with its women's version *basadi ba baeng* (visiting women) stresses that the host dancers – equivalent to a football 'host team' – should not feel threatened by the arrival of the visiting dance-group since the latter have come not in spirit of rivalry but of co-operation, not to set themselves apart but to be included in a broader unity.

The ethic here is what Tuck et al. (2020: 1) propose: "Being a visitor is showing care and being responsible for our impact and presence." Indeed, the next line of *ke rena baeng* that declares: *re kgopela go raloka le lena* (we are only here to play along with you), affirms that the 'presence' invites a convivial 'impact'. The invitation in *re kgopela go raloka le lena* (we are only here to play along with you) – an invitation to 'play' – foregrounds Musila's "principles of creativity, play, pleasure, learning and sociality" of African popular culture (Musila 2022: 2).

Ntate Ngaka Mabena calls on indigenous Christian churches, the government, the education sector to join and invite indigenous knowledge-system sites and bearers to rethink how we live with the natural environment we are all a part of. He is "very proud" of the crew and everyone who visited Mothong African Heritage ko Thabeng ya Mogale on 22 May 2022 (Mabena 2022).

[107] Indigenous trees greeting Ntate Mabena on the mountain.

[108] The song-dance music genre is performed largely by the people of South Africa known as 'Bapedi', in Limpopo, parts of Mpumalanga, and Gauteng provinces.

MAHIKENG: The place where 'visiting' evokes *Moeng o naka di maripa, Moeng etla ka gešo re je ka wena*, and *Ke rena baeng, re kgopela go raloka le lena*

Credo Mutwa found refuge in Mahikeng as a fugitive from Soweto. In Soweto, he had created what is now known as the Credo Mutwa Cultural Village. The site Mutwa created in Soweto is described as "more than a museum, it is an outdoor experience steeped in tradition and African folklore" that hosts "sculptures that he constructed from 1974 to 1986", that "juxtaposes African folklore and art with an increasingly Westernised society" (SAHA 2011/2019). Mutwa was simultaneously a fugitive and a gift to Mahikeng. As a fugitive – or a refugee, given that Mahikeng was part of Bophuthatswana, another country in the 1970s – in Mahikeng, his gift, a *Moeng etla ka gešo re je ka wena*-type of gift – was another 'cultural village' (see Chapter Two for an extended discussion on 'cultural villages').

On Letlamoreng Dam and Credo Mutwa, Motlapele 'Mo' Molemi' relates: "Re a mo tshaba"[109] *ko* Mafiking. The myth is that he kept and maintained a water snake at Letlamoreng as part of his study of astronomy, history, healing, and freedom through art. His sculptures form part of the ruins of what used to be a villa.

Established in 1852, Mahikeng is one of the sites where Credo Mutwa lived after he was forcefully removed from Diepkloof (Soweto). His home was burnt down on 16 June 1976, when he fled to Mahikeng. According to Mo Molemi, Mafikeng people revere Mutwa. Mahikeng is also known for its annual 'Sixties Party' – a crucial gathering in the development of kwaito. Yet, it is at the Letlamoreng Dam that Mutwa's diviner 'university' staged performances and sacred rituals. This dam was the habitat for Mutwa's legendary water snake. Snakes? On dams and rivers? It is here that we bring in Isabel Hofmeyr (1993: 71), and her study of former Transvaal societies:

> Rivers in general are seen to hold mythological power, and in the Transvaal as elsewhere they inspire any number of *dinonwane*. In addition, the Mogalakwena featured in the annual initiation ceremonies in which boys were said to cross over (*go wela*) from boyhood to adulthood. In going to and from the circumcision lodge, it was the Mogalakwena that the young boys crossed.

Mahikeng is perhaps also well-known for Bophuthatswana Radio and TV, platforms that exposed South Africans to international cultural production during apartheid, when the then state-controlled South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) offered limited programming. In 2018, at 97 years old, two years before his passing, Credo Mutwa returned to Letlamoreng Dam, what he considered one of the most important ancestral sites. Kgosilentswe's closing remarks are apt in the reiteration of the common plea in this post-colonial, post-independence and contestable'post-apartheid' republic: "The traditional rituals have been done, now it's over to the North West government to outline detailed development plans to revive the Lotlamoreng Dam and Cultural Village and set deadlines for its delivery." (Kgosilentswe: 2018)

In September 2021, six months after the filming of *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* at Lotlamoreng Dam, *Newzroom Afrika* reported that development is taking place at the dam, "growing the economic

[109] "Mutwa is a myth."

development and heritage sustainability in the North West Capital, Mahikeng", citing Mutwa's intervention as important to such a 'development'.



Figure 44: The work is a meditation on Sol Plaatje leaving South Africa aboard the *SS Norseman*, writing *The Native Life in South Africa* (1916). Photograph by Bongani Mndaweni on location for *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* (2021) at Letlamoreng Dam, Mahikeng, South Africa.

***Letlamoreng*[110]. Le tla moreng Tsodiyo?**

Tsodiyo *ke moeng o naka di maripa*[111], as referred to in the following text:

> I'm going away to Mafikeng
> I'm going away to Kimberley
> I'm going away to Mafikeng
> I'm gonna leave you now.
> Now the train is ready, ready for us to go-oh.
> Time to be ready
> I'm gonna leave you now

[110] The phrase literally translates to "What can you say about [place subject], alluding to the ungraspability of a subject. It is a play on 'Letlamoreng' Dam and is one of the lines in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*.
[111] As related in the previous section, Mutwa, like Tsodio fled, again.

The lyrics above come from a song that is part of choral repertoire. I learnt these lyrics from high-school learners as part of *New Freedom Songs*[112] in 2012, a project of Keleketla! After School Programme[113], in collaboration with Freedom College Choir, a school choir of Freedom Community College[114]. Mafikeng and Kimberley are key topographical markers in the biography of Sol Plaatje. The banner captured in the image (Figure 43) inscribed Hip Hop Pantsula's lyrics, in which he more than acknowledges Sol Plaatje, but further credits Plaatje for the gift of his 'visitation' to Mahikeng, to a point that *motswako*, a subgenre of *hip-hop* and kwaito*,* created by Hip Hop Pantsula (industry name HHP) and his peers, now forms part of Plaatje's legacy. According to HHP, Plaatje offered both a '*ke moeng o naka di maripa*' and a '*moeng etla ka gešo re je ka wena*'-type of gift to Mahikeng. In his chapter titled 'Land and Belonging: On the Tomb *ya ga* Solomon Plaatje', Jacob Dlamini (2016) reinscribes – being the stimulus for my banner inscription – and translates HHP's lyrics:

> *On the tomb ya ga Solomon Plaatje*
> *From the womb o tswe o tshwere botaki*
> *In the rooms though you find out go tswile kgotla re apere dibaki*
> *This is not a record label re party*
> *Now we built this city with two ma-handsa*
> *Botsa fela we got the answers*
> *If not, you can catch me on the BBC X*
> *Soon I'll be signing those BEE cheques*
>
> On the tomb of Solomon Plaatje
> Emerged from the womb with talent
> In the rooms a delegation in suits awaits
> This is not a record label but a [political] party
> We built this city with our [bare] hands
> Just ask we have the answers
> Otherwise, catch me on the BBC
> Soon I'll be signing those BEE cheques

***

At the screening event in Mahikeng on 21 May 2022, at Bra T's place – a tavern – Sello Tatai, the respondent of the essayistic video, enters his reading of *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* by first recalling the themes of *Mapantsula*, a film directed by Oliver Schmitz, and written by Schmitz and Thomas Mogotlane, made in 1987. He speaks about symbols of resistance to apartheid. He reads how Panic,

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[112] *New Freedom Songs* was a musical and history creative research project as part of the Keleketla! After School Programme. It was an exchange and mentorship between The Freedom College choir, with an ensemble of young professionals: Tito Zwane (bass guitar), Simphiwe Tshabalala (drums), Zweli Mthembu (rhythm guitar), and Zithobile Sibiya (keyboard), conducted by violinist Teboho Semela. You can listen to the excerpt of the above lyrics here: https://soundcloud.com/keleketla-library/sounds-from-our-after-school.

[113] Keleketla! After School Programme, as defined by Keleketla! Library, was "a youth learning space that relates history and contemporary issues to the lived experience. The programme aims to engage youth in critical analysis of contemporary social, political and economic issues of the city, the country and the continent".

[114] Freedom Community College is a private low-income school located in the inner city of Johannesburg.

the main protagonist, throws a *pakstena* (face brick) at the window of the house in which his girlfriend was employed as a domestic worker – what Tatai (2022) calls "black people's selling of our labour to white people".

This action by Panic, according to Tatai, is a statement to express how 'gatvol' he is at apartheid, which evoked a 'hallelujah!' from one of the audience members at the screening event. Although the script relates to Panic being angry (Tatai mentions that Panic was abusive) to his girlfriend, the defiance of apartheid is what Tatai calls a 'hidden' message.

Tatai reads the character of Panic 'flipping the script' into what he calls "com-tsotsi" – a comrade who is also a criminal, but a criminal that is at once a legacy of apartheid and simultaneously its nemesis. This is the 'parallel narrative' that Tatai finds is evoked by the character of Tsodio. I read Tatai's insights as interesting, when we think about James's writing about the lyrics of Paulina Mphoka that disregard Tsodio's crime, and instead aligns his fugitivity with that of women beer brewers. It is important to expand on Mphoka's allyship with Tsodio, as James (1999: 90) recounts:

> This fairly neutral reference to the police is made more pointed by its juxtaposition with the last section, of two lines. Deriving from earlier female performance, this refers to the inclusion of women in the late 1950s within the legislation requiring Africans to carry passes. It records a time when, moving to South Africa's urban areas, women became subject to the same indiscriminate raids and arrests by police which men had been experiencing for decades. Paulina's own more recent experience of harassment, this time at the hands of the Lebowa rather than the South African police, is recorded in the first section, of three lines. Like a number of other *kiba* singers before they became migrants, she had supplemented her family's income by brewing illegal liquor, and had been arrested for doing so.

Mphoka and her women peers, together with Tsodio, become Tatai's 'com-tsotsis'. Yet Tatai does not read the makings of 'com-tsotsis' in historical and contemporary isolation. In the opening sequences of *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, Tatai is drawn to the depiction of a 'typical township', what he called "dungeons". Recognising the 'strength' of the "well-shot, well-narrated, beautiful pictures", he nonetheless zooms in on symbols that, to him, show the viewer that very little has changed for black communities despite, as he dialogically asks, "How many years now … into democracy?" – evoking multiple responses from audience members, including "What haven't reached democracy yet …" – given the high levels of poverty and unemployment bedevilling South Africa.

Tatai was critical of the representation of *isipantsula* in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*. In general, Tatai (2022) expressed his concerns through the following set of questions and comments:

> Why is a culture that is created by young black people, out of poverty, depicted with connotations of thuggerism? Why is popular culture by young back people, kwaito especially, associated with violence? Make a distinction between *motswako* and 'Soweto' kwaito, and how the latter's lyrics do indeed usually reflect violence.

I responded to share that *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* speaks about criminalisation of black life in general by zooming into the notion of the criminalisation of 'the hustle' – which in the case of *Sesasedi sa*

Tsodio, is of the women brewing beer. There is also the problem of *isipantsula* as a practice, that is a gift, that never receives fair representation and compensation. *Mapantsula* and their practice are exploited in popular culture. As such, *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* is also a homage to productions like *Tjovitjo* (2017), that gave *amapantsula* a dignified platform as narrators. In other words, in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, *mapantsula* are telling a story that is partly about crime, but they are not criminals themselves. After all, in the story, the 'criminal' is Tsodio. Further, I expand on the notion for the 'reverse' scene of *mapantsula* as a return to the past, to 'cancel' the negative representations, including that of their criminalisation.

Mpho ya Badimo, the moderator of the screening event, also refers to the opening scene. In this scene she sees the Converse All Stars dressed by the Intellectuals Pantsula members. She anticipates and speculates that the language to be used in the film would not be what she terms 'hi, how are doing'-type language (with an American accent). Her conviction is also based on the combination of Converse All Stars with *mahlafu* (feet rattles). She reads the combination of Converse All Stars and *mahlafu* as a balance of two stories that are blending. She also reads this combination as being a way to disrupt perceptions, in this case of how Converse All Stars can be associated with criminality, but that in combination with *mahlafu*, such a perception is challenged.

On the blending of the new and old stories, Mpho ya Badimo considers pioneers of *motswako* as part of a generation that has lost its language during the 'old' South Africa. *Motswako* as a subgenre, somewhere between kwaito and *hip-hop*, started in the late 1990s. Ya Badimo reads the 'reverse' of the *mapantsula* scene, in which the sonic narrative is a verse by *motswako* rapper, Motlapele 'Mo' Molemi Morule, as a 'return' to a past. (It is interesting that a verse by 'Mo' Molemi starts with the lines: "*Kgale ke sa bale*" (it's been long without reading), "*Kgale ke sa kwale"* (it's been long without reading) (Molemi 2022).

However, this is not about finding everything that was lost, or even desiring to reclaim everything from this past. As a result, the *motswako* generation understood that Setswana will be in conversation with English and other languages, while retaining and building its own identity. What is a generative coincidence in this reading, is that the *pantsula* characters in the scene, named Maftown Pantsula Nation, are based in Mahikeng.

This reading is an interesting one, as it links with what Pooe and Shole (2020), in their reflections on Plaatje, appraise as Setswana's flexibility. Indeed, that *motswako* is a 'mix' of *hip-hop* and kwaito (the latter signified by HPP – short for Hip Hop Pantsula, a name that speaks to the syncretism of *motswako* – who features on two songs in Spikiri's 2018 album), amongst other genres and practices, indicates how Setswana "can accommodate new language cultural expressions" (Pooe & Shole 2020: 157). Pooe and Shole (2020: 156) further write about the "repatriation of literary work" as the work of "postcolonialist translation"; work that:

> serves the role of activist, liberator, enabler, revolutionary and instrument of disruption in cases where undesirable orders or forces are at play, such as colonisation. In this role it deliberately seeks to reclaim, recapture or repatriate that which was lost, dispossessed, or forcefully removed from its native base; and, more specifically, to address the challenges of writing in African languages in a multilingual environment where European languages unfairly predominate.

Motswako can also be read as a disruptor, if we consider the hegemony of *hip-hop* and kwaito. What I mean is that kwaito, with all its positives, is also predominantly Johannesburg-based, and in most cases is Nguni-centric. *Hip-hop*, on the other end, outside of the force of North America, is also predominantly English-centric (this discussion extends the discussion on *ga se mo States mo*). In the late 1990s, there were few South Africans who wrote lyrics in vernacular. *Motswako* is one of the first subgenres to do the work of "postcolonialist translation" (Pooe & Shole 2020: 156). Mo Molemi, a key proponent of *motswako*, who features in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, recounts growing up in the "enabling environment" of Bophuthatswana, "bubbling with opportunity and excellence" (2022). He says:

> We always knew we wanted to rap. It's just only later in time that rap became something that we could define in Setswana and take our culture forward. Hence the emergence of *motswako* and pioneering it. From then, you know, we have reached out to the world, all four corners, in our own special ways. And that's what brings me to this chair today, because it's through that very same journey that one day I was fortunate to receive a call from *warra* Rangoato Hlasane [who] slowly and patiently tried to explain to me the concept of what he was working on for his doctoral thesis as part of the work. I was so intrigued to really find out *gore ka na nna ke tsena jang ko* [how do I fit into the] story *sa ga* [of] Tsodio.

Mpho ya Badimo reads this 'going back to go forward' as a case of using what one has, "after you go back, to get your story, you go forward, with pride. You can see the movement – of going forward – that it's a movement with confidence" (Badimo 2022). This confidence, Badimo reflects, also relates to the 'original' Tsodio by Johannes Mokgwadi, in conversation with Mathosa's revision. Until she was invited to be the moderator, she had not known the 'original' version by Mokgwadi. Like many of us of the 'kwaito generation', she only knew Mathosa's version.

On a comical note, an audience member, who had clearly had a few – we were at a tavern after all! – wanted to express his appreciation of the "situation". When the moderator mentions the beauty of the day, all full moon and beautiful music, the speaker comments that there is no such thing as 'half moon' in real life. Some deeply philosophical utterance! Expressing his appreciation for the events that happened that day, and that which would take place the following day, and that had occurred the day before – that we knew nothing about – he said: "I was there before, I was here now. You hear what I'm saying? 'I was': it speaks of yesterday but also refers to the present. It's a continuous tense. And I was here tomorrow."

This seemingly comical comment actually relates to N. Chabani Manganyi's rebuttal of F.J. Engelbrecht, who, according to Manganyi, is of the view "that Africans live in the past and in the present, not in terms of an anticipated future" (2019: 100). The speaker's utterances also link with Peterson (2016: 26), as he reflects on Plaatje's widely cited opening sentence to *Native Life in South Africa*, that "the incredible change between yesterday and today can only be thought through on a mythical level".

Another audience member read the film as an attempt to engage the 'displacement' of *mapantsula*'s practice. Expanding on the idea of displacement, the speaker cited how Credo

Mutwa brought spiritual practices to Mahikeng, linking that to a narrative in a novel he had read, in which a man had a recurring dream about his ancestors' cows that were taken, and the need for those cows to return. Peterson (2016: 29), in a similar vein, writes about how Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* links livestock with loss of land:

> The dispossession of land is exaggerated by the further loss of livestock since 'these herds of cattle have been the native's only capital, or the native's "bank", as they truthfully call them. Cattle 'were the pliable symbolic vehicle through which men formed and reformed their world of social and spiritual relations'. Thus while Plaatje's primary focus is on what it means to be human, he complicates the question by considering the cruelty to animals. It is clear that 'compassion for animals was a significant move toward an objective compassion for the suffering of other humans'.

As I discussed in the introduction to this section, the relationship between humans and animals is deep in African ontology. This 'bank' that is the cow, exists not only in relation to financial transactions but also spiritual ones, as Mo Molemi states in his song 'Motzamai' (2016): "Motho o hlokomela kgomo/Morago ya mo fihla" (a human nurtures a cow, that it in turn can take care of a human), in reference to the historical practice of using cow skin instead of a coffin in the burial of Africans. Of course, humans in general 'care' for cattle or livestock, that in turn 'feed' the humans. But here we are speaking of:

> the question of haunting […] what seems to be a recurring motif in black art that I don't know what to do with […] the mourning of cattle […] What is it that within even the modern, young artists […] Ayanda Mabulu, a book on *Yakhal'Inkomo* [Percy Mabandu] … a couple dozen poems, songs […] ? What is the loss in a sense that perpetuates this haunting up until today? (Peterson at the NEST colloquium, 2016)

Another audience member reflected on how the narrator's language is a typical "*kasi* language". This '*kasi* language' is, in fact, SePitori, a 'language' in the region of Pretoria that is a mix of Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, with modifications of English – i.e. Sotho-fied English. This choice of SePitori (for there is also Selista, widely spoken in Meadowlands, and Setswana of Mahikeng) was informed by two key points. The first is that our narrative suggests that Tsodio escapes Limpopo and lands in Mamelodi. The second is that the narrator, Masello Motana, who was also the co-writer of the narrative, is fluent in SePitori. In fact, Motana was one of the actors in what is regarded as the first mainstream film to use SePitori as the predominant language, *Matwetwe* (2017).

The speaker was also intrigued by the style of the narration, and wondered why, in terms of tonalities, it seemed "exaggerated", yet fits the trajectory of the story of Tsodio. I did not have the opportunity to ask for them to elaborate on what they meant by 'exaggeration', however, people had commented that the narrator sounded like a grandmother – a reading that is close to the intentions of the essayistic film for two reasons. The first being the fact that Tsodio is received by 'grandmothers' in Mamelodi, Mahikeng, and Meadowlands, along his trajectory in the narrative. The second reason is that grandmothers had always been the custodians of *dinonwane* during my childhood, and from a time earlier than that (Hofymer 1996).

One audience member further reflected on the type of subtitling that has been used in the film, as not being a typical translation, since it employs colloquialisms, which they found to be a provocation. The speaker wondered whether there was "a bit of Khoi words" in the subtitling? Whatever they may have found provocative in that, the speaker was invited to arrive at their own interpretation. Much of the speaker's reflections reflect what Isabel Hofmyer (1993) writes about the politics of the colonial introduction of literacies in the then Northern Transvaal, between the 1920s and 1950s in South Africa. Hofmyer (1996: 61) writes about how the chiefdom "attempted to bend the language of official correspondence and bureaucracy to meet their particular needs".



Figure 45: Still from *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* – frame filmed at the Rondavels in Mamelodi, with Thabeng ya Mogale in the background.

One of the ways the chiefdom achieved this was their attempt to "'oralise' the written word and make it bear the 'imprint' of the human voices and relationships that necessitated its creation in the first place' (ibid.: 61). The speaker wondering if it is 'Khoi' in the subtitles, might come close to what Hofmeyr observes as a strategy to "embed the spoken word on the printed page", which the chiefdom employed to "reappropriate the written word in terms of phonetic spelling", and "aural appropriation" (1996: 63-64). Yet, what the speaker is referring to is simply our (the makers of the film) strategic decision to use certain characters, such as @, >, ///, and many others. These characters do not necessarily come close to Khoi orthography, although I can discern why they might have thought the subtitles included some Khoi words. The question is, why did we use such characters? Before unpacking that, we could first look to Quayson (1997: 16) for some insights:

> Yet the notion of an interrelationship between orality and literature renders the term intertextual fragile as a descriptive of such a relationship because of the privileging of the physical text that the term implies. This is because the semiotics of a culture does not

> always require prior textualization. This is a particularly relevant premise in the general context of an indigenous resource-base which may be said to be constituted not just by representative oral and written texts, but also motifs, symbols, ritual gestures and even unarticulated assumptions.

The use of characters – some mathematical, some scientific – in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, is an attempt at evoking "unarticulated assumptions" about reading, first, as a literacy of sorts, that comes before writing, proper. It is intertextual in the wildest sense: narration and voice-overs over an original score/soundtrack and singing; recitals and song; banners that are image and text; dress and costumes that conflate different symbols (Converse All Starts with *mahlafu*); sites from different geographies, both visible and implied/evoked – the city, the peri-urban and semi-rural, the mountain and the dam; text on vehicles …

The same speaker was curious about why Tsodio is never visible, but rather an unseen face that the audience have to 'paint' for themselves – that "Tsodio could be you, could be the next person". This reading was apt. While the essayistic video is a work of cinematic art, it was indeed an essential intention that the work should feel like a radio drama, or 'story', as we grew up calling the medium. As mentioned earlier, the song, 'Tsodio', gained mainstream popularity as a theme song for a radio drama on the then Radio Lebowa, now Thobela FM. On the apt reading that "Tsodio could be you, could be the next person", again, as I mentioned elsewhere, Lebo Mathosa's grandmother used to insist that "we are all Tsodio" – in fact, this is the third factor in how the narrator's speech acts evoke a grandmother.

The speaker further commented about how Tsodio's movement means that he adopts cultures. Indeed, Tsodio adapts the languages and the cultural practices at each of the sites he passes through. The backdrop is, after all, the trajectory of the song from *mmino wa setšo* to all the genres that I have already mentioned. Hofmeyr (1993: 77) writes about how the colonialist erected barbed wire on the landscape of South Africa. These fences were erected to "[embody] the reality of the boundary and supposedly writes it permanently into the earth", while "[a]gainst the 'literacy' of the fence, the residents of the chiefdom mobilised the resources of an oral performance culture". Janet Remmington (2016: 55) comments on Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*, and the mobility of its author, and subsequently of the book itself (and I quote at length for the incredible segue with the narrative of Tsodio):

> South African history is replete with examples of black mobility being forced, restricted, limited, policed, questioned. Manifestations included systemic displacement of nomadic borders and hunter gatherers; the attributions of 'vagrancy' to those who wished to escape indentured labour or move about at will; border 'buffers' between white and black; 'passes' for people of colour; designation of reserves, which in expanded and modified form, became the basis for euphemistically termed 'homelands' during high apartheid; regulation of migrant labour and 'influx control' into cities; forced removals; one-way exit visas; anti-black immigration policies. The politicised nature of movement is of course not unique to South Africa, but the racialised, pronounced and enduring nature of mobility controls and pressures in all their variety present themselves as significant factors in the country's past, present and future.

Although, in the end, the fences did suppress the ‘natives’, Tsodio’s adoption of cultures in his border crossings is a defiance of the “barbed wire that caged the spoken word” (Hofmeyr 2020: 77). In the same spirit, SePitori is a language that simply ignored the barbed wire that Hofmyer (1993: 72) calls “writing on the land”, in which “settlers almost invariably saw the countryside as a blank page on which they could write their authority”. SePitori is one of the symbolic resistances to ethnic boundaries that were enforced by colonialism, defying such ‘blank pages’; Tsodio-like.

NDOFAYA: What happened to Tsodio *bathong*: Did he die? *Dipoko di motlogetse*? Or does he remain a Ten times Guluva?



Figure 46: Sometimes o *blue-ish* – lights, banners and *situated lens performances* with 'people as libraries', at White House Ndofaya, Meadowlands, Soweto on 19 March 2022. Photograph made by Bhekisisa Pilot Biller.

Zandi Nkosi asked a deep question at the screening event in Mamelodi, at Mothong African Heritage: "What happened to Tsodio – did he die? Dipoko di motlogetse? Re le teng re le dingaka, re kgona ho thusa Tsodio?" She urged the scriptwriters to return to the story, with the input of *dingaka*. At the same gathering, Blouberg 178, picked from *mmino wa setšo* repertoire, saw fit to acknowledge the presence of *dingaka*, the song-text is a soundtrack to Tsodio's biography:

> Ngwana wa lena o tshwenya ngwana rena weee
> Eeee phasa diolele[115] (Blouberg 187, 22 May 2022)

Multidimensional narratives call for extra-dimensional symbolic representations: the essayistic method simultaneously masks and highlights the key points in the story: sometimes the answer is hidden in plain sight (and ear). The montage of Intellectuals Pantsula, in fact, reveres *amapantsula* rather than casting them as criminals. They point to the universe, past the drone, while the voice-over speculates that Tsodio is metamorphosing into a frog – a creature of water. In between all

[115] Literal: your child is bothering/harassing our child – Please consult the bones.

this, from filming to screening, White House Ndofaya had transformed a former dumping site and scene of subjection, to water (Hartman 1997) … in Meadowlands. In the text "*Dangerous Combinations and Skeem Sam Foundations: The Most Beautiful Black City in Africa?"* that I mention earlier in the discussion of Mafikizolo's 'Kwela', (2020: 194-196), I write about Meadowlands, in what is an apt entry to this section, quoted here at length:

> Meadowlands, a township in Soweto, was one of those new homes where people were forcibly moved to at the height of apartheid. This new home was adopted (and adapted, as a form of defiance) in song – a passive resistance. Many of the first-generation residents of 'Ndofaya', as Meadowlands is widely referred to ever so lovingly, were reported to have been descendant from Sophiatown. The African Jazz Pioneers, with Dolly Rathebe, offer an atmospheric rendition of the song 'Meadowlands' (written in 1956 by Strike Vilakazi and originally sung by Nancy Jacobs And Her Sisters), reflecting on the reluctant move:
>
> Otla utlwa makgowa are / Are yeng ko Meadowlands / Meadowland Meadowlands / Meadowlands sithandwa sam.
> Otlwa utlwa botsotsi bare / Ons dak nie, ons phola hier / Phola hier, phola hier / Phola hier, sithandwa sam.
>
> An evocative beauty in the hideous story that serves as a tense link between Sophiatown and Meadowlands, 'Meadowlands' is as much a protest song as it is a ballad, an ode to a new lover. While Meadowlands is divided by ethnic difference, its residents relive the Sophiatown era of mixed existence. Ushering new energy into a township that would give birth to one of the country's foremost music producers, Mandla 'Spikiri' Mofokeng. Meadowlands is well marked in one of his songs; 'Ndofaya' (2001) is named after the pet name for Meadowlands. Ndofaya's post-apartheid spatial planning in its different zones according to Spikiri goes like this:
>
> Zone 1 asi funi amawaza [we don't take bullshit].
> Zone 2 sithi two for joy.
> Zone 3 s'push'i e passion [we are passionate].
> Zone 4 ziwa more [it rocks].
> Zone 5 fak isiqiniso [we tell the truth].
> Zone 6 abagata e mova [watch out for the police].
> Zone 7 up!
> Zone 8 zithi ola! Heita [we greet]!
> Zone 9 ga Ratau / go jewa mogodu moo [Ratau's, where we indulge in tripe]
> Zone 10 ten times guluva [we are street wise]
>
> Contrary to the apartheid-state design of the township, Meadowlands was 'where something is always happening 24/7 … where people get along'.

Meadowlands, as we know by now, is popularly known as Ndofaya. It is a township forming part of Soweto (Soweto is an acronym for the 'South Western Townships' of Johannesburg). Of course, Spikiri knows that it's not fully true that people "get along" in Meadowlands. Rather, in the tradition of choices among many other options when it comes to representation in the kwaito music

video (as discussed in Chapter Two), calculated ambiguities, contradictions and ambivalences are generative, and keep it moving in kwaito. So, where people get along, they also show gun signs in Zone 7 Ndofaya. It is possible both to greet in Zone 8, while ordering the police to recede in Zone 6. It is to recast being *a ten times guluva* of Zone 10, as a sign of the *passion* of Zone 3, or even Zone 1's *take-no-prisoners* attitude with the fire dancing in the *straight-talk ya* Zone 5. It's all part of Mogodu Mondays *ka/si/con/o/mics* – hence the filming of Spikiri took place at White House Ndofaya, founded by a Tsodio-like *ten times guluva*-cum-Kasi Hero.

And hence why the launch screening event tour of *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* touched down in Zone 5, White House Ndofaya – one example of the *kasi*'s re-engeering of the shebeen into 'lifestyle centres' popping up from "eSoweto to eGugulethu" (read Ma-E 'Tse Blind'). *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* touched down in this part of Soweto, where Alaska's Lesley 'LesMaada' More had one of his apprenticeships and helped shape the community space, while forming a kwaito outfit after he served time, and where he was allied under Kasi Hero. Very much like Thabeng ya Mogale in Mamelodi, a large part of the site for White House Ndofaya used to be a danger zone a few blocks from Ndofaya Mall, and a large sports ground and veld, while also sandwiched between two churches. In large part, this was an informal dumping site that was overgrown, and as such, rapes and muggings used to take place here (the muggings largely because of the proximity to a mall, the rapes always shocking, every time, even as a thought).

White House Ndofaya's first and main yard lies directly opposite this former hell of a dead space in *kasi*, so Kasi Hero asked his family if he could turn the yard into a kickstarter to transform the dead zone opposite their home. Now White House Ndofaya has a beautiful poolside-cum-carwash-cum-kitchen on a site that used to inflict terror on people. The poolside hosts not only events but also offers free swimming for young people under 18 years, with a trained instructor! *Ko kasi*. Spikiri knows the many sides of Ndofaya, so he wrote them into being through the song 'Ndofaya'. And 'Ndofaya' also features some of the dopest and most diverse members of the kwaito family tree: Thandiswa, Kamazu, Stoan, and Kabelo …

This is significant for reading Meadowlands as a township that was divided into ethnic clusters by the apartheid government. The meeting of Sekhukhuni (Mopedi) and Modjadji (Molobedu), read within that apartheid logic, locates 'Limpopo' in one section of Meadowlands. However, this meeting represents two of many Northern Sotho/Bapedi polities, here 'getting along' in Gauteng.

The *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* screening-event tour then, in and of itself, is a mirror to stories of families in motion: each return to the geography, and sometimes the very site of filming, for collective enjoyment and conversation of this film, is a multi-layered encounter; an opportunity for the essayistic video to almost rewrite itself while propelling forward. This was one of the key editorial decisions we made to present the final film not as a revision but also as a precursor for selections from the screening events.

The *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* screening-event tour next touched down at Bra T's Place, a tavern in Mahikeng. Another *Tsodio-esque* kasi entrepreneur, Bra T told us that his other name is Tonkana – which is the shapeshifting name for Tsodio in Mamelodi in *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*, drawing from Vusi Mahlasela's character in his song named 'Tonkana'. Bra T is an electrical engineer who installs powerful energy lines over mountains and small and big waters, which is why he could

imagine what he saw for the scene of the banner – with the boat Sol Plaatje took to London, where Plaatje wrote *Native Life in South Africa* – hovering over Lotlamoreng Dam. That *he* could not do that, let alone imagine it – imagine that! It reminds me of how blown away Kasi Hero was by the view from underneath a *gusheshe* … In this instance, so was Bra T, saying that it's his second-favourite scene, this *situated lens-based performance*. As for Mo Molemi, he is a Tsodio. He says: "I have killed my uncle. I am on the run. I redefine any space that I pass by" (Morule 2022). Molemi is a rapper, a cultural worker, and a farmer.



Figure 47: Still from the music video for 'Tana La' (2022), by Spikiri, Eugene Knox, and 2.5 ft. Kwesta, Reece Madlisa, Zuma and Bingobash.

These receptions of Tsodio – both the character and the film – are fascinating to me. What I find fascinating is how people readily see themselves in the film, or in Tsodio. On the Instagram post for the promotion of the screening events, Thato Magano (2022) writes, "@mmatseleng brilliant. Ke rona bo tsodiyo, untethered and expansive. *Re nyaka go bona bo tsodiyo ba bangwe*. I so very much look forward to seeing it". This - Magano's relational positionality - is what in Sepedi would literally translate to 'zebras recognising kin'[116] through their stripes, and what Spikiri in 'Skeem Sam' (2011), articulates as "imoto ye fanayo/iyahootelana" [literal: identical cars hoot at each other in greeting].

[116] The phrase "imoto ye fanayo/iyahootelana" is of course written *historio-graphically* in the music video (Figure 47).

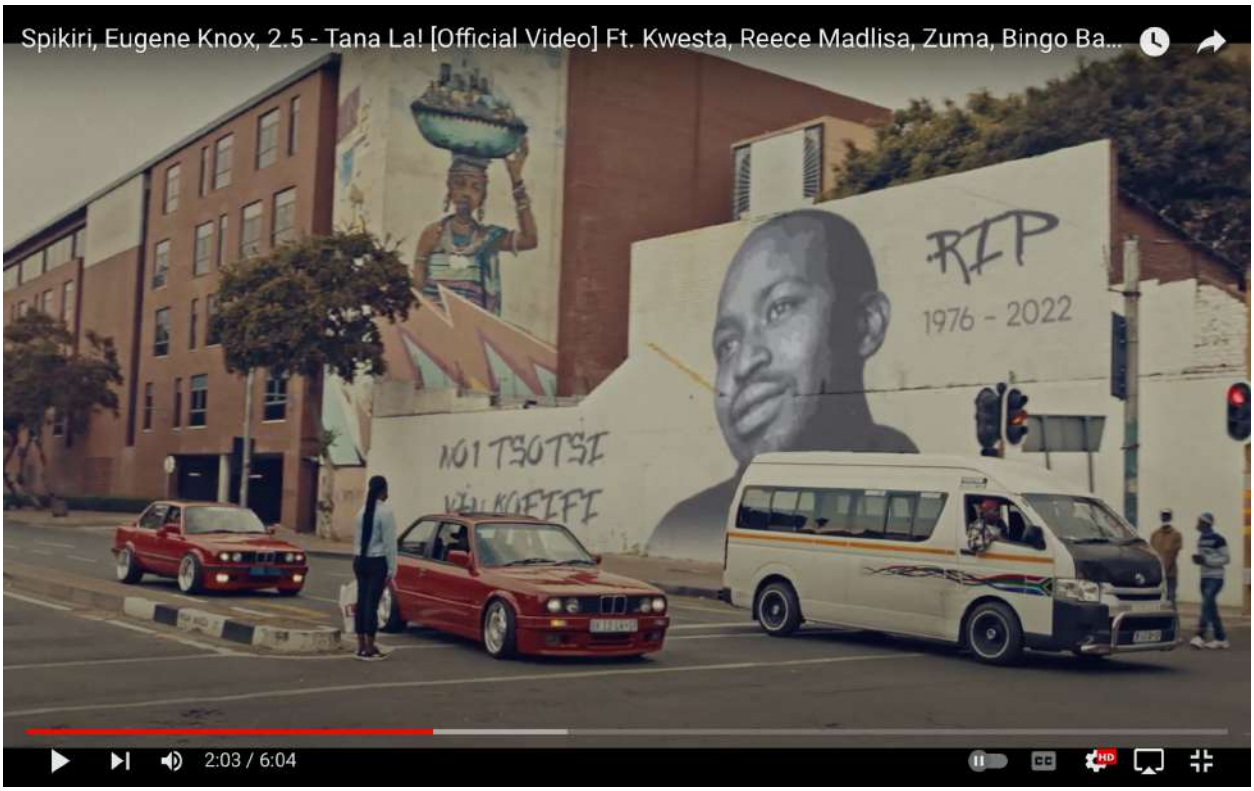


Figure 48: Still from the music video for 'Tana La' (2022), by Spikiri, Eugene Knox, and 2.5 ft. Kwesta, Reece Madlisa, Zuma and Bingobash.

Geo-graphic territories 'powered' by *geo-philosophical ontologies*: bo-guluva is bo-clever from *kasi* to *kasi* – an undercurrent grammar discernible in the kwaito music video. At White House Ndofaya, the respondent and Black Studies scholar, Ayabulela Mhlahlo, waxed lyrical about *Sesasedi sa Tsodio*. She drew largely from the geographies of spirituality – of both interior and public offerings – referred to in the essayistic video, such as the speculative meeting of Queen Modjadji and Credo Mutwa, which for her then also evoked bo Mazizi Kunene. Mhlahlo (2022) commented:

> The interesting thing about Credo Mutwa is that people didn't take his work seriously. Even now they don't take him seriously. And even in our studies of literature, he is not taken seriously – as a canonical writer; as someone whose frameworking of imagination and aesthetics … opens up another door of knowledge.

Mhlahlo (2022) cites the essayistic video text about how Mutwa's Cultural Village at Letlamoreng Dam in Mahikeng is read as a link to the formation of *motswako* in Mahikeng. Thinking with Credo Mutwa et al., Mhlahlo invites us to "remind ourselves about their doorways; how their mythologies in their work enable us to reconceive of reality and its broadness; reconceive of being; reconceive of time".

When thinking about a location for the *Tsodio* movement and choreography with Intellectuals Pantsula, the first rationale for using Meadowlands High School was informed by a long-running but now seemingly defunct charity event at this school by Spikiri, called 'Christmas in Ndofaya'. In fact, when I was proposing his feature in the essayistic video, I proposed using the school, but

he kind of brushed that off, simply telling me about this nice venue by an *mpinchi* of his, who turned out to be Kasi Hero, naturally. Let me not digress … although the last thing to highlight is that White House Ndofaya is not that far away from Meadowlands High School, which now will be the location for Intellectuals Pantsula's piece.

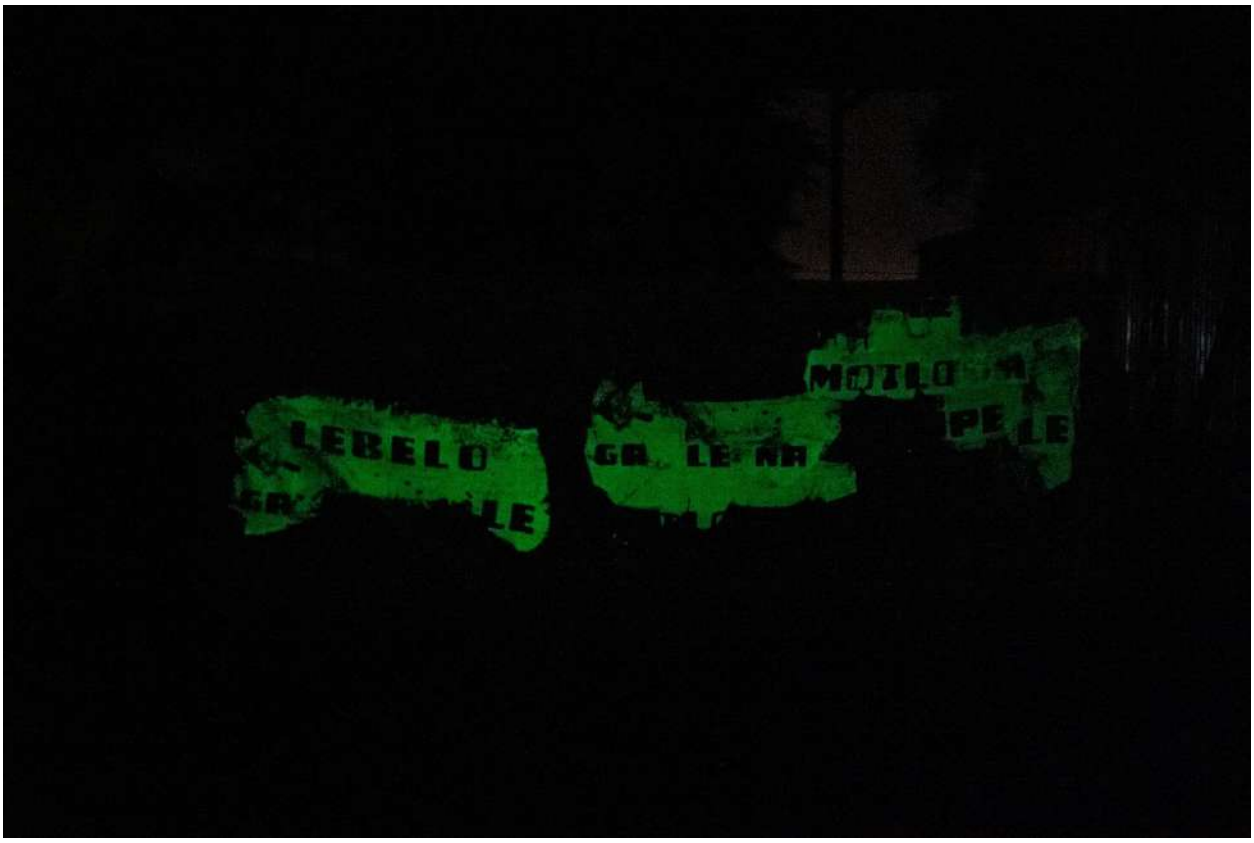
As it turned out, a deeply grounding option presented itself when we read the topography – that the streets named after Modjadji and Sekhukhune intersect not quite at Meadowlands High School but in fact at a small primary school, in a corner segment of the entire Meadowlands High School, with a large soccer pitch where 'Christmas in Ndofaya' would install a stage annually. This 'meeting' – of two of Limpopo's major monarchies of polities categorised under Sepedi/Northern Sotho – at the heart of Ndofaya, was truly the work of ancestors! There was no more talk of where to stage Intellectuals Pantsula, who were now delving deep into research about Modjadji and Sekhukhune, while immersing themselves in the Tsodio narrative.

I could have been imagining things, but I think I sensed a bit of a beef about Ndofaya for the Intellectuals (who are from Naledi), or perhaps I'm pushing *geo-graphic territories* too hard. But actually, when filming, I ear-stole two cats speaking about why we didn't bring *mapantsula* from Ndofaya – stru's God! A *geo-graphic territories* version of 'I'm more gangster than you'. The reader is more likely to emerge after this thesis and its creative work knowing much *less* about the kwaito music video, for you have instead walked it through a *bonakude* – seen scenes from so far away you come out the other side knowing that African popular culture is rooted in so many traditions, that any split second is underscored by a place hidden in plain sight – places often unimaginable about black visual forms – kwaito visual culture being the most mainstreamed and followed since the mid-1990s. Today, music videos – or 'visualisers', as music videos are currently referred to by young practitioners – persist as the most-circulated medium of African popular culture, managing to claim and maintain space in an internet world that privileges more and more the (audio)visual.

The persistence of the music video is deeply specific in kwaito visual culture due to its interdiscursivity, perhaps most signified by the practice of introducing a novel dance style with each single, EP or album. It is this singular factor that found a home in the kwaito music video, and that continues as a key template to inform, influence and inspire the music-video culture of black popular music forms in South Africa, as can been seen in *Afro-Tech* and *amapiano*, even *hip-hop*, at the intersection of kwaito (read the K.O. music video for 'Caracara', in which they recast the '80s dance move 'skero', which also recurred in 1990s kwaito; also in Donald Duck's 'Tabalaza', as discussed in Chapter Two).

Chapter Five

HISTORIO-GRAPHIC NARRATIVES OF KWAITO'S VISUAL CULTURE



Figures 49: Still from *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* (2021). Photographs by Bongani Mdaweni.

Sa Koša Ke Lerole (2023-)

(2021 to 2023)

Dir. Rangoato Hlasane

https://vimeo.com/800085549

Password: please email to rangoato@gmail.com

Conclusion

KGOMO GA E NTŠHE BOLOKO KA MOKA[117], OR WHAT HAPPENED TO TSODIO? DID HE DIE? *DIPOKO DI MOTLOGETSE?*

FIGURES 50–58 [Inserts/Fold-Out in print version, TPO in this version]**:** Impressions from the set/locations for *Sa Koša ke Lerole*, 24 July 2023. Artwork, installation and photographs by Rangoato Hlasane.

[117] *Kgomo ga e ntšhe boloko ka moka* is a sePedi phrase that was uttered by the moderator/*moswara marapo* at the *Sesasedi sa Tsodio* screening event in Mamelodi, at Thabeng ya Mogale. It was spoken in a context that was deeply spiritual, when *mmino wa setšo* ensemble ya dinaka, Blouberg 187, honoured *dingaka* (sangomas) with a song that speaks to 'them'.





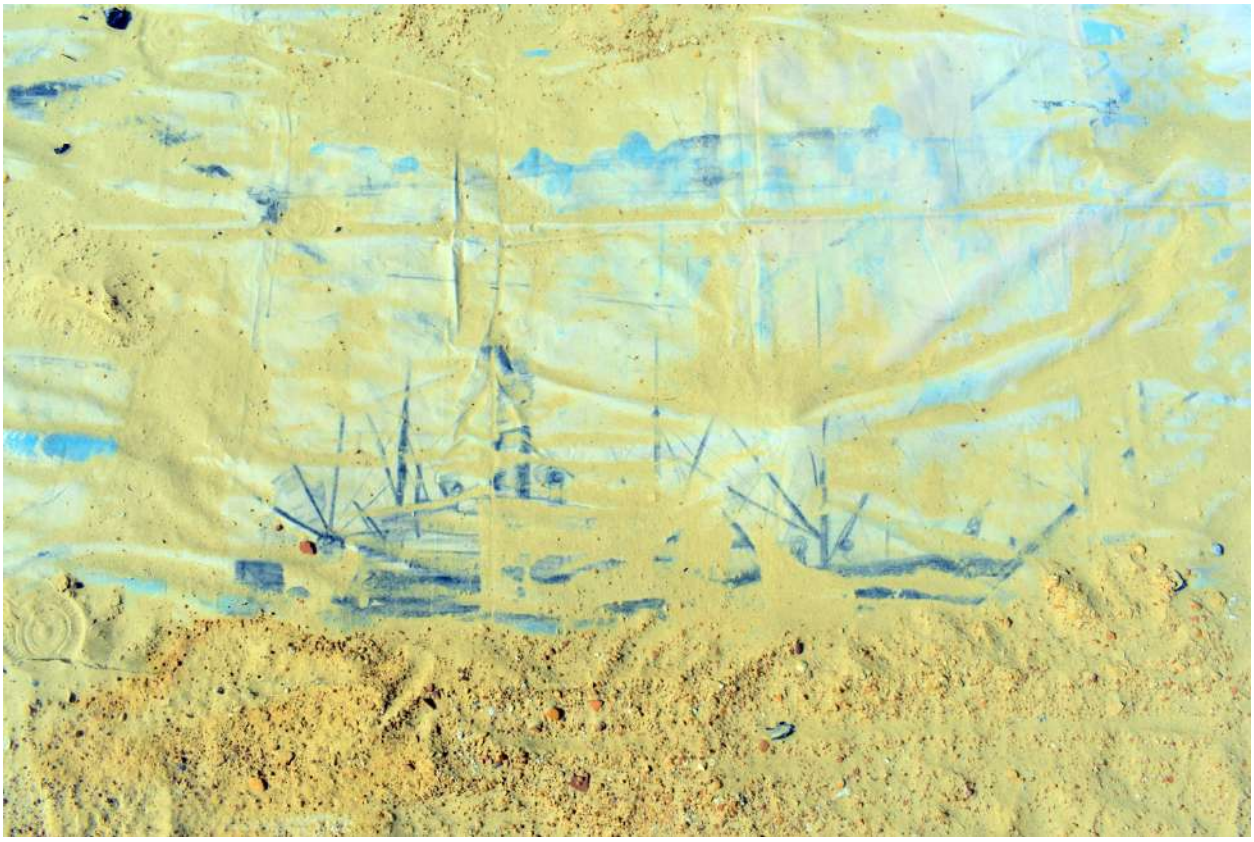







In the tomb
gd Solomon Plaatje
the womb
the rooms
ough you find out
tswile kgotla re apere dibaki
re party
Botsa Fe
e got the
not,
can catch
the BBC X
I'll be sig
those
cheques





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Appendix i

Plagiarism Declaration

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY

Declaration by Students

I Mphapho Christian (Rangoato) Hlasane (Student number: 599033) am a student registered for African Literature (PhD) in the year 2024.

I hereby declare the following:
• I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
• I confirm that ALL the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
• I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
• I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this in not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

Signature: M. C. Hlasane Date: 30 April 2024