In the Mix: Expressions of Coloured Identity in Cape Town-Based Hiphop

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In the Mix: Expressions of Coloured Identity in Cape Town-based Hiphop

A dissertation presented

by

Warrick Moses

to

The Department of African and African American Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

African Studies

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts
April 2019
In the Mix: Expressions of Coloured Identity in Cape Town-based Hiphop

Abstract

My dissertation project, In the Mix, investigates expressions of “mixed race,” or “coloured” socio-political and cultural identity in the performance genre of Cape Town-based hiphop music. South African hiphop originated in this city and has been associated with the concerns and sensibilities of its working-class coloured population from the outset. Based on fieldwork completed between 2015 and 2017, I interrogate contemporary conceptions of identity formulated by the members of this racialized social group – practitioners of the musical style themselves – both during and after the end of official apartheid; how their representations disrupt, and in some instances, overturn prevailing negative imaginaries within South Africa of coloured lived experience.

A major contention of my work is that racial categorization predicated on visual apperception remains the primary means of self, and social identification in South Africa, despite the post-1994 promise of equity heralded by inclusive “Rainbow Nationalism.” The musicians included in my ethnography adamantly reject the term “coloured” as a fiction of separatist ideology yet acknowledge “colouredness” as signifying discrete socio-cultural practices inherent to Cape Town hiphop.
Their negotiations of self-identity in the present moment address the (mis)translations that occur between standard and vernacular varieties of Afrikaans. The former is associated with white, middle-class Afrikaners and erstwhile Nationalist rule. Afrikaaps, or simply Kaaps on the other hand, is synonymous with the working-class “coloured” demographic of Cape Town, and also constitutes the fundamental language of hiphop performance in this city. My work describes how the unapologetic texts, emphatic attitudes, and dramatic performances of artists racialized as coloured, challenge longstanding, negative stereotypes intrinsic to the South African popular imagination of coloured identity. As they proclaim, denounce, and celebrate, these musicians skillfully employ the conventions of a genre known globally for its potential as a medium of social uplift, while mobilizing an aesthetic characterized by the incendiary critique of authoritarian practice.
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My research would not have been possible without the very generous support of the Social Sciences Research Council as a recipient of the International Dissertation Research Fellowship, and the Harvard University Committee on General Scholarships, as a recipient of the Knox Traveling Fellowship. I also deeply appreciate the encouragement and generosity of my advisors Ingrid Monson, Jean Comaroff, and Tommie Shelby. Apart from fielding numerous (invariably last-minute) requests for recommendations and panicked e-mails, their input during the course of my research has been invaluable.

For the many late-night reviews, edits and suggestions, commiserations and breakthroughs, I am forever indebted to Jessica Dickson, Renugan Raidoo, Roché Kester, Gerald Schreiner, Lucy Valerie Graham, Julie Strand, and Amsale Alemu.

Finally, I am grateful to the scholars, musicians, and artists without whose time and patience this project would not have gotten off the ground. Thanks go to Adam Haupt, Quentin Williams, H. Samy Alim, Emile YX?, Isaac “Mutant” Williams, Catherine “Dope St.Jude” Pretorius, Weaam Williams, Bernadette “Burni” Amansure, Shaheen Ariefdien, Lee-Ursus Alexander, Hakkiesdraad Hartman, Kurt Odendaal, Rasmus Bitsch, Dane Dodds, Mario “Roach” Pieterse, Dark Swan, Alvhinator, Sumo Jac, Damian “D Planet” Stephens, Martin “S.I.E.P.” Muller, Nathan and Andre Trantaal, Marc Lottering, Megan “Patty Monroe” Steenkamp, Simon “Hemelbesem” Witbooi, Lindley “Linkris” Heynes, Ryan Swano, and Rozzano. Thank you all. And of course, my sincere apologies to any and all I have inadvertently forgotten to mention.
Preface

Transcription of lecture-demonstration by MC Emile Jansen aka. Emile YX at the University of the Western Cape on October 3, 2015.

Toe ons begin et, soos in enige plek, het ons meestal “Yo” en watwat, en “Chill” [gebruik]...ons wil American gewees...maar ons het gou besef (na ons a Gatsby geëet het)...onse reality issie hulle reality nie, sien jy...die main ding back in the day was jy moenie vir ander mense copy nie...die eerste crew wat uit was wat ‘n album bygesit et, was Prophets of Da City...hullet ‘Dala Flêt’ oppie album [gegooi]...as jy tenige plek oppie Cape Flats gaan, sal ai oudag ouens van back in the day: “Kykie my bru, al ai dinge moet jy los....” Jy ken mos daai, nuf...hullet ie gedink ai sal só a groot impact gehad het nie...hulle eintlik die eerste ouens wat spaza of local rap gedoen het...[Prophets] het baie van ons bewusgemaak van hoe ons eintlk klink, want oppie radio dan hoor jy maar baie min vir ons...hiphop het ons bewusgemaak van wie ons is....

Na a while het baie jong mense eintlik begin rap in Afrikaans...en it was baie difficult vir hulle eintlik in hulle eie taal te rap...want jy word nog noudag afgeknou vannie mense wat nou ‘knowledgeable’ mense is...[op skool word jy geleer] om regte Afrikaans te praat, standaard....

Die geskiedenis van hiphop is eintlik dat hiphop ‘n groot getal jongmense proud gemaak et van wie hulle eintlik is...en een ding wat mense nie maklik vi jou sê nie, is onse gemeenskap dit baie difficult vind om a living te maak van hulle artistic skill...Isaac Mutant en Skallywag en Garlic Brown is a miljoen keer betere MCs as Jack Parow en Die Antwoord saam, maar in ons land koop mense altyd CDs according to colour...en wat is palatable...as jy nie vi my glo nie, hoeko is Johnny Clegg the most well-known Zulu in Suid-Afrika?...

Anyway...dis belangrik dat ons moet besef dat hoeko hulle nie respek het vir hulle self hettie, is dat jy gesê et...dat die taal wat hulle praat issie goed genoeg ie...en as jy die waarheid will wiet, is hierie taal wat julle sê issie ‘goed genoeg issie,’ die founding of die oorsprong van waar Afrikaans eintlik begin et...totdat ons eintlik agree op daai punt...as ek na meetings gaan, [sê die mense daar]: “Nee ons gaan almal saam sing; ons is een Afrikaans-sprekende gemeenskap, blah, blah, blah.” En nou praat jy: “Kykie dies hoe it eintlik gaan oppie Cape Flats, is omdat daai geskiedenis veroorsaak het, dat die laaities nou gangsters en drug-dealers en drug-addicts is, omdat jy vir hulle hul selfwaarde weggeneem het omdat jy sy taal gesêret issie goed genoeg ‘ie...nou moet jy sê: “Wag, ek is sorry vir wat my voorvaders gedoen het, hieris a paar miljoen rand om ai ding regtemaak...verstaan...?”

Dit was 2010 gewies toe ek eers leer, dat hoe ek praat orraait is...[en nou sê ek] wat ek wil sê soos ekit sê...as it ie vir hiphop wassie, dan sal ekit nie geleer het nie. Hiphop is ‘n powerful tool om mense a sense van self-worth te gee.
When we first started out in hiphop, like pretty much everywhere else, we’d be all, like: “Yo” and “Chill.” We wanted to sound like the Americans. But then we realized that our reality wasn’t actually the same as theirs. And the main thing back in the day was that you shouldn’t bite anyone else’s style. Now, the first crew out of Cape Town to put together an album (1990’s *Our World*) was Prophets of Da City, and they had this track called *Dalah Flêt*. Anywhere you go on the Cape Flats if you ask an old hiphop head, they’ll remember those lines (singing): *Kyk my bru, al ai dinge moet jy los*...[“Listen up brother, you gotta leave that shit behind....”]. They didn’t think it’d have such a lasting impact. Prophets were actually the first group to rap in *spaza* or local vernac. At the time you didn’t really hear a lot of that on the radio, and they made us aware of our individual sound. Hiphop made us aware of who we were.

So, after a while, a lot of kids started rapping in Afrikaans. But it was pretty difficult to rap in your own language, I mean, even today, “those in the know” only teach you “the right way” to speak Afrikaans...the standard form.

Hiphop made a lot of kids proud of who they were. And not a lot of people will admit it, but a number of people from our community find it difficult to make a living solely from their art. As MCs, Isaac Mutant, Skallywag, and Garlic Brown are a million times better than Jack Parow and *Die Antwoord* put together. But here in this country, people still buy albums according to color, or what’s palatable. If you don’t believe me, then why is Johnny Clegg the most famous Zulu in South Africa?

Anyway, it’s important to understand that the reason why kids on the Flats don’t have any self-respect, is because it’s been drilled into their heads that the language they speak, *Kaaps*, isn’t good enough. And the truth of the matter is: this language that people say “isn’t good enough,” is actually the basis of standard Afrikaans. And until we can agree on that point....Listen, I sit in all these meetings and the white folks there are like: *Nee ons gaan almal saam sing; ons is een Afrikaans-sprekende gemeenskap, blah, blah, blah*. [“Let’s hold hands and come together as a unified Afrikaans-speaking people, blah, blah, blah”]. And then you say: “Hold up, the reason shit’s going down on the Flats – the reason the kids are gangsters, and dealers, and addicts – is because apartheid took away their self-worth! You *told* them that their language wasn’t “good enough”! You gotta take responsibility for that and say: “I acknowledge that what my ancestors did was wrong, I’m sorry; here’s reparations to make things right.” *You know?*

I’m a grown-ass man, and only in 2010 did I begin to accept that there’s absolutely nothing wrong with the way I speak Afrikaans. I say *whatever* I wanna say, *however* I wanna say it. Hiphop is a powerful tool through which a people can reclaim their self-worth.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Because I grew up in South Africa, under apartheid, privileged, but still subject to a system of oppression and division, it seems I keep coming back to questions of identity. Apartheid was not all, or only, about identity, but identity formed a large part of its definition.

- Stephen Clingman, The Grammar of Identity

We’ve always said we were black...but now when I do a scorecard, I have to tick whether I’m black, coloured, or Asian, or what the fuck...so, don’t come with this reverse politics and say that we musn’t be ashamed to be black, when the block exists...on your official forms. What am I supposed to call myself then? I’m Muslim, I’m not Arab. I’m Malay, I’m not Indian...there’s cultural things that I do in my life, the way we do certain rituals, that are true to that narrative....Essentially, I’ve never actually identified with the term “coloured.”

- Personal interview with film director Weaam Williams

Having unequivocally failed his law school finals at the University of Cape Town, Bafana Kuzwayo, the protagonist in Niq Mhlongo’s 2007 novel After Tears, arrives at the following conclusion:

That was it. I had had enough of Cape Town. The cold Atlantic Ocean, the white sand beaches, Table Mountain, the Waterfront, everything I had once found so beautiful about the city, had suddenly turned ugly...I was sure that if I stayed in Cape Town for one more day I would go mad....

By the end of August of 2017, after completing my dissertation research in Cape Town, I had come to share Bafana’s antipathy towards the place: eKapa...The Mother City...referred to by the college-educated, hip, and woke crowd of creatives as “the Cape Colony, South of Africa.” I felt as though the city of my birth had let me down. Let me explain:


2 Niq Mhlongo, After Tears (Cape Town, Kwela Books, 2007), 1.
I have spent the majority of my early-twenties and thirties studying and working in the United States. I had been back and forth from Cape Town a few times for the occasional wedding and other brief visits, but prior to the two years of extended graduate fieldwork from 2015 to 2017, I had never really lived there as an adult. Stepping off the twenty-seven-hour flight – thirty or so, with layovers – I looked forward to the immigration official’s warm greeting, his beaming “Welcome Home.” I smiled at the isiXhosa, Kaaps, and Saffa English (heavily inflected with Afrikaans) of the friends and family-members anxiously awaiting their loved ones at the gate. Didn’t think twice about the replica of Nelson Mandela’s Robben Island prison cell in the airport arrivals corridor, copied right down to the state-issued blanket, curling barbed-wire, and klaxons. I had seen it all often enough. I could already taste the masala burger and samosas from Wembley Roadhouse, washed down with a double thick strawberry milkshake (nobody really goes for the chocolate flavor). Once outside the terminal, I braced for the unrelenting wind and the unrepentant sun. I was ready too, for the painfully clumsy re-acquaintance with my parents, all three of us deftly skirting the business of how much longer I would be in graduate school and what exactly I was doing there.

In After Tears, Bafana Kuzwayo returns angst-ridden to his home in Chiawelo, the district in Soweto township where he’d grown up. Unable and unwilling to tell his family about what had actually happened at university, Bafana goes along with their assumption that he’d aced the requisite series of exams and was ready to begin a distinguished career as “the youngest advocate to come out of Chi.” In their reasoned estimation, law school was four years; Bafana had been gone for four years so he must have completed his studies. Mhlongo punctuates the

3 Mhlongo, 3.
story of Bafana’s re-entry to kasi life⁴ – the young man’s unintended involvement in a property-ownership dispute; forging the documents needed to practice law; and successfully, albeit fraudulently, defending hapless clients in criminal court – with frequent and diegetic references to kwaito, a homegrown, bass-heavy form of electro-pop marked by the prodigious influence of Chicago house music.

The black African vernacular or tsotsitaal expression, kwaito, is derived from the Afrikaans word kwaai. Tsotsitaal itself – a creole language drawing primarily from Afrikaans, English, and Zulu, and synonymous with the historic Sophiatown locality of Johannesburg – is syntactically based on Afrikaans.⁵ Kwaai, translated literally as “angry,” colloquially describes someone or something that is cool, impressive. For those familiar with this musical performance genre and Mhlongo’s narrative context, the mere mention of iconic kwaito tracks excites a fully embodied and sensorial response. As we read Mhlongo’s work, we hear Bafana’s mother singing along to Bongo Muffin’s Thathi’ sgubhu in the kitchen; at other times we feel in our chests the vibrations of TKZee’s Izinja zami and Shibobo, Makhendla’s Minwana phezulu, and Mandoza’s greatest hits blasting from the trunk stereo of a BMW (known in the “hood as a “Be My Wife,” or more bluntly, “Black Man’s Wish”); we jive to crowd favorite Mazola by “The Godfather,” M’du, and share in the nervous excitement of Chi’s inhabitants during their New Year street celebrations.

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⁴ The term kasi broadly designates “the township;” it is the black African vernacular abbreviation of lokasie, Afrikaans for “location.”

Readers unselfconsciously listen to, see, viscerally experience, reminisce over, and breathe in the quotidian praxes, the meticulously annotated habits of Mhlongo’s characters who are struggling, as author and academic Njabulo Ndebele says: “even under the most oppressive conditions...to maintain a semblance of normal social order.” This attention to (musical) detail exemplifies Ndebele’s call for contemporary South African writers to “rediscover the ordinary;” to divert attention from the broad strokes of spectacular description that characterized early literary accounts of black South African life under apartheid and to focus instead on more nuanced, personalized narratives. Ndebele attests:

The spectacular documents; it indicts implicitly; it is demonstrative, preferring exteriority to interiority; it keeps the larger issues of society in our minds, obliterating the details; it provokes identification through recognition and feeling rather than through observation and analytical thought; it calls for emotion rather than conviction; it establishes a vast presence without necessarily offering a challenge.

Commenting in 1984, Ndebele maintained that the manner in which South African literature had depicted the injustices of that country’s lived experiences under apartheid, was far too limited. A reliance on the spectacular political dramatization in contemporaneous fiction of vicious, antagonistic action on the one hand, and spirited counteraction on the other, reduced the complexity of life under separatist rule to a simplistic relationship of malevolent oppressor versus defiant oppressed.

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7 Ibid., 41.
The taken-for-granted-ness of apartheid social dynamics represented in this way, obscured “the vitality of the tension generated by the dialectic between the personal and public.”

Since the cruelties and absurdities of apartheid so thoroughly permeated the daily lives of ordinary South Africans, it was only by investigating the neglected experiences of human tragedy, vicissitude, and disruption – elements that constituted “the very content of the struggle” – that a full account of apartheid life could be given. As to my disappointment on returning to Cape Town, I was struck by the “ordinariness” with which racialized attitudes persisted in the city post-1994, and the overwhelmingly spectacular nature of their execution as witnessed and experienced in my day-to-day interactions. As I soon came to realize, even in the hopeful post-apartheid South African era, racial category premised fundamentally on visual signifiers – pigmentation of skin, kinkiness of hair, thickness of lips, width of nose – remained the principal archive from which understandings and proposals of identity were drawn.

So pervasive is the impact of official apartheid segregation – bookended by the years 1948 when the white Afrikaner Nationalist party assumed power, and 1994, the occasion of South Africa’s first democratic and non-racial election – that any critical inquiry related to and/or set within this country is ultimately informed by the enduring legacy of this inimical system of social organization. My present dissertation on Cape Town-based hiphop within working-class “coloured” communities (let’s go with “mixed-race” for now) is no different. However, I intentionally begin this discussion with references to the more familiar modes of socio-cultural production – the South African “protest” literary tradition critiqued by Ndebele,

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8 Ndebele, 51.

9 Ibid., 52.
and the genre of *kwai*to* music – to address two primary misconceptions of political and ethno-racial formulation that I encountered during my research.

The first is that apartheid legislation solely affected the country’s black African populace. As a corollary, resistance to apartheid rule (international cultural boycott/divestment efforts and domestic political movements aside), was the exclusive domain of black Africans. In his essay, Ndebele cites coloured author and activist Alex La Guma’s 1963 short story *Coffee for the Road*, the tale of an Indian mother’s unexpected and forceful reaction to petty apartheid regulation as a disingenuous, “spectacular contest of the powerless against the powerful.”10 The racial categories of coloured and Indian (I will get to these distinctions in a minute) are often subsumed in contemporary scholarly and journalistic writing under the generous heading “Black with a capital B,” meaning “non-white,” or eclipsed entirely by the term “African,” invariably meaning “black African.” Ndebele’s assessment of La Guma’s work unintentionally feeds into this phenomenon.

Moreover, within the pantheon of South Africa’s “struggle” writers, coloured authors like La Guma, Richard Rive, and James Matthews are arguably less well-known than their white contemporaries J.M.Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Athol Fugard, and Alan Paton, or eminent black Africans like Zakes Mda, Lewis Nkosi, Mongane Wally Serote, and even relative newcomer Niq Mhlongo. Adding to the presumed black-white binary of South African racial dynamics, is the mythologization in local and international media of Mandela’s negotiations with the Afrikaner Nationalist government, and his succession by a line of black African presidents all supported by the formerly banned African National Congress – the ANC, South Africa’s ruling political party post-1994. One can be forgiven for imagining the very public predominance of

10 Ndebele, 38.
black African actors on the contemporary political and cultural scenes in South Africa as a long overdue reversal of white dominion.

As to the second misconception, US hiphop is acknowledged as an unambiguously African American aesthetic and musical style, despite the contributions of African Diasporic, including Caribbean, and Latinx communities to its early development. For this reason, amongst others, *kwaito*, a popular music originated and performed by black Africans, is understood particularly by international commentators as “Black political music,” or “just South African hiphop.” In his 2016 monograph entitled *Kwaito’s Promise*, ethnomusicologist Gavin Steingo expresses frustration during the early stages of his research with the easy merger of these two distinct genres in the popular imagination (and later, the simple appraisal of *kwaito* as “just South African house”). From Steingo’s vantage and that of his interlocutors:

[H]ip-hop is overtly political whereas *kwaito* is “apolitical;” hip-hop is didactic whereas *kwaito* is party music; hip-hop deploys asymmetrical break beats whereas *kwaito* is typically based on four-on-the-floor rhythms. Those who remain tempted to conflate *kwaito* and hip-hop overlook another important fact: there is a robust hip-hop scene in South Africa, and this scene is usually *opposed* to *kwaito*.11

Ironically, it is exactly because of the recent attention given to *kwaito* music in academic circles, not to mention the global appeal of the genre, that I face the converse of Steingo’s predicament. In conversations and presentations of my work on hiphop, the question is unfailingly asked: “Isn’t this just *kwaito*?” (This supposition is no doubt exacerbated by the overwhelming focus in South African ethnomusicological literature on black African indigenous, and popular music). Both the long and the short answer is “no.” Another question that perennially comes up, this time prompted by the contention of hiphop as a uniquely African American paradigm, is:

11 Steingo, viii-ix.
“What about *Black* hiphop?” This one is a little trickier to answer.

**Hiphop in Cape Town**

Soweto is to Johannesburg as “The Flats” are to Cape Town, both of them areas on the periphery of the city proper to which non-whites in South Africa had historically been relegated by apartheid separatist polity. As much as *kwaito* evokes the everyday of Bafana/Mhlongo’s black African Soweto, the coloured regions known as the Cape Flats are scored by localized hiphop. Armed with most of a doctoral degree in African Studies and trained as an ethnomusicologist, it is this latter soundtrack that I had come home to interrogate. For the moment, it is simplest to say that in this study, I examine “coloured political music.”

Now I’m just gonna put it out there (and sure, you can try to fight me on this), but Cape Town is the undisputed birthplace of hiphop in South Africa. Since the outset, the style has been associated with the concerns and sensibilities of the city’s working-class coloured population, a grouping whose history is closely linked to ideas of “mixture,” indeterminacy, and marginalization. Depending on who you ask, the origin of hiphop in the city follows one of two anecdotal streams. The first, acknowledges a connection between the circulation of US jazz, soul, and funk in Cape Town, and the socio-political ramifications of the Soweto uprising in 1976. This fateful protest by black African students against the apartheid government’s imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of formal instruction, served as the catalyst for coloured artists who had already embraced the pleasurable, ludic ethos of early US hiphop and its musical precursors, similarly “to become conscious,” and to reflect an intentionally political and defiant attitude towards apartheid constraints in their own work.
The other version of this story proposes that coloured youth in the late 1980s were politically and aesthetically inspired by the rhetoric of Golden Era (US hiphop ranging from the mid- to late 1980s, to the early 1990s) performers like Rakim, and Public Enemy. Neither popular nor welcome on apartheid’s airwaves, these artists’ work would enter the country by way of European or American penpals, or else, sympathetic record-store owners would sell off this new, imported music at a discount price to anyone who would purchase it. Cassette copies would be made and remade (one informant noted jokingly: *Die Kaap is mos famous vi’ ‘make me a copy’* [“‘Brother, won’t you make for me a copy?’ is a common way of doing things amongst coloured folks in the Cape”], and in this way, spread throughout the burgeoning hiphop community of the Flats.12

Noting similarities between the history of US minority subordination and the oppression of apartheid, coloured kids adopted hiphop as a cultural form in order to make sense of “negotiate [their own] experience of marginalization [and] truncated opportunity.”13 This latter version of the tale, the one that recognizes intersections of global socio-political inequality, is also the familiar story of how diasporic hiphop – by which I mean, non-US hiphop – came into being. Like all such offshoots, these iterations were initially imitative of US models, before making the crucial transformative shift of indigenization (Mitchell, 2001; Osumare, 2007; Charry, 2012). In prioritizing vernacular speech, idiom, and in some cases, even instrumentation,

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12 Personal interviews with Shaheen Ariefdien, and Rozzano Davids, 2017.

diasporic hiphop came to reflect, in the words of Murray Forman, a set of “extreme local” perspectives.\textsuperscript{14}

Although hiphop in Cape Town is indebted in many ways to the US archetype, the musical context I investigate here is thoroughly imbued with the testimonies of local ethno-cultural practice, and communicated through discrete, regional phonology. It is a given that vernacular Afrikaans – known as \textit{Afrikaaps}, an elision of the words Afrikaans, and \textit{Kaaps} (“from the Cape”) – is the fundamental register in which hiphop coming from the city is articulated. Amongst practitioners of the genre however, this speech form is simultaneously incorporated under the banner of standard, \textit{suiwer} (“pure”) Afrikaans commonly associated with erstwhile white Nationalist rule (glossing over the problematic ideological implications of this move). Alternatively, \textit{Afrikaaps} is lauded as an indigenous progenitor of standard Afrikaans (a mindset that reads easily as an ethno-nationalist counter-narrative).

Analyzing both musical output and personal responses to interview sessions, most of the interlocutors with whom I spoke adamantly renounced the term “coloured” as a fiction of apartheid-era social organization. Instead, some artists preferred a Black Consciousness racial and/or political affiliation; some claimed an indigenous ethnic identity of Khoisan, or Nama. Others still, embraced the appellation “coloured,” adopting a phonetic spelling for the word (i.e.: \textit{K-u-l-i-d}), thereby asserting cultural and linguistic facility with \textit{Afrikaaps}, referred to usually as \textit{Kaaps}, as a contingent basis for group inclusion. In all instances, whether these affiliations were embodied as discrete, or as overlapping – “colouredness” as a form of “Blackness,” for example – interlocutors were steadfast in their subversion of the negative social

\textsuperscript{14} Murray Forman, \textit{The ‘Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop} (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2002) xvii.
connotations within the South African imaginary that accompanied “being coloured.” This is a crucial ideological component of their work; how they go about it, through sonic and linguistic means, is the focus of mine. The longstanding negative tropes of coloured identity – among them: servility; laziness; a propensity for violence and criminal activity; alcoholism and sexual avarice – all have their foundation in 1) South Africa’s unique system of racial categorization, and relatedly, 2) language chauvinism.

**Racial Categorization under apartheid**

The 1950 Race Classification Act – more commonly known as the Population Registration Act (PRA) – instituted a four-part system of racial hierarchy throughout the country: white, Indian, coloured, and (black) African. The categories of Indian and coloured functioned ostensibly as socio-political buffers between the two extremes of whiteness, and blackness. Importantly though, my placement of Indians before coloureds in this listing of racial categories, does not imply socio-political hegemony of one ethnoracial group over the other.

As a heterochthonous grouping, Indians were considered a separate taxon in this scheme. Most of South Africa’s early Indian population was brought over to the east coast between 1860 and 1890 as indentured British subjects to work in the Natal region’s sugarcane plantations. An elite merchant class of “passenger Indians” immigrated to the same area during the 1880s seeking business opportunities. The spatial policies of apartheid not only restricted residential opportunities for Indians, but also sought to eliminate them as economic competition for white-owned enterprises in desirable neighborhoods. *De jure* segregation of Indian communities

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existed prior to 1948 in the country’s then three northeastern provinces of the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, and Natal. There was however, no need for such formal proscriptions in the southwestern Cape Province, where the presence of Indians was relatively insignificant.\textsuperscript{16}

Upon closer inspection the language of the PRA reveals a number of semantic inconsistencies. The terms “white” and “coloured” describe phenotypical characteristics; “Native” (replaced in 1951 by “Bantu” and changed again to “African” in 1978)\textsuperscript{17} emphasizes indigeneity as a condition of classification; “Asian”/“Asiatic” (at various times including the “Indian” group, at other times, not) indexes continent of origin or nationality.\textsuperscript{18} The premium of “whiteness” was bestowed across disparities of language or culture, encompassing a diverse range of European ethno-national inflection. This included English-speakers of British descent, as well as Afrikaners of Dutch descent, despite the well-documented socio-historical and political antagonisms between the two groupings.\textsuperscript{19}

Scientific racist thought – the belief that “race” was predicated exclusively on biological difference – justified these discrepancies and played a significant role in establishing the nomenclature of racial categorization in South Africa. Any mixing of supposedly pure

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\textsuperscript{16} John Western, \textit{Outcast Cape Town} (Oakland: University of California Press, 1996), 47.
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\textsuperscript{17} Muriel Horrell, \textit{Race Relations as Regulated by Law in South Africa 1948-1979} (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1982).
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\textsuperscript{18} Kate Manzo, “Global Power and South African Politics: A Foucauldian Analysis,” \textit{Alternatives} 17 (1992), 37.
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bloodlines, it was rationalized, would result in physiological and psychological contamination.\textsuperscript{20} And thus, “ambiguously brown” coloureds were imagined as unfortunate and inherently flawed by-products of miscegenation having occurred between “essential” typologies of settler-colonial whiteness, and indigenous black Africanity. In fact, the “joke” goes that coloureds arrived on the Cape’s shores exactly nine months after the Dutch disembarked. Another one states that coloureds aren’t \textit{actually} violent, it’s just the white and black people inside of them fighting for the land.

In actual terms, the PRA only partly reflected the strict ideals of scientific racism, and apartheid ideologues ultimately embraced an attitude of “strategic ambiguity with respect to race”\textsuperscript{21} in order to ensure the transmission and maintenance above all, of white hegemony. The efficacy of racial classification and practical implications for the enforcement of racially-predicated rule of law, required a shift in thinking from an assumption of purely biological hierarchy, to one that allowed for the influence of cultural distinctiveness as well. And so, in addition to the respective singularities of whiteness, and blackness (as well as Indian-ness), the PRA made accommodations for sub-categories of coloured, or persons of similarly unfixed/unfixable lineage. Along with the ostensibly “bi-racial” grouping of “Cape Coloured” – a “mix” if you will of Dutch whites, and black Africans at the Cape – the 1950 Act listed a further five “types,” namely: 1) Cape Malay, 2) Griqua, 3) Chinese, 4) “other Asiatic,” and


\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}, 53.
finally, the catch-all term, 5) “other coloured.” This “New Racism” as Paul Gilroy describes it, synthesized philosophical antagonisms between “nature and culture, biology and history” to produce a theory of difference motivated by a more practicable “biocultural” impulse.

Prior to the implementation of the PRA, South African racial categories were only loosely acknowledged and really rather flexible. Individuals might “pass for white” in their work environments, but in their home and social lives be acknowledged as coloured. In other instances, black Africans might petition for “re-assignment” to coloured status after attaining a certain level of education. But under apartheid rule, the determination of one’s race came to be considered an “obvious and uncontroversial” decision, easily made by taking into account “common sense” understandings of social and biological indices (plainly recognized visual markers), as well as the irrefutable habits of everyday life. Racial category and social conduct were tautologically linked.

In addition to vagaries of appearance – complexion, hair texture, height, bone structure, degree of genital pigmentation – a person’s social position and standing within the community became important factors in appraising racial category. Since social behaviors were racially coded, this form of evaluation re-inscribed notions of socio-cultural determinism. So, if a

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22 “Indian” was also included under the heading “coloured” inasmuch as this social grouping met neither the phenotypical criteria for whiteness, nor blackness.


24 Posel, 54.

darker-skinned person happened to live or work in an area designated for coloured development; participated in leisure activities imagined as the pastimes of coloureds (playing rugby, as opposed to soccer, for example); and was generally acknowledged by his community as such, this complex of practices would seal his fate as “coloured.” Similarly, if anyone who self-identified as white, was discovered primarily to have coloured friends and associates, her status under the PRA might be downgraded, so to speak.²⁶

Under apartheid, another one of the mutually constitutive criteria of difference along with color, phenotype, and ethnicity, was language facility. As already noted, the expression of the state, of authoritarian rule and white domination, was standard or *suïver* (“pure”) Afrikaans. Following the logic of racial hierarchy, black African languages (among them isiXhosa, and isiZulu) were the articulations of an “inferior” and “rightly subjugated” majority. The notion of autonomous language as indicative of autonomous culture contributed to the proposal that South Africa was a landscape inhabited by members of discrete social groupings which in turn, led to the imperative for separate “national” and ethnic development within the country’s borders. Although this process was initiated during the time of British colonial rule, it was meticulously refined by apartheid’s ideologues and exemplified in the creation of separate *bantustans* (“homelands”) for black Africans by the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. There remained however, the problem of coloureds, understood as neither white, nor black, nor indigenous. Complicating matters even further, most members of this grouping considered Afrikaans (especially the vernacular speech form of *Kaaps*) their mother-tongue as well.

As a solution, apartheid legislation and social practice maintained a pragmatic, distanced intimacy between this “intermediate” racial category and the *laager* of *Afrikanerdom* (the

²⁶ Posel, 60-61.
cultural mantle of Afrikaner-ness). Coloureds were allowed more political concessions than black Africans, but decidedly fewer privileges than whites. Hendrik Verwoerd, prime minister of South Africa from 1958 up until his assassination in 1966 – often referred to as the “architect of apartheid” – described the state’s patronizing attitude towards coloureds thus: “There is no doubt that [they] are citizens of this country. There is just as little doubt that [coloureds] are not part of this homogeneous entity that can be described as ‘the nation.’” Such intentional ambivalence – compounded by the essentialist logic of apartheid and the concomitant biological “impurity” of coloureds – provoked aspersions as to their collective moral character. Coloureds were stereotyped as ethically and behaviorally deficient, with an innate propensity for wrongdoing.

*Kaaps* took on negative connotations as well. The most salient connection between vernacular Afrikaans and the alleged subservience of its coloured speakers to whites (and moreover, the speech variety’s apparent contingency on the reified form of *suiwer* Afrikaans), is conveyed by the epithet *kombuistaal*, meaning literally “kitchen language” or “kitchen Dutch.”

**(Re)discovering the Ordinary**

In an essay published in 1976, writer T.T. Moyana observed that: “A...difficulty for the creative artist in South Africa, especially the black writer, is that life itself is too fantastic to be

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outstripped by the creative imagination.”²⁹ In other words, and in specific reference to the lived conditions of apartheid: this ish is just too crazy to make up. I recognize that for some readers, especially African American audiences, that the word “coloured” as it is used here, evokes a painful past of subjugation, and perhaps elicits a bitter taste even before it leaves the mouth. But reality being stranger than fiction, it is a cold, hard fact that the racialized terms of white and (black) African, Indian and coloured, are still used in South Africa today, continually recounting the memories and iniquities of apartheid divide et impera rule. Just as the common use of these categories has extended beyond the end of official apartheid, the typecasting of coloured behavior propagated under separatist rule has endured as well, becoming normalized, or “made ordinary” in the public sphere. But how to account for the persistence of these tropes after South Africa’s momentous 1994 election, and also, as I maintain, their amplification in the present?

A socio-cultural parallel in US history offers a possible solution:

Glenda Carpio notes that soon after the passing of major Civil Rights Acts in the 1960s, there was a resurgence of negative stereotypes within white communities, decrying the intrinsic nature of African Americans. In the wake of Civil Rights injunctions, and the institution of a purportedly color-blind society, “the focus was no longer on white racism—because segregation in public accommodations and proscribed discrimination in employment and disenfranchisement had been outlawed—but on the moral deficiencies of minorities.” Systemic, and institutional racism could no longer be blamed for social inequalities. The fault lay instead with those “welfare queens, career criminals, and deadbeat dads,” who refused to motivate themselves and

seize the opportunities for improvement provided and assured by legislation. Likewise, it was commonly assumed that the freedoms ensured by the Constitution of the newly-democratic South Africa, would yield the same opportunities for the advancement of all of its citizens. Any failure to prosper at this monumental juncture in the country’s history, would lie entirely at the feet of the individual.

This attitude, coupled with a powerful sense of white nostalgia (as I argue later), established formidable barriers to the self-cultivation, and broad social acceptance of contemporary, alternative coloured ways of being. The idea that everyone was free and equal to pursue the opportunities that could improve their lot in life, ignored the implications that decades of purposeful structural, and socio-economic exclusion had wrought on the coloured population writ large. In an ironic twist, a nostalgia for the stability of apartheid racial/social categories at a time when opportunities for advancement were in fact available to a lucky few through class privilege, foreclosed the possibility of these new identities even being recognized.

Class subjectivity is important to the discussion of coloured identity and also that of stereotyping. My interlocutors live, or grew up on the Cape Flats, a geographic expanse comprising numerous suburbs, all of them commonly understood as working-class coloured neighborhoods. Socio-economic strata are of course not fixed; varying degrees of privilege and access to financial, educational, and employment resources operate within these parameters. Yet the specific contours of coloured socio-economic status in South African academic literature is overshadowed by the study of black African middle-class experience, and can be attributed, avers economist Roger Southall, to this demographic’s role in the rise of the ANC’s political influence, and their notable participation in the apartheid resistance movement. Writing in 2016,

30 Glenda R. Carpio, Laughing Fit to Kill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3-4.
Southall observed: “[I]nterest in the middle class of South Africa revolves overwhelmingly around the extent and consequences of black upward social mobility, yet this only highlights the lack of attention to the wider middle class generally.” While there exists a foundational literature on South Africa’s Indian merchant class, academic interrogation of the history of white, Indian, and coloured middle-class experience, is insubstantial.31 Not only is the coloured middle-class demographic under-examined, a lower-status socio-economic condition is widely presumed for all members of this ethnoracial grouping. Thus, in addition to ascriptions of inherent moral deficit and ethical shortfall, coloured identity across class distinctions is also tied to notions of economic impoverishment. The following section describes my own “rediscovery” of the interplay between perceived socio-economic standing and racialized status in Cape Town.

Class and race are optic indices. The former is guessed at by way of one’s dress and demeanor, the latter, inferred by easily recognized and clearly visible phenotypical markers. Quoting Ndebele again: “What matters is what is seen. Thinking is secondary to seeing. Subtlety is secondary to obviousness.”32 In Boston where I had been living for twelve years – decked out in a blazer, button-down shirt, fitted jeans, and Converse sneakers; a pretty standard hipster/graduate-student uniform – I could still be served at a bougie restaurant and not get too many of those Fanonian “Look, a Negro!” stares. Having been away for so long, I had forgotten that the opposite was true in Cape Town, where I am racially classified as coloured.

I simply wasn’t ready when a few weeks into my stay, the patron at a favorite music venue casually enquired how much I wanted for my coat. My internal monolog went nuts:

31 Roger Southall, The New Black Middle Class of South Africa (Johannesburg, Jacana Media, 2016), 41.

32 Ibid., 38.
The absolute caucasity! I mean, did this white dude seriously think he could buy the shirt off my back? Or later in the evening, when he sought my advice on stealing the car across the street.

I guess, of the two of us, I would be more likely to know, right? I had gotten used to folks with blue eyes and straw-colored hair enquiring if I could hook them up with some dagga, insisting on touching my dreadlocks, or asking if I was a Rastafarian. *Nah, Becky, I’m not a Rasta. Are you?* But I was wholly unprepared for the time when I was walking downtown and surrounded by baton-wielding public safety officers, detained, and accused of shoplifting. They reluctantly released me after the store owner clarified that the suspect was actually a white guy. *SMDH!*

These incidents, innocuous as they may seem in relation to the country’s well-documented history of surveillance and racial animus directed towards non-whites nevertheless highlight the persistence of prejudicial attitudes and responses to the assumed behaviors of differently raced, and consequently, excluded bodies.

That stereotypes of “colouredness” manifest within a sonic register as well, cannot be overstated. A truism in Cape Town is that if you can’t tell a person’s racial category by looking, a discerning ear can establish this identity by listening. It is not only the particular speech form employed, but how one *sounds* when one speaks it. Jennifer Lynn Stoever theorizes the “sonic color line” as “a socially constructed boundary that racially codes sonic phenomena such as vocal timbre [and] accents” enabling astute and particularly attuned listeners to determine “racial identities based on voices, sounds, and particular soundscapes.”\(^{33}\) Aural stereotypes can also function independently of their visual, embodied signifiers. And so, there exists in Cape Town the unnamed awareness of a prototypical, “working-class coloured accent;” an accent that

characterizes voicings of English and Afrikaans – the primary speech forms of the region – by stable lexical and phonological variables (or rather, deviations from received pronunciation). These might include such features as: deleted initial and final consonants; displaced accentuation (organize instead of organize; Hanover instead of Hanover); contraction (innie as opposed to standard Afrikaans in die, meaning “in the”); or flattened or extended vowel sounds with raised inflection (nɪ instead of nɪ(ə)r, Afrikaans for “no”). As much as it serves to define racial category, this accent is also a marker of class and stigmatized social behavior.

A case in point: As a teenager I remember when Cape Town lost its bid to host the 2004 Summer Olympics to Athens. Political cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro aka. Zapiro captured the moment of the announcement and the city’s disappointment, with a distinctly local pictorial (Figure 1.1). The image featured Table Mountain looming behind City Hall and the Grand Parade, Cape Town’s main square where Nelson Mandela made his first public address on release from prison in 1990. Abandoned placards vaunting the city’s hopeful campaign are strewn across the plaza in the foreground of Zapiro’s cartoon. At stage left stands a solitary, dejected figure. Shoulders hunched over, with a toothless grimace he declares: Athens se ma se @*#&!!

Figure 1.1: Zapiro’s cartoon “Cape Town 2004, Athens se ma se....”
What marks Zapiro’s depiction as peculiar to Cape Town is not so much the featured landmarks, but the character’s race (the cartoon was printed in full color), his speech form, and the expletive used – basically: “Fuck Athens!” Readers throughout the city would have recognized the speaker’s racial categorization as coloured, and his forceful epithet as extemporized in working-class Kaaps. Such is the ubiquity of this visual-auditory nexus, that every single Capetonian could hear the precise inflection, timbre and well-timed vitriol of the full implied expression: “Athens se ma se poes!” in their mind’s ear.

As Zapiro’s example eloquently demonstrates, sound and hearing are both racialized, and racializing experiences. The legislative orders intended to ensure as much as possible the physical separation of ethnoracial groupings in South Africa also created rigid barriers of sonic acceptance. The imagined supremacy of suiwer over Kaaps, and thus whites over coloureds, is an obvious example. However, the phenomenon of sonic exclusion has received relatively little attention in South African hiphop studies and ethnomusicology more broadly. The reason for this, I propose, is that both the sound and the usage of Kaaps are regarded as negative behavioral tropes of colouredness, in the same way that criminality and other vices are imagined as intrinsic to the coloured disposition.

My writing describes articulations of contemporary South African coloured identity via hiphop, examining socio-cultural and musical performances irrefutably shaped by apartheid and the lasting impact of this nefarious system. In the “new South Africa” the apperception of visual markers remains the primary means of establishing racial category, reinvigorating negative racial tropes propagated during official segregation. Importantly, the sonic indices of language and

34 Zapiro’s footnote reads: “All dialogue genuinely overheard.”

35 The implied expression Athens se ma se poes! translates coarsely as “Athens’ mother’s cunt!”
accent are also carelessly subsumed within this aggregate of unfavorable stereotyped behaviors that supposedly constitute coloured identity. Reclaiming sound as a positive signifier through the politically-charged genre of hiphop, the musicians I engage with in my dissertation offer a powerful challenge to normative, racialized hegemony. By expressing the concerns of their communities, and intentionally spittin’ in *Kaaps*, coloured rappers assert endogenous cultural practices while simultaneously expanding long-held and myopic imaginaries of these practices; subverting dominant forms of social-representation through an equally subversive means of self-expression.

**Project, and Chapter Outlines**

Building on Stephen Clingman’s observation, I argue that identity not only “formed a large part of [apartheid’s] definition,” but was crucial to its instantiation. Furthermore, the tropes and commonplace understandings of coloured social behavior fomented under apartheid remain firmly entrenched in the South African psyche, perpetuating in the current moment those prejudicial attitudes inculcated by separatist rule.

Like Clingman, I must acknowledge that “I grew up in South Africa, under apartheid, privileged, but still subject to a system of oppression and division.” I was seven years old when *Die Groot Krokodil* [“The Big Ol’ Crocodile”] P.W.Botha, delivered his infamous Rubicon speech; ten years later I was able to vote in the country’s first democratic election; I came of age in a decidedly middle-class environment that included a nuclear family, pets, two cars, and private school. My experiences of “privilege, oppression, and division” as a coloured South African are different from those of the white author quoted. They are also worlds apart from those of the coloured working-class musicians amongst whom I conducted my dissertation
Instances of alienation and two-ness – class disparity, awareness of racialized difference, diasporic and local belonging, global and vernacular sonic inference – have of course been documented by preeminent scholars such as: W.E.B DuBois (1903), Franz Fanon (1952), Steve Bantu Biko (1969), Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1988), Paul Gilroy (1993), and Alexander Weheliye (2005). Don’t get it twisted though, my writing is neither an attempt to reify exclusively male analytical perspectives, nor to rehearse a “sobbing school” narrative.

The inclusion of prefatory auto-ethnographic examples is intended simply to illustrate my contention that apartheid-era racialized attitudes catalyzed primarily by visual cues of phenotype, continue to affect the lives of people broadly acknowledged as coloured, across intragroup social divisions as well.

The title of my dissertation, *In the Mix*, is a nod to the mixtape culture through which early hiphop was first circulated. This form of musical exchange and cultural dissemination was also the process through which a number of DJs an MCs with whom I spoke were first introduced to the genre. Many of them also remember having to use a pencil to rewind the cassette tape; in terms of “old skool credibility,” this constitutes a very different kind of “pencil test.”

The expression “in the mix” is also an allusion to the supposed “mixed-racedness” of coloureds, their equidistant positioning between essential whiteness and blackness, and how this demographic is regarded in relation to these socially constructed polarities.

In my first chapter I focus on the implications of racial codification imposed by the Population Registration Act of 1950, which required all people within South Africa’s borders to

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36 The notorious “pencil test” was administered during apartheid under conditions where racial classification was in dispute. When a standard pencil was pushed into a person’s hair, the ease with which it slipped out, would decide racial category. If the object could be smoothly removed, the person was declared white. If the pencil stuck due to the coarse texture of their hair, the person was determined to be either coloured, or black African, but certainly not white.
stipulate their racial status on a tiered scheme of white, Indian, coloured, and black African. This is followed by a brief review of South African ethnomusicological literature and a summary of extant theoretical approaches to parsing coloured identity, the latter tracing a shifting academic emphasis from ideas of racial, to cultural instantiation. I draw on Lawrence Blum’s notion of “peoplehood” (2015) to motivate what I propose is the fundamental tenet of Cape Town-based hiphop, namely, a commitment to challenging negative stereotypes of colouredness in the South African imaginary. I combine this outlook with Stuart Hall’s theory of “trans-coding” (1997), an explication of the means by which minority groupings resist and attempt to subvert negative representational tropes. I identify three modalities of trans-coding in Hall’s writing – which I interpret as 1) substitution; 2) reversal; and 3) provocation – and demonstrate throughout the rest of my dissertation how coloured MC’s employ these strategies to assert self-identity.

The second chapter describes the experiences of socio-political and spatial dislocation exacted on the coloured community writ large, through the 1950 Group Areas Act. This mandate facilitated the forced removal of coloureds from neighborhoods within the city, to vastly underdeveloped regions on the periphery known collectively as the Cape Flats. Despite apartheid legislation having been repealed in the late 1990s, a large-scale physical repatriation to these residential and business zones is impossible due to contemporary neoliberal economic policy, and predatory real estate ventures. Influenced by theories of de-territorialization (Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari 1987; Arjun Appadurai 1990) I suggest that, given the physical absence of its speakers, an “acoustic re-territorialization” (Steven Feld 1996; Brendan LaBelle 2010) does the work of recuperating the cityscape through the soundscape of Kaaps, as exemplified in the expressive medium of Cape-based hiphop.
Chapter Three reiterates my contention that visual apperception precedes sonic comprehension – that visual markers eclipse sonic signifiers – when determining racial category. Specifically, I investigate the work of “rave-rappers” Die Antwoord (Afrikaans for “The Answer”). A pair of white MCs known for their exploitation of visual signifiers associated with Western Cape, coloured gang culture and the use of Kaaps as their primary linguistic basis, this group has been vilified as cultural appropriators of the worst kind, and also praised for their creative re-fashioning of South African white identity post-apartheid. I adapt Jacques Lacan’s “mirror theory” proposal (1936/1949) to examine the process through which a white musician constructs and embodies the figure of “Ninja,” the hyper-sexualized, and physically imposing frontman of Die Antwoord. I then compare public reception of Jones’ progression to the fictionalized ideal of “Ninja,” with coloured MC, Isaac Williams’ instantiation of the character “Isaac Mutant” (Williams is a contemporary of Jones, and frontman of the rap outfit Dookoom or “Conjuror”). I demonstrate how these two artists engage in the same fundamental practices of identity formation and representation with regard to musical output. However, due to their respective positionings within the South African system of racial taxonomy, Jones and Williams are held to vastly different standards of aesthetic evaluation, ethical accountability, and instances of objective censure by the South African public.

The final chapter addresses questions of language propriety and the varied socio-cultural ideologies bound up in specific speech forms. As noted, “standard,” suiwer (“pure”) Afrikaans is conventionally associated with white Afrikaners and, as the language of apartheid legislation, with separatist hegemony. Vernacular Afrikaans or Kaaps, by contrast, is affiliated with working-class coloured communities, and additionally, is the language of hiphop expression in the city and its surrounds. Following Marcel Mauss (1990), and Nancy Munn’s (1986) writing on
reciprocity, I examine a/symmetrical processes of giving and receiving, whereby Kaaps is imagined as a “gift” to be used in contemporary hiphop by non-native speaker white MCs. Citing Nicholas Harkness’s 2013 work on qualia, the qualitative experience of language, I interrogate the assertion made by coloured MC, Emile Jansen aka. Emile YX? that Kaaps functions as a signifier of indigeneity for working-class coloureds. As with my second chapter I propose a means of hearing the body as it is instantiated through the sound of Kaaps.

Throughout my dissertation I am interested in how social indices either confirm or disrupt entrenched expectations of racialized behavior. In Chapters Three and Four I dedicate attention to articulations of whiteness in Cape Town-based hiphop, my reason being that these post-apartheid constructions of identity nevertheless occur at the expense, or exploitation of social markers conventionally understood as the cultural possessions of coloureds. That representations of whiteness in South African popular culture and media outlets are upheld as normative ideals, means that even those representations derived of heterochthonous sources – flirtations with Kaaps, for example – are regarded as merely playful and legitimate extensions of fundamentally white identity. The same propensity for exploration and play is not permitted of coloureds, who are relegated to only a circumscribed allotment of stereotyped identitarian expressions.

In my writing – especially with regard to notions of visually and sonically informed apperception – I allude to “white practices of remembering, seeing, and hearing” as distinct from the manners in which coloured individuals might respond to the same experiences. This is not to say that all members of a particular grouping racialized by apartheid social and political impositions, will react in exactly the same way. I insist however that apartheid rule succeeded in socializing its populace to “racialized ways of being” that persist in the contemporary South
African mindset. To illustrate this idea, and to offer critical alternatives with which to dismantle such thinking, I make extensive use in my analysis of South African literature, and music videos, in addition to the expected hiphop lyrical and musical transcriptions. These additional media forms describe an aggregate of pervasive and normative racialized attitudes and biases in the country.

Some final comments: Hiphop in Cape Town reflects a predominantly heteronormative outlook replete with instances of misogyny, problematic language, and troublesome representations that plague much of the genre the world over. It is not my intention to offer a gendered critique of hiphop in the city, nor to offer a comparison between the local Cape Town scene and global iterations of hiphop (or even a US paradigm). The ethnographic insights presented in my work are mostly drawn from my conversations with male MCs and DJs, as they relate to the interrogative foci of visual and linguistic representation, considered in the thematic contexts of work by Dookoom, YoungstaCPT, Die Antwoord, Jack Parow, as well as the stage production Afrikaaps, and the film documentary of the same name. During my research in Cape Town I was able to speak with a number of women proponents of hiphop, and coloured culture in the city – Weaam Williams, Nadine Cloete, Rae Human, Bernadette Amansure aka. Burni Aman, Catherine Pretorius aka. Dope St. Jude, and Megan Steenkamp aka. Patty Monroe – and have included some of these insights in my work. The contributions of women’s voices to the development of hiphop in the city and negotiations of coloured self-identity are no less valid than those of their male counterparts. However, their perspectives deserve the full attention that I have been unable to provide here.
Chapter 2: In the Mix

[1'35"] My mother tongue is supposed to be Afrikaans although I feel alienated by it.

[2'18"] In terms of class, I’m not sure where I fit in to be honest.

[2'28"] In terms of race, I consider myself politically Black, culturally coloured.

- Excerpt from South African Candice Breitz’ video installation entitled “Profile (Variation B),” voiced by coloured artist Igshaan Adams.

[Chorus:]
_Aaml is mixed mense,
_Kom ons mix en meng it op._
Everyone is mixed race,
This purity lie must stop.
_Onse wêreld kan kwaai wies,
_Kom ons mix it verder op._
Every sound and culture’s
In my mixed mense’s hiphop.

[Translation:]
_We’re all mixed people,
Just throw it all together._
_Things could be great,
Keep stirring it up._
_...peoples’...._

- _Mix en Meng ‘it Op [“Stir It Up”]_ by Emile YX? and Mixed Mense

Having sketched out the contours of apartheid social engineering under the 1950 Population Registration Act, in this chapter I describe the impact that legalized racial designation has had on the social representation of coloureds. Sociological and historical disciplinary approaches to parsing colouredness have tended to conflate “biological,” racial identity with homogeneous cultural identity. This singular, delimiting focus has led to an overwhelmingly negative social appraisal of coloured identity, and deep-seated negative stereotypes within the South African popular imagination of coloured lived experience. The classification “coloured” as well as the meaning(s) of “colouredness” are openly contested by my interlocutors, members of the broad social grouping constrained by these terms. I argue that practitioners of Cape-based hiphop are nevertheless unified under Lawrence Blum’s notion of “peoplehood,” and moreover,
are committed to challenging unfavorable representations of colouredness circulated in the public sphere. This objective, I contend, is achieved by mobilizing the resistive representational strategy known as “trans-coding,” advanced by Stuart Hall, through the equally resistive performative expression of hiphop music.

A tired epithet imagines coloureds as “too black” for full social inclusion under white rule, a shared cultural affiliation by way of the Afrikaans language notwithstanding. At the same time, coloureds are considered “too white” and perhaps undeserving under the current regime, to benefit from legislative efforts to assuage the wounds of apartheid. Another overworked assumption views coloureds relationally as an aberrant, hybrid formulation between essentialized settler colonial whiteness, and autochthonous, “African” blackness. Coloureds are regarded as a social grouping without a definitive lineage; without a recognizable culture; without an autonomous language; and without any justifiable claim to land or place. In short, coloureds are defined in the South African imaginary by a sense of lack.

Despite these misgivings and despite the post-1994 promise of all-inclusive “Rainbow Nationalism,” a central argument in my work is that racial classification remains the primary means of self, and social identification in South Africa. I maintain that racial and therefore cultural identity, is constructed and contested through the combined acts of looking and listening. In this dual process, visual apperception (what is seen) supersedes, but does not supplant language use (what is heard). For example: the 1950 Population Registration Act prioritized visual presentation as an order of racial difference, with relevant sections of the Act defining “a white person” as: “[someone] who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously
a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person.”¹ This method was scaffolded by a tenacious attitude of language chauvinism holding standard “white” Afrikaans in higher regard than the Kaaps spoken by working-class coloureds. It was primarily appearance, and then demeanor or “general acceptance” that affirmed one’s racial position, a system of evaluation that persists today. In the present moment, “colouredness” is rationalized through the related faculties of visual and aural discernment – what one looks and is therefore assumed to sound like – a stubborn mode of thinking that owes its origin to apartheid-era legislation.

Sociologist Zimitri Erasmus posits that the “look” or how one is visually perceived, is motivated by “a racialized mind’s eye.” Put another way, the seemingly incontrovertible optic appraisal of race, relies on a complex of signifiers that denote one’s relative position in a hierarchized social structure. Racial categorization is situated within a “regime of visibility” that acknowledges the body as always already marked “prior to the power relations that [give] the mark its meaning.”² The continued use of apartheid nomenclature in South Africa demonstrates that the habitus surrounding racial category remains immutable as ever, coupling the idea of a myopic “regime of visibility,” to a static “regime of representation.” To this point, “Being coloured,” writes Erasmus, “means being the privileged black and the ‘not quite white’ person…[it] is about living an identity that is clouded in sexualized shame and associated with


drunkenness and jollity.”3 Assessment of race by visual means, confirms the assumed manner in which a member of that racial category is supposed to act.

Jennifer Lynn Stoever makes a similar intervention – connecting racial category to expectations of behavior – but one that more directly supports my contention that the sound of the working-class coloured voice figures as a trenchant index of coloured racial classification. Articulated most notably via Kaaps, but also English, former speech variety especially then becomes an expectation and trope of coloured behavior. Stoever invites a consideration of the complicity of race and sound with her proposals of “the sonic color line,” and the “listening ear.” She writes that:

The sonic color line describes the process of racializing sound – how and why certain bodies are expected to produce, desire, and live amongst particular sounds – and its product, the hierarchical [nature of race relationships]. The listening ear drives the sonic color line; it is a figure for how dominant listening practices accrue – and change – over time, as well as a descriptor for how the dominant culture exerts pressure on individual listening practices to conform to the sonic color line’s norms. Through the listening ear’s surveillance, discipline, and interpretation, certain associations between race and sound come to seem normal, natural, and “right.”4

As mutually constitutive paradigms, the sonic color line and the listening ear ensure that the supposed “drunkenness and jollity” of coloureds is invariably both heard, and expected to be performed, in Kaaps. By specifically rapping in this vernacular form, the musicians quoted in my study complicate normative understandings and modes of representation – the socially inscribed tropes – that immediately confine coloureds to only a circumscribed set of behaviors. As they


proclaim, denounce, and celebrate in *Kaaps*, these artists skillfully mobilize the conventions of hiphop – a genre known for its potential as a medium of social uplift – and simultaneously embrace an aesthetic characterized by the incendiary critique of authoritarian practice.

**Race and Racialized Groups**

The idea of “race” as an essential biological trait or scientific fact has been thoroughly debunked in academic literature. The social implications of racial categorization, the very constructed-ness of this idea, however, is a focal point of my writing. In their rumination on post-1994 performances of identity *Categories of Persons*, Megan Jones and Jacob Dlamini observed that even after the end of official apartheid, the issues of race and of racially mediated social markers, continue to vex public rhetoric: “Most of the time when South Africans claim an identity, the cornerstone is race-shaped.” Quoting Paul Gilroy, the authors concluded that: “attempts to move beyond race flounder because we cannot do so without deploying racial terms.”

Supporting this idea, Deborah Posel notes that even South Africa’s well-intentioned Employment Equity Act of 1998: “[simply produces a] renewed salience of racial identification in the project of transformation.” Striving to dismantle the deceit of “race,” one invariably runs into the problem of using, or inadvertently reifying the very categories being opposed.

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5 An expression borrowed from South Africa’s 1996 Constitution, “[rejecting] apartheid racial categories…in favour of what it calls ‘categories of persons.’” These categories of persons are defined in two ways: on the basis of a history of unfair discrimination, and as grounds for the promotion and/or achievement of equality through measures such as affirmative action.”


Add to this quandary, Zimitri Erasmus’ observation, often cited in South African explorations of non-white identity, that: “There is no such thing as the Black ‘race.’ Blackness, whiteness, and colouredness exist, but they are cultural, historical, and political identities.”

Today, self-identification as “coloured” – if not, the very use of the word – suggests complicity with separatist ideology, endorsing polity that allowed certain privileges for this group over “ethnic” black Africans. The fact that coloureds were not subject to the Natives Laws Amendment Act of 1952 requiring black Africans to carry “pass books,” nor to the Act’s many “influx control” precursors, is a prime example of such a concession. My solution to this semantic, and philosophical pitfall in my work, is simultaneously to acknowledge the impact of apartheid-era terminology – the reality of its various interpretations – as well as the experiences of those whose very existence it was intended to immure.

I take my cue from Lawrence Blum, who distinguishes between identities based on the concept of “race,” and the affiliations that occur as a result of social groupings having been externally “racialized.” J.B. Blumenbach’s nineteenth-century taxonomy proposed five essential races – which Blum refers to as the “classical racial groups” – each with its own fixed set of behavioral and psychological features. This taxonomy led not only to racialist thinking (a belief in the existence of discrete races), but also to hegemonic racist thinking (the inherent superiority of some racial groups over others). “Racialized groups,” argues Blum, do however share recognizable intimate, and social realities: 1) a sense of collective or “linked fate” implied by

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8 Erasmus, Coloured by History, 14.

shared socio-historical, and therefore, socio-economic experiences; and 2), the obtrusion of racist thinking and racial ideology onto these racialized categories.

A racialized group is defined as: “a real social entity that has been created historically [whose] existence transcends merely contingent current classificatory practices, although those practices generally play some role in sustaining the existence of the group in question.” A case of the chicken-and-the-egg perhaps, but a distinction I find helpful. Within racialized groups there exists the possibility of further self-identification into complementary groups of “affirmation, solidarity, pride, and meaningful affiliation.” My writing proceeds (albeit, circuitously) with the understanding that all the individuals included in my dissertation would at one stage in South Africa’s history, legally have been described as “coloured.” This “linked fate,” described as “a place of lack” by MC Burni Aman, a former member of the all-female Cape Town hiphop crew Godessa, of course had its origin in explicitly racist thinking. This sense of “lack” also gave rise to intra-group cultural expression and political identification, the broad subject of the present work.

Methodology and Literature Review

My interactions with musicians and other interlocutors consisted of interviews ranging in length from forty-five minutes to an hour each, usually over quarts of Black Label, and packs of Stuyvesant Reds (referred to colloquially as “strawberry flavor” on account of the cigarette label’s red swish). I also conducted informal conversations at performance venues and recording studios, seminars, or related cultural events such as book launches, and stage productions. I was fortunate in most instances to be invited into the artists’ homes, or otherwise meetings would be

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arranged at a nearby restaurant, or coffee shop. The formal engagements with participants in this study followed an outline of questions related to the varied instantiation of coloured identity specifically within hiphop music. There were also extended periods of non-directed conversation addressing related aspects of identity performance. These were structured as listening sessions where my informants and I evaluated old and new hiphop tracks, while discussing the respective artists’ personal involvement with hiphop culture. My project is not so much a recounting of the history and development of the genre in South Africa, but rather an examination of how a particular racialized grouping attempts to “historically construct, socially maintain and individually create and experience music”\textsuperscript{11} in the present socio-political climate.

The study of hiphop in Cape Town is not a new field of inquiry by any means, but as with any longstanding topic of research, a healthy attitude of skepticism has developed amongst its practitioners. That documentation is skewed towards the contributions and reflections of a handful of pioneering artists from the period of the genre’s inception in the late 1980s, has led to a pronounced sense of “interlocutor fatigue.” This is evidenced in well-rehearsed answers to often-repeated questions found in much print media and other journalistic forums. Many contemporary hiphop practitioners voice concerns that information gathered for the purposes of academic scrutiny, is rarely disseminated within the communities under consideration. International scholars might also “parachute in” (a phrase commonly used by my interlocutors) for only brief periods of time, and on completion of their work, sever any social bonds and obligations established. Additionally, access to published material is obscured through the formal register and theoretical requirements of academic discourse. Most contentiously, the analyses

\textsuperscript{11} Tim Rice, “Toward the Remodeling of Ethnomusicology” \textit{Ethnomusicology}, 31/3 (Autumn, 1987), 474.
offered by both local and international researchers, misrepresent the views of the genre’s proponents.

It should be noted that scholarly accounts of Cape-based hiphop exist only as individual essays in collected volumes and not as full-length monographs. In the past as it does now, the body of work that makes up the South African ethnomusicological canon, concedes an undeniable bias towards the study of either indigenous, or popular, black African musical experience. Hugh Tracey (1948/1970), David Dargie (1988), David Coplan (1985/2008, and 1995), Veit Erlmann (1991, and 1996), Christopher Ballantine (1994/2012), Gwen Ansell (2005), Carol Muller (2000), Louise Meintjes (2003, and 2017), Marie Jorritsma (2011), and Gavin Steingo (2016), have all contributed important texts to the field. These authors employ the system of racial classification codified under apartheid, and the historical specificity of their respective investigations reflects the socio-geographical partitioning and stratification of separatist rule. However, the temptation in much of this work to read “African” as “exclusively black African,” and the scant consideration given to a more expansive conception of “Blackness” is nonetheless problematic.

Marie Jorritsma observes that despite the interrogatory shift in the late 1980s and early 1990s from “rural to urban musical traditions,” colouredness remain[ed] insufficiently acknowledged as a “part of African identity.”¹² Her work Sonic Spaces of the Karoo (2011) documenting the choral practice of a farming community in the rural Eastern Cape, offers an important intervention in the study of “coloured musical practice” (as does Denis-Constant Martin’s Coon Carnival published in 1999, and his 2013 survey of musical style, Sounding the Cape). Jorritsma adopts a clearly self-reflexive approach in considering the entrenched power

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dynamics of race, language, and culture endemic to her field site, and to South African socio-political dynamics more broadly.\(^13\) She is not the first to take this approach: In Carol Muller’s ethnography of Nazarite women’s performance, the author acknowledges her own positionality with regard to that of her interlocutors. Muller writes: “I had grown up in kwaZulu Natal and so I had a support network in place before I even entered the field. Nevertheless, the success of apartheid structures was not just the creation of physical boundaries between its peoples, but also of emotional, cultural, and economic divisions. At this level, we all lived in separate worlds, and have been fearful of ‘crossing the borders.’” Returning to Jorritsma, this author candidly describes her position as a white, Afrikaans-speaker with relatives in the farm-owning community of Graaff-Reinet, as well as the experience (given her research context), of having to overcome “an initial oversensitivity to [her own] whiteness.”\(^14\) Yet, the neoliberal impulse to “[place] the voices of coloured people at the center of [her] study,” or Jorritsma’s benevolent attempt to “inscribe the voices” of non-white members of a laborer-class farming district – both of them unfortunate turns of phrase – raise important questions: For whom are all these well-meaning interventions being staged?\(^15\) And to what extent, paraphrasing Muller, are borders really being crossed here?

I say this not to belabor the false binary of “emic versus etic” that has occupied much of ethnomusicological thought. As Deborah Wong notes, developments in native anthropology and autoethnography have led to productive new perspectives on “how proximity is imagined and


\(^{14}\) Jorritsma, 16.

\(^{15}\) *Ibid.*, 2.
enacted, and how the epistemological problem of knowing is put forward.” At the same time as these “complex” reflexive moves are being made, it is disingenuous to allow the fact of a distinct paucity in scholarship regarding “characteristically” coloured musical engagements produced by culture-bearers or the members of this ethnoracial grouping themselves, to go unmentioned in disciplinary discourse.

Among those contributing to this burgeoning field are ethnomusicologist Sylvia Bruinders with her forthcoming investigation of coloured marching bands, and Quentin Williams, whose interrogation of hiphop linguistics, *Remix Multilingualism*, was published in 2017. Adam Haupt is arguably the most prolific scholar in this area. Apart from work featured in edited volumes, his monographs on South African media and popular culture – *Stealing Empire* (2008), and *Static: Race and Representation in Post-apartheid Music, Media, and Film* (2012) – describe numerous instances of the agentive and resistive possibilities explored by coloured musicians through hiphop music. Additionally, as co-editors on the 2019 book project *Neva*

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Again: *Hip Hop Art, Activism and Education in Post-apartheid South Africa*, Haupt and Williams facilitate an important ideological intervention in South African hiphop studies. By including the perspectives of local hiphop musicians in addition to academic commentators, they mitigate the charge that scholarly inquiry neglects wholesale the insights of the performers/members of the community themselves.

Challenges to intellectual representation such as these take on additional measures of significance when productions of “colouredness” are subsumed and effectively erased, within a totality of uncritical “Blackness” or “Africanity.” Take for example Louise Meintjes’ suggestion that the “gritty and raspy,” technologically-mediated bass guitar sound of *mbaqanga*, constitutes both “authentic Zulu-ness,” as well as the quintessential “sound of Africa.” Left unchallenged, the link between sonic representation and ethno-national identity produces a totalizing master-narrative that leaves little room for the exploration or appreciation of alternative acoustic and identitarian formulations. Meintjes does however acknowledge the difficulty of implementing such a unifying framework. “How,” she asks, “does Africanness come to be located in a single sound? While the idea of an Africanness is essentializing, ahistorical, and a gloss of a diverse geopolitical region, it takes on a particular form in the local context and performs in ways specific to its music-makers’ personal and social investments, ideas, and ambitions. Africanness emerges as an utterance out of a stylistic and social history and from a locally constituted consciousness concerned with race, national citizenship, and ethnicity.”¹⁸ This is an important notion to bear in mind, given the fiercely contested issues of “race, national citizenship, and ethnicity” coloring the South African intellectual and ideological landscapes. But besides Williams’ monograph *Remix Multilingualism*, there are no comparable studies explicitly

addressing the connection between sonic expression and coloured identity in the manner that Meintjes’ seminal work conjoins sound with Zulu identity.

Given the dearth of writing about coloured musical and cultural expression, studies of coloured identity in South African academic literature can mostly be found in sociological treatises. These have tended towards narrow models of socio-political instantiation, each addressing in some way, the relative indigeneity and “Africanness” (or not), of this demographic. Analyzing historical South African writing about the supposedly intrinsic “nature of coloured identity,” Mohamed Adhikari derives a four-part schema that traces various scholars’ attempts to apprehend “colouredness.” Adhikari describes these paradigms as: 1) an essentialist approach; 2) an instrumentalist standpoint; 3) a social constructionist view; and 4) a theory of cultural creolization.19

Theoretical Approaches to Coloured Identity

Essentialist conceptions of racial categorization dominated writing about coloured history up until the 1980s when, influenced by Black Consciousness rhetoric, scholars sought to “distance themselves from racialized thinking or any idea that coloured group consciousness was based on biological or primordial ties.”20 According to Adhikari, the “essentialist school” took for granted that the coloured population came into being as a result of white-on-black miscegenation. The “essentialist” archetype is further divided into three ideological camps: 1) “traditionalists,” who aligned with scientific racist assumptions of white hegemony and the


20 Ibid., 11.
notion that blood/racial mixing contributed to the (moral) inferiority of non-white groupings; 2) the “liberal essentialists” in favor of assimilation, who viewed racial segregation as detrimental to South Africa’s economic modernization and growth, yet still regarded coloureds through a paternalistic lens; and 3) the “progressionists,” the educated, and politically conservative coloured elite who aspired to full inclusion to the dominant realm of society, imagining the level of sophistication exemplified by “white civilization” as an imminently attainable goal.

The “instrumentalist” approach set the tone for the two decades of anti-apartheid writing following the 1976 Soweto uprising. Galled by coloured participation in prime minister P.W. Botha’s notorious tri-cameral parliamentary system, this faction rejected “coloured identity” as an invention of the apartheid government, and regarded the term “coloured” as simply an instrument of white supremacist thinking. Adhikari suggests that instrumentalism, characterized by unified non-white resistance to domination, ironically lost ideological purchase in the 1990s when in the run-up to South Africa’s first democratic election, the black African majority-led ANC appealed specifically to the interests of coloureds as an ethno-racial grouping separate from black Africanity. Both essentialism and instrumentalism by Adhikari’s reckoning, saw “colouredness” as a fixed and unchangeable category; an undesirable condition by all accounts, arising from race-mixing on the one hand, and implemented as a deliberate fiction of white social engineering, on the other. Neither essentialism, nor instrumentalism factored in “the fluidities and ambiguities inherent in processes of coloured self-identification.” 

21 Adhikari, 14.

22 Adhikari, 14.
more comprehensive viewpoint, was the focus of “social constructionism,” the third strand in Adhikari’s historiography.

Writing in the late 1980s, proponents of social constructionism acknowledged the potential for individual agency – the reciprocal relationships between political, cultural, and other social determinants in constructing identity – and moreover, the notion that identity formation is a continual process. Adhikari takes particular umbrage at the idea that coloured identity *per se*, was specifically *imposed* by the apartheid state. He suggests instead, that under white supremacist rule, an inferior social status was normatively ascribed to coloureds (and black Africans) through legislative and administrative means, and subsequently reinforced by everyday social discrimination. Identity can certainly be cultivated by and derived from the foundational basis of racial category, but it encompasses elements of “resistance as well as collaboration, protest as well as accommodation”\(^\text{23}\) to white hegemony. Adhikari asserts that social identity must accordingly be regarded and interrogated as an amalgam of numerous, often contradictory, aspects of lived experience.

The final consideration in Adhikari’s rubric is “creolization,” influenced by the work of Caribbean scholar Edouard Glissant and brought into the discussion of South African coloured identity expression by Zimitri Erasmus. With her introduction to the edited volume *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place* (2001), Erasmus offers a conceptualization of coloured identity that shifts focus from “race” or “racial mixture,” to cultural practice. Diverse coloured subjectivities, she reasons – perpetually fluid, and inherently ambiguous – have developed as a result of “cultural creativity.” According to Erasmus, “[these are] creolized formations shaped by South

Africa’s history of colonialism, slavery, segregation, and apartheid.” Following Glissant, Erasmus maintains that even under conditions of marginalization, cultural creativity is still agentive, drawing influence from practices of both dominant and subjugated classes, and not simply a result of direct assimilation. Creolization in this sense is not only concerned with the fact of cultural mixture over time, but also considers those conditions under which new formulations of identity are made and effected.

Noting the historical complicity of coloureds in the socio-political repudiation of black Africans is fundamental to this understanding of identity. If the apartheid project was one of valorizing settler-colonial whiteness through racist means, the ethical imperative in the present moment is for coloureds to embrace their previously renounced “affiliation with Africa.” Erasmus cautions however, that in re-thinking coloured identity from this liberatory and anti-racist standpoint, it is important as well not to conflate “blackness” or “Africanness” with moral integrity and political legitimacy. Coloured subjectivities must come to be understood as courageous and intentionally realized “encounters with difficulty,” deriving from a conscious reckoning with the “entanglements” of a painful past (another idea borrowed from Glissant), and the impact that these various beginnings – oftentimes unknown, and unknowable – have had on contemporary cultural production.

The creolization model as advocated by Erasmus, is an obvious response to the delimiting attitudes of essentialism and instrumentalism outlined by Adhikari. And yet, critics of

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24 Erasmus, *Coloured by History*, 14.

25 Ibid., 16.

26 Ibid., 24.
creolization warn vehemently of the danger in reading Erasmus as conflating cultural fusion with racial mixture, thereby reiterating the notion of colouredness as a “mixed” biological category.  

Sarah Nuttall for example, recognizes the utility of creolization in examining coloured identity politics, but also sees how this theory could be deployed to interrogate the instantiation of South African cultural identities, more generally. Nuttall’s argument rests on the fact that: 1) processes of creolization are invariably associated with legacies of violence, and 2) creolization has played an integral role in the creation of diasporic communities. South Africa’s history of slavery meets the first requirement of this thesis; the country’s geographical placement at the juncture of “the Indian and Atlantic worlds as well as the land mass of the African interior,” and the numerous influences absorbed by these regions, meets the second. Nuttall maintains that given South Africa’s emergence as a nation from “processes of mobility, the boundaries of which have constantly been reinvented over time, through war, dislocation and possession,” creolization could just as easily describe the formation of white and black African subjectivities as well. This viewpoint however implicitly forecloses the expression of individual, and historically racialized experiences.

Bridging the intellectual gap between these two accounts, Helene Strauss describes the analytic of creolization as a series of ongoing mediations, noting that although they “necessarily produce new cultural and identity formations, the speed at which these transformations take place varies depending on the social factors at play in the social exchange.” I take this to mean

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28 Ibid., 24.
that Nuttall’s ecumenical stance on creolization – first articulated in a volume co-edited with Cheryl-Ann Michael – that post-colonial theorizations of culture tended to emphasize racial specificity, and that assessments of racial identity ought instead to focus on the intimacies and intricacies of all social affinities, holds true. But so too, does Erasmus’ contention. Creolization has purchase in the evaluation of a specifically coloured identity, because of the historical degree of cultural exposure to a variety of racialized subjectivities that this grouping encountered, given their relative social positioning under settler-colonial, and apartheid (not to mention, contemporary neo-colonial) conditions. Strauss adds:

The small-scale identity alterations that people have to make in moments of intercultural contact, and the psychological divisions that people have to negotiate in contexts of conflict and domination, are necessarily staged against the backdrop of larger political and social developments.

This final reading of creolization marks it as a strategy of contingency, one of skillful accommodation to contemporaneous socio-political ideology. Any port in the storm provides a safe haven. From an Orwellian perspective, it might appear though, that we are indeed all creolized, but some of us are just more creolized than others.

Contingent on individual circumstance as Adhikari, Erasmus, and Strauss’ interpretations of creolization may seem, they nevertheless represent an important intervention in the interrogation of coloured identity by coloured academics and theorists themselves. It is tempting


31 Strauss, 24.
in the context of debates surrounding this idea, to bring up Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s observation that “[j]ust as black popular music – blues and jazz – could only gain popular currency when white musicians played it, black racial theory could only begin to make headway in the ‘mainstream’ social sciences when reframed and advanced by white scholars.”\(^\text{32}\) So, what, if anything, distinguishes performances of identity as expressly “coloured”?

**Coloured Is…Coloured Ain’t….**

In her 2017 monograph, Erasmus explores a number of “productive tensions” related to processes of racialization, each of them demanding the “double politics” of “[acknowledging] the ways in which race continues to matter, while working towards its undoing.”\(^\text{33}\) While South African academic inquiries might have moved on to prioritize the ways in which cultural identities are being performed under a new political order, these identities are still linked to the racial designations of apartheid and the racialized assumptions fostered to maintain the separatist policies of this erstwhile regime. Erasmus describes a post-1994 scene where “politically progressive parents” – one classified as white, and the other as black African – insist on their biological progeny being identified and classified simply as “African” (understood nevertheless as “black African”). While this move circumvents “the stain of dominance attached to whiteness,” it simultaneously avoids the undesirable “misrecognition of their child as Coloured,


\(^{33}\) Erasmus lists four “productive tensions;” only two of which are germane to my study, namely: “a tension between the assumed visibility of race, and ways of coming to know and engaging with meanings of race that challenge this assumption; [and] a tension between the rigidity of race categories and the possibilities open for new ways of seeing Self and Other.” Erasmus, *Race Otherwise*, xxiii-xxiv.
because of the stain of degeneration, disloyalty, and lack attached to this category.” If descent is a morally objectionable criterion for racial classification and harkens back to capricious apartheid-era procedure, then a lived understanding of everyday behaviors (behavioral tropes associated with visually racialized bodies), again becomes the framework for making sense of the world, and deciding social order in the democratic moment.

Gerhard Maré considers such “race thinking” – “a paradigm in which we accept that there are races, that we can tell what they are and who belongs to them, and that we can use such knowledge in our daily thinking and actions” – a ubiquitous psychic presence in South Africa. Quite simply: “[R]ace thinking is everywhere. Race has been thoroughly naturalized, it is so ‘obvious’ to us, that it seems to invite no questions.” To quote Michael Billig, on whose theory of banal nationalism Maré’s assertion is based, race thinking “far from being an intermittent mood…is the endemic condition.” The couple’s response in Erasmus’ anecdote, demonstrates that like Billig’s comparison between a flag hanging surreptitiously in a public building as opposed to being conspicuously brandished at a political event, race thinking is not dependent on conventionally understood or explicit acts of racism for its articulation. Rather, race thinking can be traced to the “routinely familiar habits of language” inculcated under apartheid to remind

34 Erasmus, Race Otherwise, 90.


36 Ibid., 33.


38 Ibid., 93.
each individual of their place in the socio-political hierarchy; lingering habits that continue to influence taken-for-granted imaginations of racialized behavior.

Recall my earlier concession, that despite their range of socio-political, and racialized self-identifications, all the interlocutors in my ethnography would have been classified as coloured under the 1950 Population Registration Act. It follows then, that these same individuals would either have directly encountered racist behaviors predicated on negative assumptions of coloured behavior, or at the very least, be familiar with the array of unflattering stereotypes attributed to coloureds. The definitive or “quintessential coloured experience” is then, I propose, of having at some point been confronted with racist suppositions and treatment based on racialized status. “Colouredness” is the qualitative experience held ubiquitously by a social grouping that has been explicitly racialized as such. This idea is inspired by Tommie Shelby’s notion of “pragmatic nationalism,” a theory of black political solidarity that does not rely on “those who are racialized as black to embrace blackness...as a valued or necessary component of the ‘self’ at all.” Shelby suggests that participation in pragmatic black solidarity – adapted obviously in my interpretation to a pragmatic coloured solidarity – requires at its core, an acknowledgement “that antiblack racism unjustly circumscribes the freedom and opportunities”39 of those towards whom it is directed. Where my analogy diverges from Shelby’s is in the author’s framing of pragmatic nationalism as a political strategy (political in the conventional sense), for recognizing and counteracting racialization.

The hiphop interlocutors with whom I am concerned, choose to construct their identities along a broad spectrum of racial, ethno-racial, and cultural indices. While some of these

perspectives might stand in direct opposition to each other, they all take as given, a shared working-class socio-economic and aesthetic position. A cursory example of such contesting viewpoints can be gleaned by comparing tracks/choruses of two Cape Town hiphop stalwarts: Deon “Ready D” Daniels, and Lindley Heynes aka. “Linkris the Genius.” Ready D’s track Intro, from the 2006 album *Ysterbek* [“Metalmouth”] begins:

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[Verse:]
I am not a coloured,
Never was and will never be.
Ek moet mal wies om integee,
*Vir my enemy!*

[Translation:]
I gotta be crazy to yield
To my enemy!

[...]  
Because skin colour is not evidence,
To try and force me into a box.
[To] classify me as a gangster, ‘n skelm, of ‘n klops,
Oor die kleur van my vel, and my street talks.
Because of the color of my skin...
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An excerpt from Linkris’ track *Omdat ek Kullid is* [“Because I’m Kullid”], released in 2015, reads:

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[Verse:]
Ek ken van arm wies,
Honger ly, en sulke nonsense.
Ons was drie gesinne wat bly
innie selle servants’ quarters.

[Translation:]
I know about being poor,
Being hungry, all of that.
Growing up, we were three families,
Crammed into the same servants’ quarters.

Ek survive elke dag,
*Omdat ek Kullid is!*

[...]  
I survive every day,
Because I’m Kullid!
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Whereas D refuses a designation imposed by the apartheid state, Linkris embraces the term, citing his ability to survive socio-economic hardship precipitated by apartheid rule as a function of his racialized identity. Secondly, their resistance to negative racialization is conveyed through

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40 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckxWwABf_sw
the means of hiphop cultural production, and not through traditionally understood political engagement where the intention is to bring about tangible legislative and social change. This approach aligns more closely to Shelby’s discussion of “impure symbolic dissent,” an evaluation of political involvement amongst members of marginalized communities, where the fact of declaring an opposition to injustice through performative expression is prioritized. In this formulation the goal is to cultivate space for communicating a resistive “voice in and of itself, regardless of influence”\textsuperscript{41} or despite the potential to elicit active civic participation.

Following Shelby’s proposal, an instance of “pure” dissent in the South African context would be exemplified by the peaceful march to Cape Town’s parliament buildings on September 2, 1989. Under the banner “The People Shall Govern” (a line taken from the Freedom Charter, adopted by the South African Congress Alliance in 1955), protestors, among them noted anti-apartheid figures Dr. Allen Boesak, and Essa Moosa, were fired on by riot police using water cannons. The ordnance charge was specifically prepared with a mixture of purple dye, so that those hit by the cannon-bursts could later be easily identified and rounded up. What became known as the “Purple Rain Protest” accompanied by the slogan “The Purple Shall Govern,” was the final instance of the apartheid government using violent force to suppress civil disobedience. One week after the incident Archbishop Desmond Tutu led another march through the streets of the city (this time unhindered by police intervention), and on February 11, 1990, only a few months later, Nelson Mandela was released from prison.

By contrast, those engaged in “impure symbolic dissent” – while their grievances are no less valid – perhaps lack the moral authority or social capital of “pure” dissidents.

Taking politically-conscious hiphop as an example, such forms of resistance employ “negative” rhetorical strategies including: offensive language, stereotyping, and espousing hedonistic, materialistic behaviors such as conspicuous material consumption. Importantly, impure symbolic dissent does not necessarily aspire to inculcate a sense of political activism in its listeners, but rather serves to fulfill the expressive functions of 1) publicly highlighting and denouncing injustice; 2) publicly affirming an allegiance with oppressed subjects; and 3) explicitly and definitively refusing loyalty to authoritarian state entities who proliferate injustice. Ready D’s excerpt meets all three criteria. In the matter of only a few lines, he rejects the unfavorable tropes associated with the term “coloured” (gang affiliation, buffoonery, use of vernacular Afrikaans), as a racialized category enforced by social and legislative means. D asserts his vehement opposition to apartheid ideology, and in a skillful rhetorical move, implicates himself as “an enemy of the state” (the line: “Ek moet mal wies on integee vi’ my enemy”). With his intimate descriptions of the lived consequences of apartheid, Linkris most obviously satisfies the first two expressive modes of impure symbolic dissent. A significant component of coloured identity in this instance is survival, the capacity to skarrel or “hustle” (a trait described at a later point in Linkris’ track) in spite of desperate circumstances. I interpret “colouredness” here as reflecting a socio-cultural attitude, rather than a legal racialized category; an identity that existed prior and in opposition to the term’s codification under apartheid rule.

A confluence of ideological and aesthetic intention is only one element in the aggregate of factors that unites these two MCs. I turn again to Lawrence Blum and his notion of solidarity engendered through a “sense of peoplehood” as it applies to his description of “racialized groups.” In Blum’s estimation an identity derived from one’s racialization is an entirely feasible

42 Shelby, Dissent, 73.
proposition. While there are no positive feelings to be had from the fact of a racialized identity having been imposed, sentiments of affirmation and solidarity can nevertheless develop through shared lived experience. Affiliation with a racialized group transcends the vagaries of mere common experience, extending to a “sense of historical peoplehood,” an acknowledgement, if not direct experience, of collective discrimination. And so, to reiterate: the hiphop artists in my study have all been racialized by the stipulations of the Population Registration Act and subjected to the social stigmas developed over time, attached to colouredness. My interlocutors describe varied, often contradictory articulations of selfhood. However, they are allied in their intention to disrupt the negative stereotypes associated with the social group into which they have historically been racialized. This singular purpose unites them through a “sense of a broader peoplehood.” With the closing section of this chapter, I describe the theoretical model I employ throughout the rest of my dissertation, to interrogate coloured hiphop artists’ instantiations of resistance to negative typecasting.

Social Types, Stereotypes, and Trans-Coding

In a 1977 essay Richard Dyer explained the distinction between a “social type” on the one hand, and a “stereotype” on the other. The former constitutes “any simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characterization in which a few traits are foregrounded and change or ‘development’ is kept to a minimum.”\textsuperscript{43} Specificity is viewed through the lens of generality; we interpret and relate the unfamiliar to conditions that we have already encountered or experienced. People might for example, be categorized by the cultural and social roles

\textsuperscript{43} Richard Dyer, \textit{Gays and Film} (London: London Film Institute, 1977), 28.
we assign to them (employee or co-worker), distinctions of group orientation (gender- or class- basis), and further still, by their demeanor or personality traits (outspoken or reserved). Our image of an individual is constructed from a myriad of assumptions based on “different orders of typification” which in turn, contribute to the production of meaning and our continual rationalization, or our “making sense” of the world. If an understanding of “types” requires the parsing of an aggregate of behaviors, “stereotyping” is an extreme reductive measure. Stereotypes work to fix social expectations of “the Other” by first essentializing and then intentionally exaggerating difference.

This idea is crucial to appreciating the function of stereotypes in the maintenance of hegemonic power structures where undesirable character traits are imposed on a subordinate group by the ruling entity. Stuart Hall emphasizes that stereotypes relate to social types, just as unacceptable behavioral models stand in opposition to normative ones. The rigidity of stereotypes establishes symbolic boundaries, distinguishing the morally and culturally appropriate from the pathological and reprehensible. That such discourse operates on the principle of binary opposition, is central to the specific instance of racial stereotyping. Civility is contrasted to savagery, restraint is pitted against inhibition, thus establishing a useful and ready-made framework for the racialized antithesis of white versus black.

Beginning around the time of British imperial expansion throughout Africa, these signifiers of difference gradually came to exemplify absolute, incontrovertible biological differences between the “human species.” Hall’s thorough assessment is worth quoting in full:


45 Ibid., 258.
[There arose] the supposed link on the one hand, between the white ‘races’ and intellectual development – refinement, learning and knowledge, a belief in reason, the presence of developed institutions, formal government and law, and a ‘civilized restraint’ in their emotional, sexual and civil life, all of which are associated with ‘Culture’: and on the other hand, the link between the black ‘races’ and whatever is instinctual – the open expression of emotion and feeling rather than intellect, a lack of ‘civilized refinement’ in sexual and social life, a reliance on custom and ritual, and the lack of developed civil institutions, all of which are linked to ‘Nature.’ Finally, there is the polarized opposition between racial ‘purity’ on the one hand, and the ‘pollution’ which comes from intermarriage, racial hybridity and interbreeding.46

Late nineteenth-century scientific racial theory proposed that whereas “white races” developed Culture to bend Nature to their will, for “black races” Culture and Nature were interchangeable.47

Connections can certainly be drawn between the repertoire of British anti-Black stereotypes, and those biases peculiar to the South African purview. But the strict binary described by Hall is obviously complicated in the present instance, with the inclusion of “colouredness” as a separate racial category. As I have mentioned, the process of classifying people by “race” during apartheid was not a clear-cut endeavor. Along with optic appraisals of physical appearance, “common sense” understandings of behavior became important factors in fixing racial status. Criteria ranged from visual assessments of phenotype, all the way through to more objective considerations like where one lived, one’s occupation, to whom one was married, or with whom one commonly associated.48 Given this logic, based on adaptive biological and social reasoning, it is easy to understand how stereotypes surrounding “colouredness” (not to mention “black African-ness”) might arise. It is easy then to also comprehend how stereotypes

46 Hall, 243.

47 Ibid., 244.

48 Posel, 59.
might steadfastly be maintained and enforced by an authoritarian regime whose separatist policies relied so completely on ideas of intrinsic difference.

Although black Africans and coloureds were both racialized by apartheid legislation, there are distinct, yet no less virulent behavioral stereotypes attached to these categories. (A crass joke asks: What do you get if you mix a black with a coloured? Answer: Someone who breaks everything that he steals. Or there’s the other classic: If you ever see a coloured running, it’s because he stole something). The physical presence of black Africans in the Cape Colony and later, throughout the Cape Province, was systematically restricted by influx control policies first implemented during British colonial rule. Subsequently, the majority non-white population in the area was coloured, and arguably bore the brunt of contemporaneous racist vitriol. Vernon February, examining racial tropes in South African literature from pre-colonial traveler accounts to 1980s fiction, goes so far as to say that: “[the ‘Cape Coloured’ was] the greatest dupe of white stereotyped portrayals than any other group in South Africa.” 49 February’s primary source material consistently links coloureds to assumptions of puerility; of innate servility; as being possessed of an insatiable sexual appetite; and demonstrating tendencies towards excessive drinking and sudden violence.

Additionally, because they were the largest non-white grouping, coloureds made up the primary labor resource in the Cape Province, thus implicating typecasting as an effective strategy for maintaining white socio-economic dominance. Academic and activist Neville Alexander explains that as the early Cape colony expanded, notions of economic dominance gradually came to be mapped onto ideas of and cultural and ultimately racial superiority. And thus:

49 February, 164.
the social division of labour found its ideological deposit in a hierarchy of racial stereotypes which reinforced the relations of domination and subordination that had been inaugurated by colonial conquest and colonial settlement.50

These instances exemplify the three principal objectives of stereotyping enumerated in Hall’s study. By his account, stereotypes: 1) reduce a particular set of character traits to their simplest form, exaggerating, and constructing these qualities as immutable; 2) split behaviors into categories of what is considered acceptable and what is considered aberrant in a manner of closure and exclusion, thereby maintaining social and symbolic order; and most importantly; 3) manifest and endure under conditions of extreme imbalances of power.51 Through a process of synecdoche, stereotypes cast individual, isolated behaviors as belonging to an entire social, and in this case, racialized, grouping. Stereotypes thus reflect both what is imagined, and what comes to be understood as irrefutably “real;” that which is visually adduced, as well as that which is fantasized about and implied, by way of normative race thinking.52

Notions of difference promulgated in this way become so embedded in the collective psyche that even as stigmatized behaviors (including “characteristic” sounds) are experienced independently of visual referents, they still conjure in the mind’s eye/ear a definitive ideological point of origin. Tricia Rose recalls the following interaction during the early stages of her research, when describing to a white academic her intention to study rap music and African American culture:


51 Hall, 258.

52 Ibid., 263.
For the music chairman, automobiles with massive speakers blaring bass and drum heavy beats looped continuously served as an explanation for the insignificance of the music and diminished rap’s lyrical and political salience as well. The music was “nothing” to him on the grounds of its apparent “simplicity” and “repetitiveness.” Rap music was also “noise” to him, unintelligible yet aggressive sound that disrupted his familial domain (“they wake up my wife and kids”) and his sonic territory. His legitimate and important question, “What is the point of that?” was offered rhetorically to justify his outright dismissal of the music, rather than presented seriously to initiate at least a hypothetical inquiry into a musical form that for him seemed at once to be everywhere and yet going nowhere.\(^{53}\)

Rap and by association, hiphop music, was dismissed as unworthy of academic inquiry on account of its structural components, echoing Theodor Adorno’s attitude towards and famed criticism of the “inexorably rigid stereotypology” of jazz music.\(^{54}\) However, it is also safe to assume that from the comfort of his own home, Rose’s commentator needn’t actually have parted the blinds and peered into the darkness to determine the source of his sonic, sociological, and psychic disquiet. While Rose’s anecdote only hints at the linkages between sound and racialization, Stoever’s remark that “hip-hop pumped at top volume through car speakers...has become a stand-in for the bodies of young black men in American culture,” makes explicit the sonic affiliation between hiphop music and blackness.\(^{55}\)

The same anxieties that accompany visual/physical encounters with the racialized Other, are anticipated and compounded by hearing the associated sonic signifiers of Otherness. Rose’s commentator for example, experienced the volume of rap music as an unwelcome incursion onto his personal “sonic territory.” At a Florida gas station in 2012, Michael Dunn felt this intrusion


\(^{55}\) Stoever, 13.
even more viscerally. Dunn, a 47-year-old white man, invoked Stand Your Ground legislation as his defense for the first-degree murder of 17-year-old African American Jordan Russell Davis, a high-school student who refused to turn his music down. You read that right: A black teenager playing too-loud hiphop music, was shot and killed for the perceived threat he posed to the aural and therefore ideological space in which he found himself. Hiphop as “a musical form that is at once everywhere yet going nowhere” portends the imminent arrival, as well as the imminent threat of the black male body. But if the meaning of the phrase “going nowhere” is reframed from “having no intrinsic value or future,” to “a stubborn refusal to leave” – if, in a hiphop modality we flip the script from “going nowhere,” to “we ain’t goin’ nowhere” – a very different message is conveyed. (Hiphop headz will recognize the line “we ain’t goin’ nowhere” from the chorus of Sean “Puff Daddy” Combs’ anthemic track Bad Boy for Life, featured on his 2001 album The Saga Continues.) With this re-framing, the autonomous spectral presence of hiphop as a racialized musical genre is now understood as both omnipresent and defiantly present. For this reason, its articulation even in the absence of black male physicality – the figure of the proverbial and eternally infantilized “bad boy” – is all the more menacing to its detractors, all the more compelling a tool of dissent for its advocates.

The potential for marginalized groupings to challenge normative forms of representation relies on the latent capacity of individual signs to yield multiple, conflicting interpretations. That racialized signs are commonly invested with only a narrow field of connotations, is a direct result of the dominant grouping’s insistence as such, in order to maintain social hegemony. As much as the process of racial stereotyping conspires unremittingly to constrain signification, Hall reminds us that:
...ultimately, meaning begins to slip and slide; it begins to drift, or be wrenched, or inflected into new directions. New meanings are grafted on to old ones. Words and images carry connotations over which no one has complete control, and these marginal or submerged meanings come to the surface, allowing different meanings to be constructed, different things to be shown and said.  

In this context, “trans-coding” emerges optimistically as an ideological strategy that seeks to confound supposedly fixed and overwhelmingly negative implications of representational tropes, by encouraging the consideration and acceptance of alternative readings. While several modes of trans-coding exist, Hall attends to only three ways in which extant meanings attached to racial stereotypes might be upended. I interpret and summarize these overlapping techniques as acts of: 1) substitution; 2) reversal; and 3) provocation.  

The first approach effectively replaces prevailing negative imagery with positive depictions. Working within an already established hierarchy of social categories, the subordinate racialized grouping is prioritized, or rather, given its fair due. Implicit to this paradigm is an acknowledgement of the potential for a multiplicity of intragroup experiences, thereby broadening the scope of racialized representations. However, the efficacy of substitution is entirely relational, demanding an acceptance of race as a stable category. While expanding normative understandings, in this case, of what “colouredness” might mean, substitution does not completely eliminate negative imaginations of “the Other.” In fact, it relies on these latter connotations for its own instantiation. Such conscious recognition of intra- and intergroup difference, was arguably the narrative impetus for the sketch comedy show Colour TV, first aired on South African television in July 2011.  

Billed as a production “for coloureds, by coloureds,” the tagline for this series, “Duidelik en Uiteindelik,” translates metaphorically to “Loud and Clear,” suggesting an intention to offer

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56 Hall, 270.
definitive and much anticipated portrayals in the South African media sphere of coloured self-representation. Criticized for its apparent exploitation of unfavorable stereotypes and emphasis specifically on Western Cape cultural practice, Colour TV featured talk-show-style segments at the end of each episode, with well-known coloured celebrities as guests (coloureds who had “made it,” among them Amy Kleinhaps, the first non-white winner of the Miss South Africa pageant). Host and impresario, Terence Bridgett, would conclude each interview with the questions: “Is jy lam? Is jy gam? Of vat jy vlam?” [“Are you basic? Are you gam? Or is your shit on fleek?”]. The inferences derived from first and last questions are easily understood as neutral, and positive, respectively. The word gam, noted in the second question, is a pejorative term, evoking the Biblical curse of Ham as a justification for the marginalization and subjugation of coloureds in South African society. In all thirteen episodes of the short-lived series, the invited guests when given a choice, identified with the favorable connotations of vlam [literally “taking flame” or “being lit”].

With the second proposal, those behavioral tropes conventionally regarded as negative, are reframed as positive. An example would be South Africa’s first hiphop crew Prophets of Da City’s decision to use Kaaps as their medium of linguistic expression. In earlier academic writing on South African hiphop, the vernacular form is referred to as gamtaal [“gam language” or “coloured language”]. As Adam Haupt suggests, the group’s use of this speech variety, particularly in the run-up to South Africa’s 1994 election, served “to engage a very specific sector of the Western Cape electorate and...reclaim the negative sign gam from the dominant

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57 Duidelik translates literally as “clear,” but is also a colloquial term for “cool.” Uiteindelik translates to “eventually.”

58 For a further discussion of this idea, see Chapter Three of Werner Sollors’ Neither Back Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 78-111.
discourse of apartheid.”[59] Emile Jansen aka. Emile YX?, who got his start in the 1990s as a member of famed Cape Town hiphop outfit Black Noise, takes this act of reversal one step further by noting the foundational role that a denigrated “coloured language” played in the development of standard, “white Afrikaans.”

A refrain from Emile’s 2015 track Mix en Meng ‘it Op [“Stir It Up”] from the album Take Our Power Back, reads:

[Chorus:]
Almal is mixed mense,
kom ons mix en meng it op.
Everyone is mixed race,
this purity lie must stop!
Ek drop info dat Afrikaans
innie Kaap gemaak is.
I’m letting you know that Afrikaans
Was made in the Cape.
Die smaak’s innie kombuis,
vir die wat nog vaak is.
And for those who still don’t believe me,
The proof is in the pudding.

Throughout this piece Emile alludes to the common description of coloured racial identity as a “mixed bredi” or “stew,” similar to the gumbo analogy used in Marlon Riggs’ 1994 documentary Black Is...Black Ain’t to describe multivalent expressions African American lived experience. In this case, emphasis is placed on the perceived racial “mixedness” of coloured people, a conception that Emile flips on its head (“Everyone is mixed race, this purity lie must stop!”), dispelling the fallacy of “essential/pure” provenance. The final line of this chorus:

Die smaak’s innie kombuis, vir die wat nog vaak is, translates literally as “The taste is in the kitchen, for those who are still fast asleep.” Obliquely referencing the term kombuistaal – another damning epithet for vernacular Afrikaans, meaning “kitchen language” or “the language of those who work/belong in the kitchen” – Emile slyly insinuates that the “original recipe” for

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standard Afrikaans, its “true flavor,” can be found in the taste of Kaaps. Like “substitution,” as compelling as the technique of “reversal” might be in challenging negative imaginations of colouredness, it still fails to eradicate them. In breaking away from a certain set of extreme representations, one is perhaps relegated to another. Even when appropriating the unflattering gam stereotype and infusing it with positive meanings as these examples demonstrate, advocates of such moves run the risk of being pigeonholed as inherently confrontational and aggressive, or instead, being viewed as cunning tricksters.

Finally, “provocation,” differs from the previous two propositions in that it allows for the simultaneous consideration of multiple significations, all derived from a single representational form. Substitution and reversal suggest positive interpretations in binary opposition to existing negative ones, with the aim of ultimately supplanting them. Adverse racial imaginaries must first be acknowledged, inadvertently reifying the construct of racial difference, before new readings of tropes can be presented and hopefully, accepted. Provocation by contrast is less concerned with offering alternative meanings to representational forms, than it is with simply acknowledging the potential for numerous associations to be drawn from only one source. This approach neutralizes the ideological impact of any one meaning, demanding a reconsideration of the need for such racialized meanings in the first place.

In Stuart Hall’s explication of racialized tropes on which I base my intervention, he notes a recourse to fetishism – an engagement with the physical body – as a powerful impulse in regarding the racialized “Other.” In this account, fetishism is characterized by an ambivalence between what is clearly seen, and what is imagined; what is openly desired, and what is considered taboo. As an example, Hall cites the cruel exploitation, sideshow-style display, and (after her death) forensic scrutiny of the enslaved Khoesan woman, Sarah Bartmann. Brought to
Europe by Dutchman, Hendrik Cezar in the early 1800s, she was publicly exhibited in London and Paris as a primitivist curiosity. Paying spectators could gawk at Bartmann’s nakedness and callously examine her anatomy: petite stature; steatopygia (pronounced buttocks); and intentionally elongated labia, referred to in treatises of the time as an “apron.” Bartmann’s renaming as either “Saartjie Bartmann” or more commonly as “The Hottentot Venus” reflected the contemporaneous representational attitudes towards non-whites in both the Cape and in Britain: “Saartjie” is the diminutive and familiar Afrikaans form of her birthname “Sarah.”

The casual juxtaposition of a derogatory term for indigenous brown people, (“Hottentot”), alongside the name of the Roman goddess of love and fertility (“Venus”), exemplified the popular British “slavocratic humoristic idiom” of ironically bestowing African “house servants” with classical Roman names.61

The practice of fetishism, by Hall’s reasoning, allowed for predominantly male spectators at once to deny their illicit arousal caused by viewing “the Other,” while maintaining an objective, unwavering gaze. The disavowal of (prohibited) explicit desire and its reframing as (acceptable) scientific inquiry, was mirrored in practical terms by the displacement of visual attention from Bartmann’s (sexualized) genitalia, to her large (non-sexualized, or at least, non-reproductive) buttocks, the latter imagined as a “natural,” stereotypical physical trait of all Khoesan women. Fetishism thus provides an alibi, a means to indulge in and also to refute societal taboos, a way to “have it both ways.”62

60 Hall, 265.


62 Hall, 267.
equivocation – and because the third method in Hall’s schema of trans-coding similarly recognizes the concurrent operation of varied meanings – “provocation,” as I have named it, is also located in the representational site of the body. As a deconstructive tactic, provocation insists on deliberately engaging with all of “the ambivalences that tropes of fetishism inevitably awaken,”63 and all at the same time. Brown Baas [“Brown Boss”] the 2015 single by Catherine Saint Jude Pretorius aka. Dope Saint Jude makes incisive use of this technique.64

From the very outset of the track, DSJ insists that audiences contemplate the varied signifiers of identity she performs:

[Chorus:]
What it’s like to be brown for a girl like me?
For a girl like me? (Do you know?)
What it’s like to be baas for a girl like me?
For a girl like me? (Do you know?)
What it’s like to be brown for a bra like me?
For a bra like me? (Do you know?)
What it’s like to be baas for a bra like me?
For a bra like me?

With her self-assured, rapid-fire introduction, DSJ troubles fixed conceptions of racialized and gendered representation. The word baas translates simply as “boss,” but commonly evokes the image of a white, male, Afrikaner landowner. Similarly, bra, is a Kaaps masculine designation meaning “brother,” while the line “a girl like me” alludes to DSJ’s identification as a queer woman. The question she relentlessly asks then is: Does the listener/viewer have any idea what it means to credibly and fully embody these contesting representations?

63 Hall, 275.

64 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdEURn4m4wk
At the end of her first verse DSJ draws attention to the impact of language, especially the Afrikaans speech varieties of *suiker* and *Kaaps*, on racialized assumptions. This section reads:

“Yes, I’m clever undercover, nigga, got it from my mother/Yes, you better *raak wys*, *want sy’s ‘n slim fokken kaffir!*” The first line warns detractors not to underestimate her ability to recognize and interrogate the inherent contradictions of longstanding representational forms (“clever undercover”). Next, DSJ employs the *Kaaps* expression *raak wys* (instructing listeners to “pay attention”), before effortlessly code-switching for the line: *want sy’s ‘n slim fokken kaffir!* [“‘cause she’s a smart fucken *kaffir!*”], parodying a stereotypical white South African accent.

This well-known invective is easily imagined as a remark made by a white “boss” to ironically deride black African laborers. DSJ explained to me her own positionality, particularly with regard to the use of this phrase:

> I feel like I can speak on [these things]...because I’m “mixed race” or “coloured”...I have a black grandparent and a white grandparent, but my cousins are all Xhosa on my mom’s side...it’s your access [that allows you] to speak about things...I definitely also know that me being able to say – to use the k-word in my song – the way I can “get away with it” is very, very different, because of my background. Like people can just ask me, they can call me out and I’ll tell them, I’ll *wys* [“tell”] them...and also being queer gives me space [to poke fun and do things that other people can’t do], to talk about a lot of different things....

Provocation as a resistive move inherently references the body since it disrupts behavioral assumptions prompted by a visual assessment of racial category.

But old habits die hard. DSJ alludes to her mother’s status as bi-racial (“I have a black grandparent and a white grandparent, but my cousins are all Xhosa [black African] on my mom’s

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side), or “born a crime”66 to use the expression popularized by South African comedian Trevor Noah. (The mere fact of such provenance was a direct contravention of South Africa’s 1927 Immorality Act prohibiting sexual relations between whites and people of other races). Although his mother is a black African of isiXhosa ancestry and his father is white Swiss German, Noah has publicly asserted his cultural identification as isiXhosa. However, “by South African standards” to quote DSJ at another point in our conversation, and despite their varied social experiences, both her mother and Noah would be classified simply as “coloured.”

DSJ speaks to the ambivalences that occur between acts of social- and self-identification:

> In my Blackness I understand why it’s important to identify as coloured, and the reason it’s important is because, first of all: I experience privilege as a coloured person...I know for a fact that my colouredness has afforded me more access than [my black African cousins ]...so I can’t claim “the black experience” or “the black struggle,” I can’t, it’s not my reality. My experience is of a coloured person in a South African context, ‘cause there’s definitely a different access that you have, you know. And it’s not only because of where I grew up. Where I grew up played a big role – coming from a predominantly coloured area, your access to whiteness is a bit closer than if you come from Mfuleni [a black African township] like my cousins – so I’m aware of that.... Also, [it’s] the way I look. My everyday treatment in life is based on how I look, and my features dictate how people treat me a lot of the time, because of South Africa’s history. So that’s why I think it’s important to identify as coloured, but I’ll never, ever say I’m not Black.

Even while engaging with the body as a locus of representational form – evidencing a critical awareness that the evaluation of “how she looks” influences her reception – DSJ is clearly not limited to or defined by this framework. She notes: “The process of my music and my performance as Dope Saint Jude, that persona...embodies everything that I want to be. And...I feel like it’s a political act for me to be part of all of these groups where I should be at the bottom of the pile, but then subvert that and use it to excel.” (I asked: “Do you feel that there is a difference between “Catherine” and “Dope Saint Jude” as a performer?” To which she replied:

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66 *Born a Crime* is the title of Noah’s best-selling 2016 autobiography.
“There used to be, but it’s slowly blurring...”). The ease with which “a girl like her”
authoritatively inhabits and declares multiple identities, demands a re-evaluation of the ascribed
meanings and narrow range of interpretations accorded to coloured subjectivity.

That conceptualizations of colouredness have always been multivalent and contingent is
not at issue here. What I suggest is that these identifications have been constrained and ignored
by the formidable influence of negative stereotypes within the South African popular
imagination, that were fostered under apartheid to sustain legalized white hegemony and are
being perpetuated in the present moment to similar effect. As the lyrical examples and
ethnographic data quoted in this chapter demonstrate, the condition of “being coloured” is at
turns: renounced wholesale; adapted in part; valorized; and also incorporated within a wider
frame of racial and/or political b/Blackness. Champions of these varied approaches are
unanimous in their intention to bring about a reconsideration of deleterious representations and
understandings of coloured peoplehood. Deftly employing a three-part strategy of transcoding,
the symbolic acts of dissent perpetrated by these hiphop artists, offer persuasive counter-
narratives to the negative imaginaries of coloured lived experience.
Chapter 3 - *Is ‘n Cape Flats Ding* ("It’s a Cape Flats Thing")

You can tell by the way I talk,  
That I come from Cape Town....

- *Weskaap* ("Western Cape") – *YoungstaCPT*

*[Chorus:]*  
*Dissie Cape Flats! Die Cape Flats! (Wat?)*  
*Vannie see tot die berg,*  
*Vannie berg tot die Vlaktes!*  
*Hie’ kom ons nou mettie wille gedagtes!*  

*[Translation:]*  
*It’s the Cape Flats! The Cape Flats! (What?)*  
*From the sea to the mountain,*  
*From the mountain to the Flats!*  
*Better get ready! We’re coming for ya!*

- *Cape Flats (Remix)* - *Brasse Vannie Kaap*

I traveled to Johannesburg to meet with informants in the city and stayed briefly at a backpackers. While setting myself up in the shared dormitory room, an older white man a few beds over struck up a conversation. I explained in English that I was a student from Cape Town, just visiting for a short time. He replied, incredulously: *Jy’s innie Kaap gebore? Hoekom praat jy dan nie Afrikaans nie?*  
["You’re from Cape Town? How come you don’t speak Afrikaans?"]

This chapter proposes a way of theorizing how coloureds and specifically members of the coloured hiphop community, (re-)inhabit zones of the city proper that have been restricted through historical legislative practice, and contemporarily through social practice. I discuss the expulsion of non-white communities from the city *via* the 1950 Group Areas Act (GAA) as a conspicuous example of “de-territorialization.” With “re-territorialization” on the other hand, I explain how physical space is ideologically reclaimed through sound, and in particular, the auditory experience of *Kaaps*. This sonic intervention – an “acoustic re-territorialization” – is a critical aspect in my study of racial and language identity in Cape Town and imagines how a disenfranchised social grouping might reconfigure its relationship to landscape, through a
conscious and pragmatic emphasis instead, on soundscape. My argument rests on the following proposals: 1) that a physical re-population of the city by working-class coloured communities is logistically impossible, given the insurmountable challenge posed by contemporary neo-liberal economic practice; and 2) that agents, through an engaged relationship with sound, of personal memory and of movement, can “make their own place” of a physical environment. This mode of “acoustic knowing”\(^1\) centers coloured communities firmly in the regions to which they have historically been relegated, inculcating a “sense of place” and affinity (positive or negative) with an imposed physical base. However, it also holds out the potential for these communities to contravene geo-spatial proscriptions, and thus, to construct belonging or emplacement on their own terms, within alternative locales.

The significance of aurality to this intervention, is most clearly understood when considering my abiding proposal that Kaaps – and moreover, the sound of this speech variety characterized by a particular accent – is itself imagined as a negative trope of coloured behavior. Acoustic re-territorialization attempts a pragmatic reclaiming of landscape and cultivation of emplacement, by drawing attention to sonic habitation as opposed to visual, physically constituted presence. Two things to bear in mind: 1) Cape-based hiphop as exemplified by its coloured practitioners is overwhelmingly concerned with issues of cultural advocacy, frequently highlighting instances of racial and spatial marginalization, and 2) while the cityscape is the locational focus of hiphop aesthetics globally, significant to the present enquiry, it is also the site from which coloured communities were forcibly displaced by GAA. Cape Town hiphop artists announce their belonging to the city lyrically through Kaaps, employing the trans-coding

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modalities of “reversal” – Kaaps as a positive signifier – and “provocation” – exploiting the
ambivalences inherent to representational forms – to assert and legitimize this claim.

I explain how the strategies of acoustic re-territorialization and trans-coding via hiphop
music are intimately intertwined and aspire towards similarly resistive outcomes. I begin with
two ethnographic examples that illustrate how hiphop headz – bboys, graff writers, turntablists,
or MCs – articulate an undeniable sense of belonging to the Western Cape region and the city
itself. This, in spite of apartheid’s strictly-conceived displacement of non-whites from center to
periphery enforced by the GAA, a dislocation that is continued in the present moment through
socio-economic disparity and real-estate opportunism.

**Example 1:**

In July 2016, as part of Good Hope FM’s month-long birthday celebration, the local radio
station hosted a live recording of DJ Ready D’s weekly hiphop slot. It was an opportunity for
established, as well as up-and-coming MCs to demonstrate their skills, introduce new material,
and potentially capitalize on the show’s listenership and circulation bases.² I arrived at the
commercial studio space in Sea Point a little early, finding Siep and Lee chatting with some
other hiphop headz: all of them familiar faces, smoking, or pre-gaming with white Styrofoam
cups in hand, standing across the street in anticipation of a freestyle cipher possibly breaking out.
Huddled between the second homes of Signal Hill on one side and the beachfront condos of the

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² For narrative coherence in this opening section, I either use the individuals’ given names, or else, their
social or performance handles. Siep (Siel in Elke Persoon/“Soul In Every Person”), is Martin Muller; Lee,
is Lee-Ursus Alexander, Die Skerpste Lem (“The Sharpest Blade”). Tyrone “Eazy” Da Silva co-hosted
D’s show, along with Celeste Mitchell. Ricardo “Azuhl” Nunes, and Enver “E-20” Peters, make up the
rest of the Beat Bangaz crew.
Atlantic-facing promenade on the other, it wasn’t exactly the type of crowd you’d expect to see out here on a Wednesday night.

Most of those assembled had come in from the Cape Flats, the weary expanse of historically coloured neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city. Such was the reputation of Ready D and The Beat Bangaz crew (the turntablist collective comprising longtime collaborators: D, Azuhl, and E-20), that audience members would bundle into a friend’s car to make the forty-minute-plus trip, or somehow organize a ride to the venue with no sure plan about how to get home afterwards. It was Siep who got me in that night. I had forgotten to RSVP, but turned up anyway, taking a chance that there might still be a seat available. Siep’s plus-one turned out to be a no-show, so he passed the extra reserved ticket along to me. The only catch was I had to present myself to the curiously strict door personnel as some guy named “Alonso.” A fair trade.

Besides breaks for pre-recorded advertisement and sponsorship announcements – “paying the bills” as he put it – the first hour or so had D and his co-hosts Eazy, and Celeste introducing the scheduled MCs, while Azhul cued up their respective backing tracks for karaoke-style performances. The auditorium was packed: tiered seating bearing down on a modest platform with multiple turntables set up towards the back, and a giant projector screen along the far wall. The first act sauntered onto the raised stage: a rangy MC decked out in a chunky gold chain, oversize t-shirt, baseball cap emblazoned with a cartoon “Brooklyn” logo, and Nike sneakers (what Laurence Ralph might call the “allegorical objects” of hiphop couture). The rapper was

3 In his 2014 ethnography of West Chicago gangland life and its associated forms of disability, Laurence Ralph discusses the vibrant sneaker culture found amongst the “renegade” contingent of the Divine Knights gang’s younger members. Analyzing this phenomenon in terms of Bill Brown’s discussion of “object culture,” (Bill Brown, “Objects, Others, and Us: The Refabrication of Things,” Critical Inquiry 36/2 (2010), 183-217), Ralph examines the Renegades’ fetishization of sneakers in terms of their stylistic, hierarchical, and ultimately, social significance. A similar sentiment of sneakers as indices of status, is
trailed by an equally unhurried instrumental beat: a slow boom-bap musical accompaniment of bass-kicks and finger-snaps.

Now, the video upload on Good Hope’s website doesn’t pick this up, but anyone sitting front-row center would have heard it. The MC definitely heard it. You could tell as much by his response, a meme-worthy scowl, his face distorted with an annoyed: “What?!”. It was the kind of record-scratch-freeze-frame moment that No Chill in Mzansi, a homegrown Instagram version of the US “Black Twitter,” was made for. What happened was, about eight bars into the track, just before this guy was supposed to spit his first line, Lee yells out from the audience: Ek kry jou buite virrai Jordans! [“I’ll catch you outside for those hi-tops!”].

A trivial exchange – the MC recovered well enough, making his first entrance on time – but significant for how it illustrates the fundamental components of hiphop performative aesthetic in action: engaged audience participation through evaluation and interjection; verbal sparring and one-upmanship; the heightened level of scrutiny given a live and unscripted context. Most instructive, however, was the language of the coloured heckler’s challenge, and that of the black African MC’s riposte. For sure, there’s spaza – township hiphop performed in a linguistic mix of isiXhosa and vernac – but hiphop in the Mother City of Cape Town, has always been associated with working-class coloured individuals rapping in the regional speech form known as Kaaps or Afrikaaps. The latter, an elision of “Afrikaans” and “Kaapstad,” simultaneously references the language’s origin and usage as Cape Town and its immediate surrounds. Lee’s comment in Kaaps (translated as “of the Cape”) situated him unequivocally within the socio-

linguistic sphere, and habitus of a knowledgeable and local hiphop public, a fact that was confirmed by the supportive laughter of his (coloured) peers, and others within earshot.

As for the rapper on stage, well, he seemed to have all the right moves. In his carefully curated outfit, this guy literally embodied hiphop visual style. The track itself, and its we-ain’t-leavin’-til-six-in-the-mornin’ type refrain, was a harmless party anthem. But the MC’s response to Lee’s playful remark, a response uttered in English no less, demonstrated his failure to acknowledge and to reproduce the tropes and expectations of an undeniably localized genre. Lee’s interjection was a reminder of who and what came first. Because out here, hiphop is Kaaps. Hiphop is coloured. Hiphop is ‘n Cape Flats ding (“a Cape Flats thing”). And if you don’t know, now you know....

Example 2:

In the greater Cape Town residential hub of Observatory, a pedestrian tunnel runs below the train tracks, connecting to the parallel streets of Florence Avenue and Milner Road. The walls of the tunnel are covered with simple tags in permanent marker, hastily scrawled admissions of love and heartbreak, or otherwise, the occasional schoolboy profanity. As palimpsests, careful orange lettering can still be seen underneath, lasting tributes to early dance collectives: The Bboy Kings, Jam Rock Crew, Ballistic Breakers, Cape Town Breakers, and The Street Freak Crew. A short distance along from this, another faded text declares: “B-boying was the first form of Hip Hop expression practiced in South Africa, followed by graffiti, and then MCing....”

On the Florence Avenue side of the tunnel there’s a piece by local graff-writer, Falko1, featuring two characters, their backs towards the viewer. The one on the left is kitted out in a
pork-pie hat and Adidas track top – the three stripes down his shoulder are a dead giveaway – and the other, sports a hi-top fade straight outta Do the Right Thing. Both wearing headphones, the figures are turned to face the words “Wild Style” playfully depicted in bubble letters. The “Jam Master Jay” character’s left arm is raised above his head and bent at the elbow to clasp the hand of “Radio Raheem” next to him (holding the same pose, but with his right arm). Stepping back from the image, it becomes clear that Jay and Raheem’s gesture is meant to resemble the handle of a boombox. A painted skyline of rectangular houses in the middle-ground of the mural, stands in for the radio’s play, fast forward, and rewind buttons (Figure 3.1). But the focal point of this graff-series, the image featured in probably every documentary about hiphop in this city, is located just to the left of the “B-boying” paragraph. Weather-beaten and undeterred by the patches of creeping weed that threaten to obscure its message, giant yellow font against a green cartoon-cloud background declares 1982 as the year that hiphop began on the Cape Flats (Figure 3.2).

\[\text{Further along the wall, there’s a tribute to Ashley “Mr. Fat” Titus, the former MC of Brasse Vannie Kaap (“Brothers from the Cape”) done in Falko’s inimitable style of caricature and shading. At the entrance to the tunnel on the corner of Florence Ave and Wrensch Roads, there’s an extended piece completed with the same technique encouraging passers-by to: “Learn [and] teach, the history.”}\]
Commemorating the birth of hiphop on the Cape Flats with a mural in far-off Observatory, is an interesting choice. A permissive “grey area” at the time of the Group Areas Act ruling, the “Obz” of today is a bohemian haven for students, artists, and sundry
trustafarians. Obz is a predominantly white and middle-class suburb, although incursions to the commercial drag of Lower Main Road have been made by black business owners and renters in recent years: the stretch south of Trill Road running perpendicular to Lower Main, is openly referred to as “the dark side.” Still, most coloureds would not have ready financial or social entrée to this space, save for the necessary daily migration to and from periphery and capital for work. What I mean is, you would either have to take your chances with the train (if it shows up at all) and change lines at Salt River station, or else hop on and off a series of minibus taxis. Neither of these are attractive options at night. On more than one occasion during my fieldwork, I interacted with well-regarded MCs struggling to find a ride back to the Flats after successfully performing at gigs closer to town. Left with no other option, they would simply hang around the city for hours until the Metrorail started running again the following morning.

But let’s assume you do manage to find transportation. To get to Obz from the Flats you would probably travel along the N2 national highway, a seemingly interminable monument to

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5 “Grey areas” were spaces legally reserved for whites, where non-whites had (illegally) taken up residence. K.S.O. Beavon writes that “greying” arose in the 1980s, due to a “chronic housing shortage created by racial divisions of residential land even for those who were wealthy enough to buy, build, or rent substantial homes but who were precluded from the market as a whole merely on the grounds of race.” John Western’s account of Cape Town urban planning and segregation suggests that greying occurred somewhat inadvertently in areas where coloured individuals “passed for white,” thus enabling them to live in desirable white residential zones. K.S.O. Beavon, “The Post-apartheid City: Hopes, Possibilities, and Harsh Realities” in The Apartheid City and Beyond: Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa, ed. David M. Smith (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001), 236. John Western, Outcast Cape Town (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 37-38.

6 Cape Town poet Nathan Trantaal, winner of the prestigious 2015 Ingrid Jonker Prize for Afrikaans Poetry expresses this condition more poignantly. Writing in Kaaps he muses: Ek is possibly die ienagste een wattie ’n lift kan kry of afford ie en Lavis toe loop, hystoe loep, vanaf Cape Town International Airport af narie literary festival in Potch veby is. (“I’m probably the only prize-winning poet who has ever had to walk home from the airport [about an hour-long journey] after speaking at a literary festival, because he can’t afford a ride.”) Nathan Trantaal, “Cash for Gold” in Alles Het Niet Kom Wód (Hatfield: Van Schaik Publishers, 2017), 42.
apartheid geo-spatial engineering that starkly delineates the boundaries of historically non-white areas – Langa, Bonteheuwel, and the intermittent, densely-populated swaths of informal housing – from those of the metropolis. The initial twenty-five miles of this artery is un-ironically known as “Settlers Way.” Coming from the Flats, you could also take Klipfontein Road, a secondary expressway that winds along parallel to the N2. Given the proximity of the racially delimited areas along this thoroughfare and how seamlessly they blend into one another, the changes in landscape and demographic sneak up on you, instead of explicitly announcing themselves as with the N2. Driving down Klipfontein Road towards Obz, it’s a pretty straight shot from the black African arenas of Nyanga and Gugulethu, past the notorious “gangster’s paradise” of Manenberg, and the coloured zones of Belgravia and Athlone, all the way through to leafy, and white Rondebosch. Depending on which direction you’re heading, the trip either ends in a place of aspirational wealth and privilege or terminates in a site of systemic legislative and attitudinal neglect.

Speaking with Shaheen Ariefdien – founding member of Prophets of Da City, Cape Town’s first hiphop collective – the longtime MC agreed that despite their adjacency, coloured and black African areas were nevertheless physically and ideologically detached from each other by intersecting highways, creating autonomous islands within a de facto grid system. The history and the present of Cape Town’s geo-spatial segregation is then a question of “how those grids are laid out, [how] those pockets are created...who gets to create those pockets…and define those grids....” He continued: “There’s a piece that Marlon wrote...‘from Athlone to Langa, we slash bones with pangas [“machetes”]...and the slang [“snake”] that slithered up between us was Jan Smuts....”’ Shaheen was referring to the poem written by MC Marlon Burgess (aka. Caco, aka. Swai), entitled Mark of the Beast. The line Shaheen mentioned, caustically describes the tensions
between neighboring districts, fomented by decades-long and aggressive *divide et impera* doctrine. Jan Smuts Drive is the roadway that “snakes” invidiously between coloured Athlone and black African Langa. At the same time, Smuts as prime minister of the Union of South Africa for extended periods from 1919 until 1948 (the year that the Afrikaner National Party ascended to rule), is implicated as a “snake in the grass” whose ambivalence towards rising tides of separatist thought in the country, ultimately led to the official consolidation of apartheid policy.  

Circumscribed by Settlers Way and Jan Smuts Drive, if you turn your gaze westwards you can easily make out Table Mountain in the near distance, bounded by the crests of Devil’s Peak and Lion’s Head on either side. From this vantage the mountain is a constant reminder of social capital forestalled, and for older generations, of devastating political dispossession. A mere nine miles away, the windswept dunes of the Cape Flats are a far cry from the wealthy playground of Camps Bay, and of Clifton’s pristine white beaches.

**If You’re Brown, Stick Around. If You’re Black, Get Back!**

The musicians I interviewed for my study either grew up, or currently reside in the neighborhoods of Mitchells Plain, Rylands, Blue Downs, Grassy Park, or Kuilsrivier, areas referred to as “the Cape Flats.” Under the Group Areas Act of 1950 (GAA), these regions were allocated for “coloured development” and set apart from spaces reserved specifically for “white development” through a system of socio-geographical planning and expulsion from residential

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areas close to the city. Entire non-white communities were forcibly displaced without compensation from established suburbs lining the city and relegated to underdeveloped locations on its borders. For many, the *locus classicus* of coloured identity is District Six just on the edge of Cape Town proper (where the GAA was enforced in 1966), a cultural hub memorialized in impresario David Kramer and Taliep Peterson’s stage musical of the same name, as well as their later co-production, *Kat and the Kings*. (Contemporary commercial and retail developers, coffee roasteries and trendy nightspots, have rebranded this area “The Fringe,” or more fashionably, “The District.”) A conscious regulation of the raced body, the GAA spoke directly to Foucault’s notion of biopower, the collusion of techniques and institutions of power to “[manifest] as factors of segregation and social hierarchization...guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony.”

Although from a generational standpoint, not every interlocutor I met with was directly affected by these removals, the consequences of the legislation were well known by all.

The extent of the psychic violence wrought by the GAA is evidenced in numerous cultural interventions – supplementary to their articulation in hiphop material production – the narratives of which grapple with the lived consequences of the Act’s implementation. In literary fiction, these explorations include works by Alex La Guma (*A Walk in the Night*, 1962), Richard Rive (*Buckingham Palace*, 1986), Rozena Maart (*Rosa’s District 6*, 2006), and Linda Fortune

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8 Attempts to regulate social behavior along racial lines, had been made prior to the implementation of the Group Areas Act. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in 1949, forbade marriage between whites and non-whites. Supplementary to the GAA, the 1950 amendment to the Immorality Act, prohibited sexual relations between whites and all non-whites (the first instantiation of the Immorality Act in 1927, prohibited sexual intercourse only between whites and black Africans).

(The House on Tyne Street, 2010). Visual media examples consist of Imraan Christian and Georgina Warner’s 2014 short film Jas Boude (“Crazy Legs”) interrogating Cape Flats skate-culture; Nadine Cloete’s 2016 documentary Action Kommandant (“Action, Commander”), the story of slain apartheid activist Ashley Kriel, hailed as “the Ché Guevara of the Cape Flats;” first-time director Daryne Joshua’s feature Noem My Skollie (“Call Me Thief”) selected as South Africa’s official entry to the 2017 Academy Award category for Best Foreign Language film; Sarah Summers and Kelly-Eve Koopman’s ongoing web-series Coloured Mentality initiated in 2017; and Weaam Williams’ autobiographical documentary of the same year about land restitution entitled District Six: Rising From The Dust; and Kurt Orderson’s 2018 documentary Not in My Neighborhood which examines the consequences of GAA spatial violence and contemporary gentrification in Cape Town. Finally, there is the annual Rabelaisian festival known colloquially as “The Coon Carnival” (again “rebranded” in recent years as “The Minstrel Carnival”) featuring bands comprising individuals who predominantly claim a Cape Malay identity, marching exuberantly through the city’s main streets all the way up to the historically Muslim (coloured) neighborhood of the BoKaap [“High Cape”].

John Western argues that the ever-changing legislature of apartheid’s separatist agenda, relegated black Africans to a condition of spatial uncertainty through a process of “continual removal.” Each time early Cape Town’s increasing urban sprawl threatened contact with black African “locations” their inhabitants were moved further out towards the periphery. Quoting an ANC leader from the 1950s, Western reports the precarious circumstances of black Africans at the time as one of “forever hamba” [“go”] – a state of being “forever moved on.”¹⁰ The same can be said of the coloured communities embroiled in contemporary land development and eviction

¹⁰ Western, Outcast, 46.
deliberations in Cape Town’s satellite neighborhoods of Tafelsig and Woodstock. These events revisit the emotional impact of the brutal GAA proclamation, as coloured communities who have occupied residential zones for generations (as renters, not owners), once more come under threat of displacement. This time though, evictions are a consequence of unquestionably moneyed, and predominantly white, gentrification. Some historical context must first be noted in order to appreciate how the (un)intentional collusion of municipal interests, land developers, institutional and laissez-faire racism, has led to the present, specific targeting of the coloured working-class.

Separatist policy after 1948 largely only affected Cape Town’s coloured population since opportunities for black African land ownership and habitation in the region, had already been severely constrained as early as 1913 through the Natives Land Act. Additionally, the 1923 Native Urban Areas Act, or “Pass Law,” imposed significant restrictions on physical movement to and from previously established “Native reserves” (apartheid nomenclature distinguished black Africans as “Natives,” a term later replaced simply by “Africans”). During official apartheid, the 1952 amendment to this law required all black Africans over the age of sixteen to carry at all times, a single document or “pass book” detailing residential and employment history. Coloureds were not subject to this ruling. Furthermore, the 1955 Coloured Labour Preference Policy effected within the perimeter of the Eiselen Line, a political border that mapped directly onto the boundary of the Cape Province (later, the “Western Cape”), prioritized the hiring of coloured, as opposed to black African job applicants. Western describes the absurdly redundant implications of this ruling:

A Black African could not, strictly speaking, accept any job unless the prospective employer obtained a certificate from the Coloured Labour Department to the effect that no Coloured worker was available to take the job…The measure may have irritated White employers searching for lowest-cost labor, but equally
it made a successful divide-and-rule political point. Black Africans…could come into the Western Cape only if a job awaited them. Ah, but precious few jobs awaited them….11

As a result, the majority non-white population of the Western Cape when the GAA was implemented in 1950, was almost exclusively coloured.12 This fact, however, doesn’t answer the question of why the presence of non-white communities in the Cape Province, was encouraged at all.

One practical reason is that a program of total spatial segregation, simply put, was untenable, given the pressing demand for cheap (non-white) labor in a rapidly industrializing Cape Town, and the ancillary need for a local consumer class. Face-to-face inter-racial transactions were unavoidable, giving rise to an ideological imposition of social distance through quotidian “dominance” and behavioral proscription.13 An obvious example of this, was the series of “petty apartheid” measures introduced by the 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act. With this Act, even the use of public premises, public transportation, and facilities (from beaches, to cemeteries; from sites of recreation, to commemorations of death), was restricted along racial lines. The imperative of social distance was inscribed onto the gestures of everyday life as well. Ritualized performances of superiority and deference reinforced patterns of control

11 John Western, “Africa is Coming to the Cape,” in Geographical Review, 91/4 (October 2001), 624. The book Behind and Beyond the Eiselen Line highlights the lived consequences of this ruling and documents the actions of a group of black Africans from the informal settlement of Nyanga. In 1982, the group protested the CLPP by taking refuge in Cape Town’ St.George’s Cathedral, and going on hunger strike. Josette Cole, Behind and Beyond the Eiselen Line (Cape Town: St. George’s Cathedral Crypt Memory and Witness Centre, 2012).

12 According to Statistics South Africa’s 2011 census information, the demographic breakdown of the city of an estimated 3,740,026 people reads: 42.4% coloured, 38.6% black African, 15.7% white, 1.4% Indian/Asian, and 1.9% “other.” http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=993&id=city-of-cape-town-municipality (accessed June 11, 2018).

13 Western, Outcast, 60-61.
and subordination, and crucially, a self-conscious “sense of one’s place.”

This sentiment is reflected in the colloquial phrase: Jy’t niks daar verloor nie. Interpreted figuratively as “there’s no reason to frequent the physical area, or social space,” the phrase translates literally (and sardonically, given the history of forced relocation) as: “you haven’t lost anything there.”

Both of my opening ethnographic narratives allude to the physical distance between the Flats and the city, and the difficulty in traversing this stretch in terms of time and expense for the purposes of either employment or leisure. The following musical example demonstrates the commonality of this experience in coloured working-class life, and also serves as a pivot to a discussion as to how personal identification with place is fostered through sound. The title of this chapter “Is ’n Cape Flats Ding,” is taken from a 2007 single of the same name by Cape Town hiphop forebear Emile Jansen, aka Emile YX? The track begins with a sample of a minibus-taxi tout, or gaartjie, calling out the names of prospective destinations along his route. Next up, we hear the end-rhymed, phatic extemporizations of a vegetable seller: Avocado pere/maakie are mere! [0:13 – 0:16] [roughly: “Avocados are good for your health!”]. The timbre and contours of their voicings, not to mention their occupations, identify the speakers as working-class coloureds. I am interested in the first of these vocal samples.

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14 Erving Goffman in Bourdieu.


16 The vehicle of choice for South Africa’s expansive long-, and short-haul taxi industry, is the 15-seater minibus. These are conventionally operated by a driver, and a gaartjie (“guard”). The latter operates the vehicle’s sliding door allowing passengers in and out, loudly announces destinations though an open window (or sometimes, an open door as the taxi is moving), and also collects passenger fares.
The line: *Athlone! Mowbray! Kaap!* [0:09 – 0:11] describes the movement of passengers from suburban boundary to urban center, initially along the national highway and then traversing Main Road towards town. Commuters specify to the tout the exact conclusion of their journey along this path, referencing either a street name or a landmark. It would not be uncommon during such communications to hear “Rex Trueform,” the name of a local clothing manufacturer, given as a final destination. All parties involved would know the location and façade of the old factory; both the abandoned carapace with its unmistakable glass-enclosed staircase, and the building’s more modern counterpart across the street. The history of this business is so ingrained in the narrative of working-class coloured life, that my own “Capetonian-ness” was openly questioned by an acquaintance, because no-one in my extended family had ever worked there as a machinist. I came up on the Flats in the suburb of Belhar, but as the aforementioned anecdote demonstrates, a certain type of vetting and scrutiny was not uncommon during my fieldwork experience.

**Sound and Color**

Let me be clear, I don’t mean *Belhar* Belhar – past the University of the Western Cape and the dividing line of Symphony Way, towards the labyrinths of Delft and Blue Downs – but rather, middle class “Old Belhar” with its unassuming brick-and-mortar homes and wide streets. I hold graduate degrees in ethnomusicology and in Western art clarinet performance. When I told Burni this, she nearly fell out her chair. She responded incredulously: “That’s something you can do?”¹⁷ Yeah, I get it, clarinet is possibly the least hiphop instrument you could imagine....

¹⁷ Bernadette Amansure aka “Burni Aman,” is an MC and founding member of the female hiphop collective *Godessa*, active in the early 2000s.
Although my research engages the fields of performance and culture, I am neither a turntablist, nor an MC, neither a bboy, nor a graff writer. I’m basically, as unlikely to wreck the decks as I am to drop a hot sixteen, to throw down power moves, or tag the side of a train. My dominant linguistic resource is closer to Received Pronunciation English – which, in a South African context, means “white private school,” or “Model C” English\(^\text{18}\) – with a noticeable lilt of more than ten years having lived and worked in the United States. I am a native, if lapsed, speaker of standard Afrikaans, and familiar with the nuances of Kaaps. In the country of my birth, I am classified racially as coloured, identified and regarded visually as such, with all the attendant negative stereotypes that distinction holds. Yet, within a few minutes of every conversation, the question on the lips of anyone I meet in Cape Town is: Where are you from?

Jennifer Lynn Stoever might describe this reaction as a byproduct of the societal racialization of sound. Challenging the primacy of vision in determining racial category, Stoever emphasizes the role of sound “as a set of social relations and a compelling medium for racial discourse,”\(^\text{19}\) explaining this idea via the dual proposals of “the sonic color line,” and “the listening ear.” Stoever’s first theoretical concept, the sonic color line, describes the expectation for bodies to produce racially-coded timbres, inflections, accents, and sounds,

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\(^{18}\) In late 1990, then minister of education, Piet Clase, proposed opening white schools to all races. The parents of white students were endowed with the authority to determine the extent of desegregation by voting system. “In what became known as the Clase Models, ‘Model A’ permitted schools to become private but with reduced financial assistance from the state; ‘Model B’ allowed schools to continue with the same level of funding, but gave them the right to adopt their own admission procedures; and ‘Model C’ allowed for conversion to a semiprivate school. In all cases, schools had to comply with a 50% plus 1 white enrollment policy.” By contrast, schools historically designated for exclusively coloured, Indian, and African enrollment, had been accepting students of other races since the mid-1980s. Nadine E. Dolby, *Constructing Race: Youth, Identity, and Popular Culture in South Africa* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), 26-27.

creating a seemingly impermeable boundary between imaginations of “whiteness” and “blackness.” The listening ear – “a modality of racial discernment”\textsuperscript{20} – normalizes acoustic expectation, determining and enforcing a dominant culture’s capricious projection of sound onto conceptions of race, thereby reifying the sonic color line.

Racially-coded sounds, or aural stereotypes, are interpreted as negative behavioral tropes. The “sounds of the Other” come to be regarded as “noise” (unruly, disruptive, antagonistic), and ultimately linked to unfavorable imaginations of blackness.\textsuperscript{21} In the present case, I argue that such “noisiness” is unequivocally linked to “colouredness.” In the South African popular imagination, the articulation of vernacular Afrikaans, *Kaaps*, has been folded into the litany of negative connotations attributed to its working-class coloured speakers. The most salient connection between *Kaaps* and the apparent socio-cultural inferiority of its adherents to *suïwer* or “pure,” standard Afrikaans associated with whiteness and Nationalist rule, is bound up in the epithet *kombuistaal*, meaning literally, “kitchen language,” or otherwise, “kitchen Dutch.” While “sounding black,” as Stoever reminds us, “remains linked to looking black,”\textsuperscript{22} H. Samy Alim explores the limits and possibilities of what he refers to as “transracialization,” a mode of challenging fixed assumptions of ethno-racial classification, through language and gesture.

The “transracial subject” he posits, “knowingly and fluidly crosses borders while resisting the imposition of racial categories…[pushing] back against the need to know, against

\textsuperscript{20}Stoever, 13.

\textsuperscript{21}Tricia Rose’s *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (1994), and Tony Mitchell’s edited volume *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the USA* (2001), highlight the association of such myopic conceptions with regard to rap music.

\textsuperscript{22}Stoever, 11.
the imposition of racial categories as real.” Alim describes his personal experience in different contexts of being (mis)translated, his body understood as a text that is (mis)read across a dizzying array of socio-cultural orders. Alim’s ethno-racial/national background is perceived by others during varied interactions as Indian, Colombian, Mexican, Arab, Turkish, Algerian, coloured, and/or Cape Malay. By virtue of his ambiguous phenotypical traits, Alim as an individual subject, was ascribed a variety of seemingly plausible origins, not to mention, certain expected racialized behaviors. But looks can be deceiving. Through his own articulations of speech and accent, Alim frustrated the attempts of commentators to situate him definitively within a familiar ethnic, racial, or regional framework. His interjections thus highlighting the spurious nature of absolutist racial logic, Alim’s “movement across social groupings,” encouraged a critique of “hegemonic ideas about both ‘language’ and ‘race’ and about the relationship between language and phenotype.” It appears that the subaltern can not only speak, but through the very act of speech, can resist normative racialized boundaries.

Conversely, through silence, these assumptions can be exploited, and barriers can be transgressed. Granted, the ability to deploy such alternative strategies – to effectively “change one’s race” within the color wheel of ambiguous brown-ness, or even to “pass” as it were – is often a coincident function of socio-economic standing. A case in point: My father, a general practitioner in his seventies, who by his own admission, “never imagined the end of apartheid,” maintains that because of class, “we [our immediate family] managed to escape being coloured.”


24 Ibid., 45.
To present matters more simply: in Cape Town, although I look coloured, I just don’t sound coloured enough for my particular lived experience.

Steven Feld’s exegesis of acoustemology argues for “a reevaluation of sensory ratios” – a more critical consideration of the coincidence of all bodily senses, together with emotion, and memory, to fully apprehend the experience of being in a particular environment. Like Stoever, Feld’s work challenges a binary that situates visuality as the primary mode of Western perception. With “sound, smell, and taste” coded as the domains of exoticized “cultural others,” Feld calls for an appreciation of “how tendencies for sensory dominance always change contextually with bodily emplacement.”25 (“Transracialism” clearly underscores the authority of visual apperception in determining racial category, and the cognitive disjuncture that can occur when auditory signification stubbornly refuses to match phenotypical appearance.) In this formulation, the “bodily nexus of sound, hearing and voice” is suggested as a productive frame within which to interrogate the perception of time – particularly the subject’s recollection of, or relationship to the past – and physical space.26

Imagining how the taxi passenger and the tout’s gradual refining of the city’s geography (the exact point to get dropped off), is a negotiation conducted via the regional inflections of Kaaps, a topography of working and social life begins to emerge. The Rex Trueform example traces an inversion of the path of historical displacement from the city center to its surrounds, as the subject moves through time towards her place of employ, enacting a reinscription of “past in

25 Feld, 96.

26 Ibid., 97.
present, [and thus,] creating biography as itinerary.” The tout’s signaling of place names, heard throughout the streets of Cape Town, charts a similar trajectory. The taxi-driver’s frequent stops and starts in response to his associate’s instructions to either *hou vas* [“stop”], or *kap ‘an* [“keep moving”], echoes the cadence of the heavily accented *Kaaps* in which the commands are given.

In his study of Johannesburg’s musical culture Xavier Livermon cites the impact of “automobility” – Mike Featherstone’s theoretical accord between individual autonomy and mobility through the city – on broadening the scope of newly middle-class black Africans’ physical movement across previously segregated areas, and the temporal extension of their work and leisure activities. Automobility, facilitated by owning a private car, describes how urban soundscape is shaped by the musical tastes of black Africans. According to Livermon:

> [T]he car functions not only as the mode of travel through which individuals move from space to space, but also as an aural arbiter. As people move from one location to the next, the car itself... becomes a space of high sociality with interactions between members of the vehicle and those who are outside the vehicle. Sound in general (a hooting horn, a human voice) and music in particular are extremely important ways through which interaction occurs with the community that surrounds the vehicle. Rather than being consumed in solitary privacy, many of the cars of young people are specifically designed to facilitate public consumption of the music. Powerful speakers ensure that the music from a car sound system can be heard at considerable distances.

In Cape Town, as far as the working-class coloured community is concerned, automobility is most commonly enabled by the minibus-taxi industry. The *Kaaps* of the taxi and its passengers is disseminated and felt in the city in the same way that gritty, distorted bass-lines blaring from the vehicle’s speakers erupt in one’s chest and crowd the urban sonic scenery. As it rests, moves,

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27 Feld, 83.


and reverberates with the motion of the vehicle, the sound of *Kaaps* – also the language of coloured hiphop – performs an important surrogate role, maintaining a spectral presence in central Cape Town long after its proponents are evacuated from the area. Through the persistence of *Kaaps*, its native speakers and (inadvertent) listeners experience both “the sense and sensuality of emplacement, of making place,” ultimately contributing to a re-evaluation of prescribed/proscribed “sense of place.” Before developing this hypothesis within the theoretical framework of “re-territorialization” as a restitutive move, the following section describes the socio-cultural context for the development of hiphop in Cape Town.

**Back in the Day**

To overturn received socio-political tropes, and to contest imposed imaginations of collective subjectivity, are power moves that find easy resonance with(in) the aesthetic of hiphop, a genre that from the moment of its inception, has been censored, derided, and elicited fear from its detractors. The question as to why hiphop, an ostensibly American art form, took root amongst the coloured community in Cape Town, has as much to do with confluences in historical circumstance between marginalized communities in the United States and South Africa, as it does with ideas of relative mobility and access under conditions of social repression. Returning to the example of the train station underpass: the memorialization of hiphop in this location as well as its initial dissemination *via* bboying and graffiti-writing, is indicative of the motility afforded these two “pillars” of hiphop culture relative to the aesthetic’s other two

[^30]: Feld, 97.
performative components, MCing, and DJing/turntablism.31 After all (and to conjure an admittedly dated image), it’s easier to lay down some cardboard and find a spot to pop-and-lock, or to acquire and dispose of spray cans as need be, than it is to haul around the proverbial “two turntables and a microphone.” But the willful transgression of geographical perimeters, the (re-)claiming of space through bold corporeal dance improvisation, and the stylized markings of territory against citadel borders with spraypaint, exemplify assumptions of hiphop as an intrinsically confrontational expressive form.

Apart from being profoundly interstitial, galvanizing the concerns of a racialized grouping caught midway between prescribed socio-political polarities of whiteness and blackness, hiphop culture in Cape Town is also undeniably intertextual, demanding attention to processes of historical relation and dependency between texts. With a view to multivalent, and multi-temporal interpretations, as opposed to a simply linear, derivative teleology, Julia Kristeva argues that: “a text cannot exist as a self-sufficient whole...[therefore]...it does not function as a closed system.”32 This viewpoint is sympathetic to the notion of dialogism, developed by Mikhail Bakhtin, from whose work Kristeva’s proposal is ultimately drawn. In Bakhtin’s words, the incorporation into the novel of “another’s speech in another’s language” results in a type of “double-voiced discourse.” This strategy “serves two speakers at the same time and expresses

31 “Knowledge of self” constitutes the “fifth pillar.”

simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author.” Transposing these ideas to the logocentric basis of graff-writing is a simple task, the argument is less easily made when analyzing the complementary visual form of mural-painting.

In her 2004 essay *Stylising the Self*, Sarah Nuttall considers the melding of such reciprocal visual media forms, anticipating the juncture where a mural (master-)piece, or something that has been culturally written lends itself to being read along “non-linear, temporal, and graphical” vectors. Discussing Johannesburg’s burgeoning Y(outh) culture, and the implications that integrated media styles might have for destabilizing the received primacy of written text, Nuttall describes examples where “visually based media forms [have] become increasingly discursive, and language [has become] increasingly graphic through volume and colour (sic).” In this expanded semiotic field: “It is no longer the image that illustrates, and the written text that comments. Rather, visuality and expression cut against each other, producing a variety of constantly transfiguring forms.” These ideas of simultaneous textual interaction and visual discourse merge convincingly in Falko’s “Wild Style” boombox piece (Figure 1).

The “Wild Style” motif at the center of Falko’s work, is a direct copy of early Brooklyn-based graff-writer Michael “Tracy 168” Tracy’s design, the basis for much of the iconic lettering and animation work in Charlie Ahearn’s 1983 movie of the same name. Along with Tony Silver

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and Henry Chalfant’s graffiti documentary Style Wars (1983), Breakin,’ Breakin’ 2: Electric Boogaloo, and Beat Street (all released in 1984), the movie Wild Style is the cultural text most often quoted by Cape Town headz when discussing their introduction to, and love affair with hiphop. The three stripes running the length of one character’s arm, hint at pioneering hiphop group Run DMC’s My Adidas, released in 1986 as both a single, and as the third track on their groundbreaking Rick Rubin/Russell Simmons-produced album Raising Hell. With this in mind, it is easy to imagine both characters depicted in the mural rockin’ the “white with black stripe” shell-toe sneakers immortalized in the song. In Darryl McDaniels aka. DMC’s closing verse, he proclaims: “We took the beat from the street, and put it on TV,” a nod to the popularity of Beat Street, but also an allusion to the band’s appearances in the hiphop movies Krush Groove (1985), and Tougher Than Leather (1988).

As this lyric relates to Falko’s piece: his protagonists are shown staring directly at Tracy168’s “Wild Style” icon, and metonymically then, watching Ahearn’s movie as well. A long shot of the graffiti work suggests that its composite parts be read in toto as the image of a boombox (as I have mentioned: the characters’ heads take the place of the device’s speakers, their arms linked above to form the handle). The boombox itself, is the very essence of mobile, transgressive, and stylized self-expression. On the real: who can forget the stand-off between Bill Nunn’s “Radio Raheem” and the group of Puerto Rican kids on a front-stoop in Bed-Stuy, each faction raising the volume of their boomboxes, turning up contrasting leitmotifs (Public Enemy’s Fight the Power, and Ruben Blades’ Tu Y Yo), in sonic competition for ownership of the block?36

These inferences demonstrate that as various intentions are refracted, as dialogues are initiated between authors and readers alike, different interpretations of a given text and its

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36 Do the Right Thing, directed by Spike Lee (1989; Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD. The exchange described above, begins at (32’25”).
histories can be legitimately speculated. Falko speaks to Tracy 168, as well as through his work, accessing a wealth of cultural meaning and credibility that extends beyond the singular moment of his piece at the pedestrian underpass. Graff-writing is thus revealed to be a deeply referential, if not reverential art-form. As Falko’s example shows, it is also an overwhelmingly nostalgic medium, a characteristic that permeates hiphop culture especially as manifested in Cape Town. Expressions like “old skool,” “back in the day,” and “respect the architect,” are common within the global hiphop cultural lexicon, reiterating the ideals exemplified by New York-based “Golden Age hiphop” produced in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These phrases also evoke a romanticized period when hiphop “was real, organic, and deeply connected to its grass roots.” As S. Craig Watkins observes, “It was in short, a simpler time in the movement’s history.”37

The rebellious ethos of Golden Age US hiphop prevails in the music of coloured hiphop artists from Cape Town, as opposed to more commercially accessible forms of hiphop available in other parts of the country. With Kaaps as the soundtrack of the city, and also the linguistic medium of Cape-based hiphop expression, the genre’s instantiation becomes an ideological, and sonic tool through which to challenge the geo-spatial constraints and socio-cultural confinement imposed by apartheid legislation.

From Space to Place

Henri Lefebvre maintains that: “(Social) space is a (social) product” having adopted, under capitalist conditions a particular tangibility, or “reality” similar to that assumed by “commodities, money, and capital.” Space produced in this way “serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence

of domination, of power….”38 John Western agrees with the contention that space is socially produced, and considers the mutually constitutive prospects within the apartheid context of: 1) social relations as space contingent – that is, the notion that by manipulating spatial parameters, society itself can be shaped towards a desired outcome – and 2) of the development of physical space as a passive reflection of social relations – that physical displacement, mirrors the steady deterioration of inter-racial social connections catalyzed through legal mandate.

Within this “complex dialectic of social space and spatial structure” Western reminds us of the possibility for consequently displaced, heterogeneous communities, to develop their own sense of group solidarity. In creating an apartheid space for the exclusive purpose of social control, “the dominated may [ironically] begin to find in space an ally in challenging the domination,” resulting in the need on the part of the state for constant vigilance, and continual removal (recalling the quip “forever hamba” or “forever get out”). This reflects an instance where, to quote Lefebvre again, the “social and political (state) forces which engendered this space now seek, but fail, to master it completely; the very agency that has forced spatial reality towards sort of uncontrollable autonomy now strives to run it into the ground, then shackle and enslave it.”39 Questions of “society and space,” are inseparable; spatiality cannot be rendered without the influence of social process. In support of this idea, Western extemporizes on the phrase “knowing one’s place” and its implications for the social lives of the mostly coloured population affected by the Group Areas Act. For this marginalized grouping, the idiom denotes: 1) an awareness of their standing in a racialized social hierarchy; 2) a knowledge of expected


39 Ibid., 26.
geographical boundedness; and 3) a recognition of the permeability of such imposed boundaries, and the potential for transgression through social intervention.\textsuperscript{40}

Western implies a gradual movement from a broad regime of a \textit{space}, initiated and coercively maintained by state actors, to a more specific articulation of \textit{place}, one that is purposefully self-imagined by those under the repressive authority of the state. Murray Forman, interrogating the role of spatiality and localization in hiphop agrees that the differences between these two axes – space and place – “are organized around differences in focus and object, as well as differences of scale and value.”\textsuperscript{41} Forman avers that physical space, in and of itself, is not a causal entity that determines social interactions, nor does any singular space bear the facility naturally, to control the behaviors of a populace. Rather, spaces are imbued with authority as a result of ever-changing contingencies of human agency. Space is intentionally produced \textit{via} “spatial practices” of governance – the socio-political inequities that contribute to systems of domination and subordination – and enlisted as a means to enact and sustain hegemonic orders of a particular kind.

Attention to “place,” by contrast, reflects a narrowing of focus from the impersonal and generalized, to the habitual and familiar. Forman mentions the importance of language in expressing an individual’s affinity to place (through the naming of particular streets, known locales, and cultural practice), but notes that the efficacy of this technique is only measured by the degree to which quotations resonate with a knowledgeable audience. The intimacy of meaningful recognition, identifying the practices and sentiments expressed in hiphop’s narratives

\textsuperscript{40} Western, \textit{Outcast}, 6-8.

\textsuperscript{41} Murray Forman, \textit{The ‘Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop} (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 4.
as one’s own, leads to the investment of individuals in an ethos of community, contributing again, to a significant and value-laden “sense of place.” Both space and place then, are socially constructed arenas, the most contested of which in the context of hiphop performance, being the urban milieu of the city, a phenomenon “that has remained consistent since the culture’s inception and remains true even as [the genre’s] forms and expressions have circulated globally.” This is intensified when considering hiphop originating from Cape Town: For its majority coloured population, the city was transformed from “place” to “space” by apartheid-era legal injunction. Through the social impetus of contemporary hiphop cultural production, attempts are being made to rehabilitate “space” back into “place,” thus effecting a re-territorialization of the urban environment.

In Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s formulation, the term “relative deterritorialization” describes an abstraction or movement from one locus or context to another. This phenomenon is succeeded by re-territorialization, a process that intervenes in or “obstructs” movement, maintaining a connection to the original territory, but through a different set of relationships. Exemplified in the case of physical displacement through the GAA, the Cape Flats writ large, is easily imagined as a stand-in for the lost territory of District Six. As I have already noted, a total expulsion of coloureds from the city proper would have been economically deleterious to the functioning of the apartheid regime. Forced removal was a strategy that sought not entirely to extinguish, but rather to re-compose the relationship of coloureds to the city.

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42 Forman, 26.

43 Deleuze and Guattari, Deterritorialization is first noted in Anti-Oedipus, and developed further in A Thousand Plateaus. “Absolute deterritorialization” implies the creation of a wholly new territory, with no relation to the original. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 508-510.
In trying to understand hiphop culture’s social and cultural movement across and between “differences of scale and value,” I find Arjun Appadurai’s consideration of “deterritorialization” especially helpful, given the musical genre’s varied participation within the frames certainly, of “ethnoscapes,” and “mediascapes.”44 For Appadurai, deterritorialization names the impact and tension created within contemporary “politics of global culture” through the accelerated circulation of “people, machinery, money, images, and ideas” across physical and ideological borders, as a result of globalization.45 As the proposal is applied to the migration or “flow” of people to unfamiliar contexts, deterritorialization implies a physical and psychic distancing from originary cultural affiliation, and the potential as well, to exploit the nostalgic yearning for “invented homelands”46 – localities created from memory, that exist only in the mind’s eye of these newly diasporic communities – through ideological and image-, or narrative-centered means (a collusion of the workings of “ideoscapes” and “mediascapes”).

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson point out, that mapping autonomous culture directly onto geographical location, an assumption of the “isomorphism of space, place, and culture” (as my summary of Appadurai’s writing implies), ignores numerous lived experiences of interstitial,  

44 Appadurai suggests a five-part model for theorizing the imbricated factors of economic, cultural, and political disjuncture that constitute and influence contemporary global flows. He names these spheres of circulation: 1) ethnoscapes, 2) mediascapes, 3) technoscapes, 4) finanscapes, and 5) ideoscapes. Respectively, each “set of perspectival landscapes,” corresponds to the movement of 1) persons, 2) forces and production of media images, 3) mechanical and informational technology, 4) global capital, and 5) (counter-)ideologies evinced in struggles of domination and subordination.


46 Ibid., 302.
and interconnected socio-cultural praxis. However, as processes of globalization continue, as movements in and through the “disjunctures between economy, culture and politics” (to quote Appadurai) persist, it is ironically in these moments of fluidity that “ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient...[...]. . .as displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places, or communities in a world that seems increasingly to deny such firm territorialized anchors in their reality (emphasis in original).”

It is these very contradictions, the fragmentation and cohesion of social relationships, both synchronic and diachronic, that incline the Western Cape’s coloured hiphop practitioners towards an ideal of emplaced and cultural stability in the city.

I contend that regardless of legal intervention, the physical reclamation of “formerly coloured” places (now related to as “spaces”) when considered in light of historical disenfranchisement and current neoliberal capitalist policy, is a near insurmountable challenge. Despite the abrogation of apartheid laws restricting avenues to “employment, residence, and leisure” and the improved financial status of a burgeoning middle class, financial and social access to these spaces post-1994, remains beyond the grasp of most non-white South Africans. Prevailing inequities with regard to social services, housing, and land distribution, as well as

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48 Ibid., 10-11.

49 Writing in 2016, Roger Southall notes: “Present interest in the middle class of South Africa revolves overwhelmingly around the extent and consequences of black upward social mobility, yet this only highlights the lack of attention to the wider middle class generally.” The surfeit of information relating to the development of the country’s black African middle class, Southall avers, can be attributed to this particular group’s role in the rise of the African National Congress’ political influence, and apartheid resistance. While there exists a foundational literature on South Africa’s Indian merchant class, by contrast, academic interrogation of the history of white, Indian, and coloured middle class experience, is insubstantial. Roger Southall, The New Black Middle Class of South Africa (Johannesburg, Jacana Media, 2016), 41.
rampant unemployment, have forestalled the translation of a juridical “deracialization of space,” to a substantive “desegregation of the urban landscape.” The intricately conjoined mechanisms of apartheid spatial design and segregationist ideal, continue to have an effect on urban planning and lived experience in South Africa; social disparities are exacerbated today, through the economic consequences of predatory real estate capitalism. But while proprietorship of physical space is an persistent contestation given South Africa’s settler, colonialist, and apartheid histories, I suggest that who in fact defines the sonic character of Cape Town, is not under dispute.

Since physical space or landscape cannot easily be re-populated under current socio-economic conditions, a saturation of Cape Town’s soundscape does the work of recouping an otherwise irretrievable metropolis. In other words, apartheid’s spatial, and racial separatist policies – the Group Areas Act, and the Population Registration Act, respectively, although both were repealed in 1991 – maintain their stranglehold on the socio-political ambitions and daily interactions of Cape Town’s coloured community in the contemporary moment. The only recourse for this, and the coloured hiphop community then, is to enact an “acoustic re-territorialization” of the city, a term I adapt from Brandon LaBelle, who observes in the movement of sound from its source to its destination, the creation of intimate auditory relationships between producers and consumers. In LaBelle’s conceptualization, moments of shared sonic experience, through the fleeting temporality of auditory stimuli, attribute a relational significance to place. The ephemeral nature of sound demands a continual

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re-negotiation in terms of how it is engaged. Thus, the potential for several, varied interpersonal
cconnections to occur as sound moves through, in, and around us, and also, the potential for the
development of an extended community, united through mutual participation in sonic
phenomena, and investment in spatial contour. If “the temporal and evanescent nature of
sound imparts great flexibility, and uncertainty to the stability of space,” I argue that the
repetition and accretion of sound, anchors it steadfastly to place. As physical space is collapsed
and reconstituted, it is the very sound of Kaaps, exalted and stylized through hiphop – itself a
medium of irreverent disintegration and joyous reconfiguration – that stems contemporary
efforts at social and spatial erosion.

**Voice of the Cape**

To illustrate local hiphop artists’ musical engagement with these ideas, in the following
section I provide comparative analyses of two tracks produced in 1997 and 2006 by the
collectives Prophets of Da City (POC) and Brasse Vannie Kaap (BVK) respectively, and two
released in 2017 and 2018 by rapper YoungstaCPT. On the one hand, these examples
demonstrate Cape-based hiphop’s enduring concern with the lived consequences of displacement
from the city proper and corresponding social marginalization of coloureds. On the other, they
point to an apparent lack of legislative desire to effectively address these matters across a
significant period of time in the country’s socio-political history, thus strengthening the case that
hiphop interventions such as these effect only symbolic acts of dissent, as opposed to the

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52 Ibid., xxi.
anticipated structural change of conventional acts of political opposition. In each instance I describe how an optimistic sentiment of re-territorialization is insinuated and characterized by the aurality, or the acoustic impetus of Kaaps syntax, vocabulary, and especially accent.

The track *I Remember District 6* from POC’s 1997 album *Ghetto Code* is a poignant account of communal working-class life in the area prior to GAA forced removals. It consists of four verses over a steady “easy listening jazz” matrix of keyboard, bass, and guitar, with accompanying kick/snare loop. An excerpt from the extended penultimate verse conjures in intimate and romanticized detail, a deeply felt sense of loss through vernacular reference to well-known haunts and familiar praxis:

[Verse:]  
I remember sago pudding and tamatiebredie.  
And when we became the needy,  
The neighbors would always keep the door open.  
In times of hardship, surviving in District Six  
Was hard work, but we could always depend  
On the neighbors’ support.  
So, taking it back to the Dry Dock,  
Upper Ashley Street and the Seven Steps,  
Where the mense slept during summer,  
with the vensters kept open, ja.  
Nuwe Jaar was altyd warm,  
We had Klopse and langarm.  
We used to slat nat.  
With a lekker stuk vastrap,  
We used to jep the ice-cream bak,  
*Gat set it agter inne yaat,*  
*En vriet skelmpies inna hok!*  

[Translation:]  
...tomato stew.  
...people...  
...windows...  
New Year’s was always a great time,  
With the Coon Carnival,  
And all kinds of dances.  
Us kids used to steal ice-cream,  
Hide out in the backyard,  
And secretly stuff our faces!

The narrator’s nostalgic, halcyon vision is however shattered in the final verse:

[Verse:]  
I remember when the bulldozers came,  
As a laaitie it confused my brain.  
[*]  
‘78 to ‘79 it was ‘vat jou goed,  
*En trek maar verder’* time.  
I remember selling *lood* and scrap irons,  

[Translation:]  
...kid...  
[...]  
...pack your stuff and move out again...  
...lead...
And how we used to mine for gelukke, ...charms/trinkets...
In the stukkende huise. ...razed houses...
We used to find old coins and dooie muise. ...dead mice...
Like luise they threw us on the Cape Flats. ...lice...

(Knowledgeable) listeners cannot fail to identify with the pathos expressed here: A child unaware of the reason for his family’s displacement, returns habitually to his former home to scavenge for mementos with his friends. This trajectory from place to space and back again is evoked in the chorus to BVK’s 2006 track Cape Flats (Remix), featured on the album Ysterbek [“Metalmouth”], and referenced as an epigraph to this chapter. The decisive lines: Vannie see tot die berg/Vannie berg tot die Vlaktes [“From the sea to the mountain/From the mountain to the Flats”], describe the wide-ranging sphere of coloured cultural influence in the region, and also serve as an assertion of ownership of the city and its surrounds despite the historical dislocation of coloureds, and subsequent attempts at their geo-spatial confinement.

In a similar vein, with his 2017 track Weskaap, MC Riyadh Roberts aka. YoungstaCPT, makes specific references to the popular tourist destination of Clifton Beach located at the foot of Table Mountain, as well as the outlying coloured townships of Valhalla Park and Manenberg. Weskaap translates as “Western Cape.” The first line of his second verse – “You can tell by the way I talk, that I come from Cape Town” – fixes Youngsta geographically, marking the characteristic inflections of working-class coloured English (discussed in more detail in Chapter Three), as integral to the city’s soundscape. Bridging the gap between global (or certainly, US) and local spheres of hiphop cultural recognition, the MC’s chorus is sung to the same tune as the opening salvo of Dr. Dre’s 2000 smash hit, The Next Episode. The most telling feature of Weskaap in terms of spatial reference is the accompanying music video, the visual narrative of which shows Youngsta leading a bewildered, presumably English-speaking, white South African character through various historically segregated neighborhoods. Youngsta, referred to as
“the King of the Mother City” takes this hapless “white bra” [“guy”] on a guided tour through the entirety of his domain, making it clear who belongs, and who’s just visiting, an emphatic reclamation of the landscape, and conversion of space, to place through sonic/linguistic means.53

Youngsta’s relationship to actual and ideological displacement from the city is complicated by his self-identification as Muslim, and more specifically, as Cape Malay. Classified as a sub-grouping of “coloured” under the 1950 Population Registration Act, Cape Malays were left largely unaffected by the expulsions of the Group Areas Act and allowed to remain in the BoKaap [“High Cape”] neighborhood adjacent to Cape Town’s central business district.54 Youngsta’s philosophical stance is therefore one of “never having been removed,” a perspective he ardently espouses by ironically appropriating signifiers of colonial discourse in his lyrics.

Take for example, his 2018 single, Voice of the Cape. As with the trans-coding tactic of “provocation” that plays on ambivalence and ambiguity, here Youngsta exploits the varied

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54 The BoKaap, or Cape Malay Quarter, was originally established within the final two decades of the eighteenth century as a residential area for enslaved people of predominantly Muslim faith. Islam was first introduced to the region by laborers from the Moluccas, political prisoners from Indonesia, and later, enslaved Muslims from Bengal, the Malabar coast, and the interior of India. It was only during the nineteenth century that “Malay” became a blanket term to describe non-white, ostensibly brown, Muslims, despite the nominal percentage of enslaved people of Malaysian descent actually brought to the Cape. Overcrowded and dilapidated, the neighborhood came under imminent threat of demolition and urban renewal in 1941 through the provisions of The Slum Act (already introduced in 1934). However, in 1943 the area’s rehabilitation became somewhat of a pet project for the “Group for the Preservation of the Malay Quarter” spearheaded by Afrikaner academic I.D. du Plessis, amongst others. In 1951, Du Plessis was appointed as the Commissioner of Coloured Affairs (remember that “Cape Malay” was a sub-category of the “coloured” grouping). To support his orientalist desire of preserving both the architectural and “ethnic” characters of the BoKaap, Du Plessis petitioned for the region to be declared an exclusively “Malay Group Area.” This was achieved in 1957, and from 1962 onwards, only those designated as Cape Malay could own property there, hence, the historical association of the BoKaap with this ethno-religious community.

meanings of the contraction “VOC.” In a South African context, this abbreviation most obviously references the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* [“Dutch East India Company”], the conglomerate of trading companies under whose auspices a colonial settlement was first established after the arrival of VOC administrator Jan van Riebeeck in 1652. (In another 2018 track entitled *YVR*, Youngsta adopts the moniker “Young van Riebeeck,” describing “the hiphop game” as “a country that he is colonizing”). The “Voice of the Cape” is also a Cape Town-based community radio station established in 1995 that caters specifically to the cultural and religious interests of the city’s vast Muslim community.

A section of Youngsta’s final verse from *Voice of the Cape* reads:

And this was the choice that I made to be
the Voice of the Cape.
I can't be Michael Jordan or Drake,
But look at all the noise that I make,
I'm the Voice of the Cape.
I remember when my voice didn't break,
Now it's broken and my voice make you shake.
I'm the Voice of the Cape.
I gave a new voice to this place,
And now they can rejoice in the Cape.
I'm the voice of the voiceless....

This verse develops Rose and Stoever’s respective proposals noted in Chapter One – that hiphop music as well as the sounds of “aurally stereotyped” black (in this case, coloured) voices produce a white “noise” – in interesting ways. From a lyrical perspective, Youngsta merges these ideas, declaring “the noise that he makes” to be the quintessential, and embodied “voice of the Cape.” As previously mentioned, trans-coding as “provocation” is located in the representational site of the body and plays on the simultaneous inclinations of attraction/disavowal evoked through fetishism. In making the claim of being “the voice of the Cape,” Youngsta demonstrates the

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55 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYW5hGhnuG8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYW5hGhnuG8)
interconnectedness between the distinctive sonic character of the voice, and the raced body as its place of origin. By reconfiguring the “noisiness” of coloureds as a positive signifier, one “that can be embodied in a voice and, by extension, the person or people who emit it...[the] voice is revealed to be as much body as it is sound...”56 The same voice/bodily nexus that elicits fear in white listeners (“making them shake”), provides coloureds with a sense in which they can “rejoice in the Cape.” Youngsta reverses the experience of physical displacement via an acoustic re-territorialization of space (or perhaps, an acoustic re-colonization), giving “a new voice to this place,” a new way for coloureds (“the voiceless” in the final line) to conceptualize their relationship and identification with the landscape.

As in the track Weskaap which melodically quotes West Coast producer Dr. Dre, the primary melodic motif of Voice of the Cape (Figure 3.1) is also derived from a staple in the hiphop pantheon, this time East Coast rapper Notorious B.I.G’s track Big Poppa from his seminal 1994 album Ready to Die. I make this assertion based on similarities between the melodic contours and implicit harmonic foundations of each example:

![Figure 3.1: Primary melodic motif from Voice of the Cape in c natural minor.](image)

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In broad strokes: The melodies in both Figures 3.1 and 3.2 effect an arch form, moving from the tonal center of c up to the leading tone, before a gradual descent to the dominant g, and continuing downwards to end again on the tonic.

By referencing *Big Poppa*, Youngsta equates his own stature within the Cape Town scene to that of Biggie’s formidable influence on East Coast rap. Aligning himself to the burgeoning US hardcore rap movement of the mid-nineties led by artists such as Biggie and Nas (whose critically acclaimed album *Illmatic* was also released in 1994), Youngsta necessarily invites the same negative critiques levelled against post-Golden Age hiphop and its (non-white) practitioners, to his own work. Tricia Rose writes that commercial US hiphop from the mid-1990s onwards has been plagued by an unholy narrative trinity of “gangstas, pimps, and hoes.” Although she notes exceptions to the rule, this pervasively one-dimensional account of hiphop music and culture has nevertheless influenced “broader public discussion about race, class, and the value of black culture’s role in society. Debates about hip hop have become a means for
defining poor, young black people and thus for interpreting the context and reasons for their clearly disadvantaged lives.” Local hiphop artists are again subjected to the type of circuitous logic that legitimated apartheid-era conflation of racialized behavior with racial category. While these musicians insist that their work and the instantiation of hiphop in Cape Town itself, promotes ideals of social uplift – recall Gavin Steingo’s assessment of hiphop (mentioned in the Introduction to my dissertation) as “overtly political” and “didactic” – they cannot escape negative characterizations of coloured behavior. Assumptions of coloured criminality and wrongdoing or involvement with gangs, map easily onto the unfavorable impressions of mid-1990s hiphop from which contemporary performers such as Youngsta draw sonic and aesthetic inspiration.

**Seeing and Hearing White, Seeing and Hearing Black**

A fundamental consideration in the viability of acoustic re-territorialization as a model for spatial recuperation, is the propagation of difference (the imbricated particularities of phenotypical and cultural racialized difference) as a stable, and incommensurable reality of social life. Although Stoever’s work, similar to Alim’s transracialism, deals with ways in which the “sonic color line” can be traversed, her discernment of an imaginary boundary separating racial categories and racialized ways of being, is predicated on the institution of difference. That sound is a crucial factor in the imagination, construction, and contestation of racial identity, takes inspiration from W.E.B. DuBois’ writing in *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), and his later autobiographical work *Dusk of Dawn* (1940). Stoever traces the re-structuring of DuBois’

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principal metaphor for racial dynamics in the United States, from a “visual veil” ideologically separating whites from blacks, to “a plate glass vacuum chamber, where the color line, invisible to the eye, manifests itself as a transparent wall. While white and black people remain visible to each other, no sound penetrates the walls.”

Whereas the “veil” implies the acousmatic phenomenon of sound as definitively heard, but without any clues as to its exact point of origin, the “vacuum” posits a willful neglect of black lived experience on the other side of the clear chamber wall, and a conscious silencing of (or deafness to) their pleas.

Summarizing DuBois’ argument as to the tenacity of racial thinking, Stoever writes that “whites not only have been conditioned to see and hear the world differently but also have labeled and propagated this sensory configuration as universal, objective truth (emphasis in original).” The notion of “visual conditioning” – that whites quite plainly have been habituated to “see the world differently from blacks” – is reiterated in Judith Butler’s suggestion that a “racially saturated and schematized field of visibility” clouds white visual perception and judgement of racialized events.

Butler interrogates the 1992 ruling that Rodney King’s brutal beating at the hands of four, white policemen was entirely justified in light of the imminent threat that the unarmed King, lying motionless and bloodied on the street, posed to the LAPD officers. Video evidence of the assault (muted during its screening at the trial), was not sufficient to convince a mostly white jury of victimization; King’s gesture of desperate self-protection – his raised hand and open palm

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58 Stoever, 10.

59 Ibid.

– was interpreted by defense attorneys and the jury as indicative of a violent threat directed towards the police. Butler asserts that in order for the possibility of King’s position to be reversed from “endangered to endangering,” the act of “seeing” performed by the white jurors, must properly be regarded as an opportunity “[to read]...the racial production of the visible, the workings of racial constraint” on visual perception, manifested as white paranoia.\(^6^1\)

Through a circuit of re-inscriptions, the blows Rodney King suffered, are projected as blows he would have inflicted and according to racist white imaginary, has doubtless inflicted in the past. White aggression towards the always threatening black male body is re-configured as pre-emptive and retributive; not only did King get what he deserved, but he brought these actions upon himself.\(^6^2\) Such shifting of blame, a displacement from aggrieved to aggressor, can also be

\(^{61}\) Butler, 16.

\(^{62}\) The regression from “endangered to endangering” described here as a consequence of white paranoia, corresponds I think to Frantz Fanon’s description in *Black Skin, White Masks*, of intrinsic black neurosis. To be a black man in a white world is inherently to experience and display the symptoms of psychic anguish. This condition however is not the result of specific and unresolved trauma located in the individual’s unconscious, but rather, it manifests via a Jungian “collective unconscious.” Fanon declares: “In every society, in every collectivity, exists—must exist—a channel, an outlet through which the forces accumulated in the form of aggression can be released.” It is for example through pervasive narratives of intrepid white explorers pitted against wily “Negroes and Indians” that such “collective aggression” is vented. Although “put together by white men for little white men,” young black consumers exposed to these media (Fanon uses comic books as examples), invariably identify with the victorious figures as well, imagining themselves as set apart morally and intellectually from the vilified antagonists. Identifying with “the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to savages,” the young black consumer then “subjectively adopts a white man’s attitude. He invests in the hero, who is white, with all his own aggression,” and this aggression is in turn meted out on black subjects. In this sense, King’s alleged participation in his own demise is understandable as a form of internalized self-hatred, and self-censure. But Gershon Legman’s study of depictions of violence in comic books and their broader psychological implications for society, excerpted by Fanon, supports the idea that visual perception is ultimately constrained and influenced by racialized notions of “the Other.” Remembering that the comic books in question were “put together for whites by whites,” Gershon motivates the normative depiction of courageous white frontiersmen encountering “Bad Injuns” in the following manner: “[The punishment that white Americans deserve for the decimation of indigenous culture] can be averted only by denying responsibility for the wrong and throwing the blame in the victim; by proving—at least to our own satisfaction—that by striking the first and only blow we were acting solely on the legitimate ground of defense....”
read as a de-territorialization of the subject’s intention, supplanting that intention with one more palatable to the dominant culture. That no black individual “within this racist episteme…can seek recourse to the visible as a sure ground of evidence,”\(^{63}\) has played out to devastating effect in recent memory in the United States, notably the flashpoints of Sanford, Florida, and Ferguson, Missouri. This episteme has implications in the current context of social relations between white and non-white individuals in Cape Town as well, leading to “universal, objective” understandings of coloureds as immanently violent, and the soundscapes they inhabit – the very sounds they utter – as similarly abrasive, as vulgar. Contrasted to “seeing the world differently,” “hearing the world differently” is not simply a matter of misinterpreting black/non-white sounds, but also of cultural mistranslation.

To this end, Antjie Krog begins her joint examination (together with Nosisi Mpolweni-Zantsi and Kopano Ratele) of a South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) testimony, by asking: “How do we read one another? How do we ‘hear’ one another in a country where the past still bleeds within and round us?”\(^{64}\) The testimony in question belongs to Notrose Nobomvu Konile, an isiXhosa woman from the rural Eastern Cape whose son, Zabonke, was

\(^{63}\) Butler, 17.

murdered along with six other young men by South African security forces in 1986.\textsuperscript{65} Testifying before the TRC on camera ten years later, Mrs. Konile’s account and demeanor was interpreted as incongruous with the performances of grief provided by the mothers of three other victims, whose reports matched the expected chronicling of “a brutal regime, stoic struggle…and an eventual triumph over evil.”\textsuperscript{66} Mrs. Konile’s non-linear telling recalled personal details having little to do with her son, thus reinforcing apartheid tropes of black African women as “ignorant; lacking in maternal devotion; unable to properly value life, and therefore to appropriately grieve; and being pre-occupied with monetary compensation.”\textsuperscript{67} A focal point of Mrs. Konile’s surrealist and disjointed testimony was the sudden, non-diegetic mention of a goat at her front door, the significance of which was only realized after uncovering discrepancies between the audio recording of the original isiXhosa testimony, its translation into spoken English, and the final transcription of events into written English.

Krog \textit{et al}, were able to situate Mrs. Konile’s tendency to disrupt her own narrative with self-conscious interjections as a thematic trope of rural storytelling, and not, as initially assumed, an explicit result of confusion caused by the trauma of horrific events. A crucial mishearing of her statement and its subsequent (mis)representation as authoritative text failed to apprehend Mrs. Konile’s “incomprehensible” mention of a goat, as an event that occurred in a dream the

\textsuperscript{65} The “Gugulethu Seven” as the group became known, had been briefly trained as \textit{Umkhonto we Sizwe} soldiers (“MK” was the military wing of the African National Congress), to carry out an attack on a police transport van. Later inquiries into the incident revealed that the group had been set up from the beginning by \textit{askaris} (turncoats), with the intention of apprehension in a planned ambush by security forces.

\textsuperscript{66} Krog, 78.

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}, 62.
night before she learned of Zabonke’s death. Considering the influence of isiXhosa cosmology, Mpolweni-Zantsi and Ratele piece together an interpretation that reveals the animal to be an important mediator in ritual communications with ancestral entities. As a result of the dream, Mrs. Konile was plagued by nervous apprehension throughout the day. That the goat appeared to her, marked it as a harbinger of impending trauma and a foretelling of her own social death in losing a son. What Mrs. Konile was trying unsuccessfully to communicate to her TRC audience, the authors claim, is that prior to receiving confirmation of her son’s murder, she had already experienced the pain of his death through premonition. The conditions of presenting and ultimately evaluating Mrs. Konile’s testimony, were inappropriate to the means of its delivery and insensitive to the dignity of its speaker. (Mis)translation occurred at a linguistic level, and also a socio-cultural one.

As the Butler and Krog examples demonstrate, in order for a racialized hierarchical order to be sustained, seeing the black body in crisis, and hearing the black body in crisis, must necessarily be experienced independently of each other: the video footage of Rodney King’s beating was shown to members of the jury without sound; the English translations/transcriptions of Mrs. Konile’s testimony were annotated without diacritical markings of timbral inflection or enunciation, indexing her distress. In both instances, a complete account of events could only be rendered by combining, and simultaneously apprehending visual and auditory stimuli. As it relates to apartheid geo-spatial planning, the nature of “visual and auditory conditioning” demanded that coloured bodies were seen, heard, and read in ways commensurate with separatist, hegemonic thinking. The visual presence of coloureds within only certain spatial zones of the Western Cape was merely tolerated; their activity within the city itself, was both

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68 Krog, 75.
circumscribed, and conditional. From an auditory perspective, an attitude of standard Afrikaans language chauvinism in relation to *Kaaps* was steadfastly maintained, and this position of linguistic inferiority extended to assumptions of coloured behavioral inadequacy as well. In addition, the socio-linguistic parity between the two speech forms of standard Afrikaans and *Kaaps* (and therefore, the two racialized groups of whites and coloureds), posed such a significant quandary to essentialist reasoning, that the primary means of ascribing difference inevitably became phenotype, or that which could be determined visually.

**Conclusion**

De-territorialization in the form of purposeful relocation achieved the intention of segregation under the guise of benign separate development. Non-whites were placed at a physical and visual remove, with only restricted access to regions of the city. This approach failed however to account for the inherent mobility of sound, particularly in the form of *Kaaps*: its capacity to pass unhindered through and between the injunctions of legislative boundaries; to trace and locate the “habitual and habituated” \(^{69}\) patterns of social movement from periphery to center. In hiphop, as Forman maintains, located-ness within a geographic orbit is fixed through the genre trope of naming specific areas, and practices, imbued with cultural meaning. Combined with the implication (derived from Feld’s theorization of acoustemology), that the aurally-predicated experience of movement through discrete territorial zones reduces the unfamiliarity of geographic distance, it is possible then also to imagine such movement as effecting a collapse of ideological distance. Using the example of journeying into the city for work *via* taxi: the path of the commuter, which (temporarily) reverses the trajectory of historical Group Areas Act

\(^{69}\) Forman, 10.
evictions, is punctuated by calling out specific destinations in the comfortable vernacular of *Kaaps*. To name and contemplate “space” in this way is to attribute significance; a cathexis, drawing these abstract locations into the realm of deep personal experience and affinitive “place.” And so, evoking “place” through the sound and cultural referents of a vernacular speech form, situates its speakers metaphorically, ultimately evincing a restitutive “sense of place” within previously prohibited “spaces.”

For LaBelle, from whose work my premise of “acoustic re-territorialization” is derived, “place” is created through shared sonic experience, and like sound, it is ephemeral, fleeting, existing only for the duration of these personal interactions. Of the modes of hiphop practice mentioned in this chapter, bboying and graff-writing – visual performances that nevertheless, index sound – share this implicit or specified temporality. These forms are most easily delimited by historical legislative spatial practice, replaced and continued in the present through market capital forces: the sanctioned use of space, in terms of who may be present and when; municipalities selling off public land to private investors, enabling more stringent acts of policing; the painting over of tags and murals, in the case of robust gentrification.

Since the genre’s inception in Cape Town it has been MCs, mobilizing the affective power of *Kaaps* communicated in a prototypical “coloured accent” together with the conventions of hiphop, who have managed most successfully to propagate the notion of emplacement.

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70 I am aware of Deleuze and Guattari’s contention that “the refrain” serves to mark territory sonically. In this configuration, the “milieu” as temporary and “rhythm” as a singular event, when contrasted to the stability of “territory” and predictability of “cadence,” perhaps map respectively onto the framework I am proposing of “space” as abstract, and “place” as personalized. While a further discussion of the authors’ perspective on “music and the refrain” is beyond the scope of this chapter, my intention here is to emphasize (acoustic) re-territorialization as an agentive and recuperative move in response to physical de-territorialization and socio-political displacement.
The compelling repetition of the lines “I remember District Six” and “I’m the Voice of the Cape” in POC and Youngsta’s respective tracks serve as sonic and ideological tethers to place, regardless of where their listeners might physically be located. Employing the trans-coding modes of “reversal” and “provocation” they re-evaluate the “noisy” sound of Kaaps, and the similarly “abrasive” sound of hiphop – altwee van hulle, Cape Flatse dinge [“both of them Cape Flats things”] – as positive signifiers of coloured identity. These characteristic sonic markers suffuse the city; their presence remains, even after their speakers have (been) withdrawn.
Chapter 4 – Playing in the Dark, Playing in the Light

Coloureds is cool; everybody wants to be coloured
- Personal interview with MC Isaac “Mutant” Williams

In contemporary South Africa, and the Cape Town of my ethnographic research, how one looks is the primary factor in determining racial category. How one sounds, on the other hand, is imagined as a behavioral trope that resonates most profoundly in the speech variety of Kaaps. In the previous chapter, I made the case for Cape-based hiphop as a specifically “Cape Flats thing” – a performance genre historically linked to the working-class coloured community of the Cape Flats, one that collapses the geo-spatial and temporal distance between periphery and city proper, through an ideological and actual emphasis on soundscape as a way to recuperate landscape. In this chapter I address the incursion of white musicians into the aural and spatial domains of Cape-based hiphop. In particular, I examine the work of arguably South Africa’s most contentious and commercially successful musical export in recent years, the self-proclaimed “rave-rap” group Die Antwoord [translated as “The Answer”]. I compare this phenomenon with the equally controversial output of the band Dookoom [meaning “conjurer”] fronted by Isaac “Mutant” Williams, a coloured MC and mainstay of the underground Cape Town rap scene (in journalistic inquiries and the Cape Town musical/popular imagination the two respective frontmen of Die Antwoord and Dookoom, “Ninja” and Isaac, are often pitted against each other as two sides of the same coin). For many followers of hiphop in Cape Town, Dookoom’s work is viewed as a counter-narrative or even a corrective to Die Antwoord’s imposition, (re)centring musical, and cultural aesthetic to a characteristically coloured focus.

The story of Die Antwoord’s rise to fame and notoriety both nationally and abroad has
been related several times over in blogs and full-length features by industry tastemakers like Boing Boing, Vice, and Spin. Initially posting tracks on the South African alternative Afrikaans-language and culture website Watkykjy? (“What are you looking at?”), by late 2009 the group had released a video on Youtube entitled Zef Side, followed by Enter the Ninja.¹ Taken together as an “artist’s manifesto” both offerings quickly went viral, in no small part due to their highly stylized, carnivalesque visuals, and Afrikaans linguistic nuance employed throughout. Print and related media interviews followed, along with guest slots at respected music festivals like Coachella and Big Day Out. Swiftly thereafter, the band embarked on sold-out international tours as headliners.

As Die Antwoord's public profile increased and details of their back-story gradually came to light, speculation about their relative “authenticity” – an enduring theme in interrogations of rap-related genres – began to surface. Turns out that frontman Ninja aka. Watkin “Waddy” Tudor Jones, and his female counterpart Yolandi Vi$$er aka. Anri Du Toit, had previously been involved in short-lived electronic outfits The Constructus Corporation, and MaxNormalTV. Prior to this, Jones had also been a member of The Fantastic Kill, and The Original Evergreen. Surely not surprising, for don’t all successful performing acts go through a period of maturation on the way to “finding their voice”? For South African audiences especially, it was unclear exactly whose voice was being articulated.

The documentary-style introduction and conclusion to Zef Side presented the two MCs along with beat-maker DJ Hi-Tek, as naïve proponents of a home-grown zef aesthetic. A South African version of white-trash kitsch, “zef” is elevated in Die Antwoord’s work to “next-level” cool. Especially at the beginning of their career as Die Antwoord, Ninja and Yolandi rapped in

¹ http://wewillraakyou.com/2010/02/the-answer-to-die-antwoords-marketing-social-media/
Kaaps. Most audaciously though, Ninja’s tattoos (the use of his alias is intentional; from the outset, the Ninja “character” was completely subsumed within/supplanted Jones’ identity) bear undeniable similarity to the hierarchical inscriptions and physical markings of the infamous Western Cape “Number” gangs, coloured prison gangs distinguished in name and function by the numbers: 26, 27, and 28. *Die Antwoord* has rarely, if ever, acknowledged these latter influences, but have been curiously open about the contributions of photographer Roger Ballen (who directed their 2012 music video *I Fink You Freeky*, and in a personal interview asserted “There was no *Antwoord* before me”); South African artist Anton Kannemeyer of *Bittercomix* fame; and renowned fashion designer Alexander Wang, to their overall aesthetic.

Numerous scholars have taken up the charge of analyzing the complex of signifiers that make up *Die Antwoord*’s exposition, interrogating the degree to the group reproduces aspects of social and cultural praxis understood to be the purview of working-class coloureds (Anton Krueger 2012; Liese Van der Watt 2012; Hannelie Marx and Viola Candice Martin 2011). These authors interpret *Die Antwoord*’s work as a wholly positive reconfiguration of white Afrikaner identity in a post-1994 South Africa, citing Afrikaans as the pivot around which the group’s creative (re-)description occurs. This idea is obviously predicated on the shared linguistic history of Afrikaans between white Afrikaners and coloured communities, especially from the Cape region.

A case in point: The title and interrogative impulse for Marx and Milton’s paper “Bastardised Whiteness,” is inspired by well-known anti-apartheid South African poet Breyten Breytenbach’s observation that Afrikaans embodies “the visible history and the ongoing process
not only of bastardisation, but also of metamorphosis.”² However, the co-authors use the terms “Afrikaans” and “Afrikaner” interchangeably throughout their paper, thereby conflating a body of cultural knowledge predicated on language with an exclusively white ethnic grouping. This move forecloses the possibility of acceptance into the laager of Afrikanerdom, a cultural template predicated by language and race, by non-white subjects who also claim Afrikaans as their mother tongue. This is important, because the teleological shaping of a “bastardised whiteness” that necessarily incorporates elements of non-white culture, but not non-white subjects, is appreciably problematic, not to mention the allusion to miscegenation, “race-mixing,” and illegitimacy bound up in the word “bastardisation.” The formulation proposed by Marx and Milton, of “metamorphosis” leading to a syncretic and hybrid identity, reifies essential categories of whiteness and blackness from which a celebratory, alternative vision of white identity then comes into being.

I argue instead that Die Antwoord’s appeal derives from their curated visual aesthetic disseminated through print and social media, and especially, through the spectacular imagery of their music videos. It is through the experience of witnessing their videos accompanied by the lyrical/language component, and not simply hearing their music in isolation, that Die Antwoord has garnered public attention. Despite the end of formal segregation in South Africa, the “legacy of apartheid’s visualised system of racialisation”³ remains firmly entrenched and apartheid-era racial classifications determined by visual assessment and confirmed via behavior, remain the

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dominant lens through which individuals are socially identified in South Africa. In other words, it is impossible to view *Die Antwoord’s* music videos or even images of the musicians themselves, without primarily considering the complicity of race in their representation.

An overwhelming fascination with the group’s visual appearance overshadows critical interest in the content of their lyrics (granted, only one factor in the sonic matrix along with instrumental and aesthetic attributes that constitute musical production). The following anecdote supports this idea: In July of 2010, I attended an all-day event at Governors Island in New York organized by HARD, the music festival promotions group. British/Sri Lankan rapper Mathangi Arulpragasam better known as “M.I.A” headlined the show, with *Die Antwoord* performing as one of the openers. Watching M.I.A perform her then-latest banger *Bad Girls* with a complement of backup dancers in full burkas was surreal enough. But that was nothing compared to watching and hearing the mostly white, hipster crowd undaunted by the pelting rain, chanting along to the chorus of *Die Antwoord’s* track *Fish Paste*, which reads: *Jou ma se poes in a fish paste jar!*

Now I’m willing to bet that none of the loft-dwelling Williamsburgers attending the gig could have imagined the translation of that line as “Your mother’s cunt in a fish paste jar!” (a potent epithet delivered in *Kaaps*), or the significance of Ninja’s assertion in a later verse of the song: “I am a fucken coloured, ‘cause I *am* a fucken coloured if I want to be a coloured. My inner fucken coloured just wants to be discovered....” Two years later, Ninja doubled down on this statement. In the 2012 track *Never le Nkemise* [“You can't stop me”] Ninja identified as “*die wit kaffir....*” [“the white kaffir” – “kaffir” being a derogatory term used to denigrate black South Africans]; in an online interview of the same year, he declared that “God made a mistake...I’m actually black trapped in a white body.”

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4 http://www.channel24.co.za/Music/News/Die-Antwoords-Ninja-Im-actually-black-20120217
Playing in the Dark

Such provocative claims of racial identity are nothing new for some white South African musicians. In 1996 Anton Goosen released an album entitled *(Bushrock) Of a White Kaffir of Africa*, and in 1997 Koos Kombuis penned *Almal Kaffirs* [“We’re all kaffirs”] featured on the album *Blameer Dit Op apartheid* [“Blame It On apartheid”]. While Hannelie Marx and Viola Milton regard this kind of linguistic inversion as a rebellious “signal...[of]...commonality between the races”\(^5\) meant to highlight similarities between diametrically opposed social categories and histories, these statements only re-inscribe relations of power between the two. As Adam Haupt notes, despite their intention, such terms “[reproduce] racially problematic language that signals white, racist projections of blackness.”\(^6\) Goosen and Kombuis’ commentaries inadvertently play to the pervasive misconception that white South Africans caught at a post-1994 juncture have unwillingly, and unwittingly been dragged down to the lowest rung on the country’s social hierarchy.\(^7\)

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In a June 14, 1991, article in the London *Guardian*, Breyten Breytenbach refers to himself as a “white kaffir.” See footnote 58.


\(^5\) Marx and Milton, 730.


\(^7\) Kombuis’ 2008 album *Bloedrivier* (named for the 1838 Battle of Blood River) features a track entitled *Die Fokkol Song* (“The Fuck-all Song”). Here, Kombuis adopts the ironic stance of a guided tour through the city. In the first verse, the narrator greets visitors at Cape Town International Airport who have arrived to enjoy the 2010 World Cup Soccer tournament, and to experience the country’s “friendly democracy.” The tone quickly changes as the chorus announces that the city, and post-1994 South Africa generally, has “fuck-all” essential infrastructure requirements, or expertise to run efficiently. 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TS_2MkoOCtc
Johnny Clegg, *Le Zulu Blanc*, or “The White Zulu” as he became known during *Juluka* and *Savuka*’s heyday, is of course another well-known example of the racially predicated privilege that allows for such cultural exploration. In a more contemporary frame, a 2015 *Mail & Guardian* feature entitled “Blackface, White Guilt, Grey Area,” quotes Xander Ferreira of the electronic group *Gazelle*, as saying (without any apparent sense of irony): “I had more black people around me until I was 13 than white people. Imagine the woman who brought you up, bathed you every day, you’ve got a heavy connection with her and her culture. When you were a baby you heard her music. It became a part of your culture [emphasis added].”8 In a complex paradigm where his family’s nanny is implicated as a surrogate mother and primary agent of socialization, Ferreira positions himself as an engaged recipient of cultural mores (albeit non-white cultural mores), from an early age. Ferreira’s social development is therefore framed as an organic by-product of early exogamous cultural exposure.

Sarah Nuttall writes that in contemporary South Africa “forms of separation and difference do still occur, materially and epistemologically,” and that such socio-political cleavages have been the focus of much recent cultural criticism.9 She suggests that academic inquiries interrogate the overlooked instances of unexpected intersection and entanglement, instead of conceiving of social sites and histories as incommensurable, or wholly separate. Investigations of cultural convergence positing non-whites as agents of their own self-identification, have certainly been made post-1994 (Nuttal 2000; Erasmus 2001; Jones and

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8 Stefanie Jason, “Blackface, white guilt, grey area,” *Mail and Guardian*, January 2015, 4. Ferreira, along with *Die Antwoord*, and Afrikaner rapper Zander Tyler aka. Jack Parow were cited in this article for the influence of non-white cultural signifiers and the impact of their work in the construction of an alternative contemporary Afrikaner identity.

However, it is important to remember that prior to and after the dismantling of formal apartheid in South Africa, the ability to initiate such interventions, to credibly subsume, and to explore alternative identitarian modes has always been the exclusive prerogative of white actors.

Any discussion of white musicians emulating the styles and expressions of non-white actors invariably brings to mind Norman Mailer’s 1957 essay *The White Negro*. In the aftermath of World War II, haunted by the threat of imminent death either “by atomic war...or a slow death by conformity with every creative or rebellious impulse stifled,” there arose on American social horizon, the existentialist character of the “white hipster.” This figure sought to imbibe, to capture the life-affirming ethos of African America. For it was only “the Negro,” Mailer reasoned, having lived “on the margin between totalitarianism and democracy for two centuries,” who existed at all times “in the enormous present...relinquishing the pleasures of the mind for the more obligatory pleasures of the body....” As an “urban adventurer” then, the white hipster “looking for action with a black man’s code to fit [his] facts...could be considered a white Negro.”

Ingrid Monson problematizes this impulse to regard blackness merely “as a symbol of social conscience, sexual freedom, and resistance to the dominant order.” Monson cautions against the tendency in these moments to conflate: “the most ‘transgressive’ aspects of African American culture with its true character, [falling] into the trap of viewing blackness as absence. Whether conceived as an absence of morality or of bourgeois pretensions, this view of blackness...buys into the historical legacy of primitivism and its concomitant exoticism of the

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‘Other.’”\textsuperscript{11} Die Antwoord’s work is steeped in the kind of existential escapism catalogued by Mailer and the flagrant exoticism noted by Monson. But more than simply a discussion of appropriation, my concern here is the relationship between visual apperception and assumed behavior in fixing racial category that so pre-occupied the apartheid social sphere, and still manifests in the contemporary moment.

\textbf{Playing in the Light}

Analyzing this continuity develops and combines theories proposed earlier in my writing. The first is the notion of “visual and auditory conditioning” described in Chapter Two: the idea that under apartheid, racialized bodies were “seen, heard, and read” in ways that conformed with separatist social organization and rationale. The second, is Njabulo Ndebele’s critique of “the spectacular impulse” in early anti-apartheid literature, as outlined in my Introduction. (To recap, Ndebele cautions that “[t]he spectacular documents; it indicts implicitly; it is demonstrative, preferring exteriority to interiority....”\textsuperscript{12}) Die Antwoord certainly embraces ethnomusicologist Christopher Ballantine’s dictum – described in his often quoted 2004 essay \textit{Re-thinking Whiteness} – that white South African musicians in the post-1994 moment have a “need for self-reinvention...that is ironic, unpredictable [and] transgressive.”\textsuperscript{13} I posit that pervasive visual and

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auditory conditioning has led to *Die Antwoord’s* “re-inventions” being evaluated along the lines of linguistic parity, contributing to a “progressive” construction of whiteness that is no longer primarily thought of as authoritarian and repressive.

By contrast, *Dookoom* is critiqued from a “spectacular perspective” for the way in which their work disrupts the set of behaviors conventionally assumed of non-white actors. Their most well-known tracks arguably describe coloureds as agentive, and capably asserting self-identity. *Dookoom’s* origin story is less fantastical than *Die Antwoord’s* and as a group, they’ve attracted considerably less sustained media and academic interest than the latter. Despite his grandstanding and obdurate callouts of other artists on social media, Isaac Williams is probably the least pretentious guy you could ever hope to meet. (During one of our interview sessions, we spent the day walking around the coloured neighborhoods of Belgravia and Athlone, ending our conversation next to an underpass, sitting on upturned beer-crates and sipping quarts of Black Label). *Dookoom* is ostensibly the brainchild of Isaac and white, British, grime DJ/producer Damian Stephens aka. Human Waste, although the lyrical impetus is all drawn from the former’s imagination and experience. Given the tenacity of associations of racialized behavior accorded to visually recognized phenotype in South Africa, musical and identitarian expositions of white and coloured actors are quite simply “seen, heard, and read” in different ways.

The title of this chapter is a reference to South African author Zoë Wicomb’s 2006 novel *Playing in the Light*, which is itself a nod to Toni Morrison’s 1992 critical text *Playing in the Dark*. With *Playing in the Light*, Wicomb explores the peculiar apartheid logic that racial classification was often decided by “common sense” (to use Deborah Posel’s term) assumptions of lived experience. Having grown up as white and middle-class in Cape Town, protagonist Marion Campbell discovers her parents’ collusion many years ago as light-skinned coloureds, to
“pass for white” under apartheid rule. Although Afrikaans language fluency and dumb luck are contributing factors, it is mainly through physical appearance that Marion’s father secured work as a traffic officer, an occupation legally reserved at the time for whites. By conspiring thereafter to adopt conventionally understood white mores, her parents’ and ultimately Marion’s racial classification was socially confirmed as white.¹⁴

In his study of “interracial literature” Werner Sollors observed that racial passing was often imagined as a profound form of social death. To maintain the deceit of passing a person necessarily had to sever all ties with blood relatives and friends from his previous life.¹⁵ Wicomb’s narrative relates to my investigation in two regards, both underscoring the prioritization of visual appearance in terms of racial acceptance. Helen and John Campbell, Marion’s parents, were notoriously tight-lipped about their respective families’ histories. Marion is moved to interrogate the longstanding unease she feels about her ancestry, through her visceral identification with a photograph included in a newspaper account of Truth and Reconciliation proceedings. The woman pictured bears a striking resemblance to the Campbell family’s domestic worker, Tokkie, described by John as “pitch black…but a lady all the same.”¹⁶ As the story progresses, it is discovered that Tokkie was in fact Marion’s maternal grandmother, and the

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¹⁵ Werner Sollors, quoting Davis et al. Allison Davis, Burleigh Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner, ed. by W. Lloyd Warner, *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), 252-253. Sollors explains his use of the term “interracial literature” thus: “…works in all genres that represent love and family relations involving black-white couples, biracial individuals, their descendants, and their larger kin – to all of whom the phrasing may be applied, be it as couples, as individuals, or as larger family units.” Werner Sollors, *Neither Black, Nor White, Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

woman in the photograph, a distant relative.

Secondly, the deceit that Marion’s parents engaged in is colloquially known as “playing for white.” The epigram demonstrates the prevailing normativity of whiteness in South African society, in that there is no corresponding vernacular phrase bearing the same cultural weight as “playing for non-white.” These instances emphasize the precarity of non-white subjects adopting conventionally understood white social behaviors: there is always the danger of being revealed as a fraud, as transgressing in some manner, or to be found out as “playing in the light.”

John Campbell later ruminates: “Vigilance is everything; to achieve whiteness is to keep on your toes. Which...indicates that [the Campbells] cannot achieve it after all; being white in the world is surely about being at ease, since the world belongs to you. But [John and Helen], it would seem, cannot progress beyond vigilance...beyond being play-whites, which as far as he can see has bugger-all to do with playing [emphasis added].” As Marion questions her own racial identity, the inevitability of “returning to brown-ness” becomes a more psychically destabilizing prospect than “returning to whiteness.”

As these ideas relate to the present study: In Sound of Africa, Louise Meintjes’ ethnography of mbaqanga studio recording practice, she describes the “magician-like status” of white sound engineers who mediate sound and affect through technological means. This in turn highlights the dynamic in the production site between the white technicians behind the desk, and the black African musicians in the booth. Seemingly abstruse technical skill empowers the white engineers found within a Zulu cultural performance space and mirrors the social hierarchy and

17 This idea is explored in an American context most recently by Allyson Hobbs in her work A Chosen Exile: A History of Passing in American Life (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

18 Wicomb, Playing in the Light, 152.
division of labor inherent to their contemporaneous apartheid context. By Meintjes’ reasoning the black African musicians’ evaluation of the recording procedure as “white people’s things,” “...propagates the idea that technology...is differently accessible to music-makers on the basis of their class and color.”¹⁹ The obvious implication being that Zulu cultural practice constitutes “black people’s things.”

Earlier I wrote that what attracts audiences to Die Antwoord has less to do with their lyrical content than their visual appeal, a component of their aesthetic that is chiefly circulated through music videos. Adam Haupt attests that while Die Antwoord obviously “references [poor] white and ‘coloured’ working-class subjects, it is clear that the artists themselves are far better resourced than the subjects of their work. The set design, props, costumes, cinematography and editing...suggest that a great deal of conceptualisation and expertise went into [their production].”²⁰ I maintain that the quality, overall production, and visual effect of Dookoom’s music videos is comparable to that of Die Antwoord’s. If the linguistic and cultural praxes of Kaaps can be considered “black people’s things” – or at least “coloured people’s things” – then the technological means of “cinematography and editing” can similarly be regarded as “white people’s things” – given historically associated constraints of financial and social access to these amenities. My writing explores the ease with which white South African musicians who adopt (extra)musical influences widely understood as the purview of non-white subjects, can credibly absorb these influences, and nonetheless, still effect a comfortable “return to whiteness.” I also investigate the inverse of this idea: that despite adopting the same means of producing and

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disseminating their work as their white counterparts, the “brown-ness” or coloured musicians is irredeemable. In other words, if *Die Antwoord* and Ninja in particular, can successfully dabble in “black people’s things,” what are the consequences of non-white agents like Isaac Mutant mobilizing “white people’s things”?

At the same time, I am interested in deeper notions of “becoming” and “metamorphosis” (observed by Haupt, and co-authors Marx and Milton, respectively), as they apply to Jones’ progression to the figure of “Ninja” – Jones’ manipulation of coloured gang culture signifiers (“blacking up” with tattoos) and use of vernacular Afrikaans to embody the persona of, or literally to become “the white kaffir”21 – and the related metaphor of Isaac’s “mutation.” In the following sections, I explore these ideas within the analytical framework of the “(self-) reflective turn” cited by author Zoë Wicomb (most often when the principal character gazes into a mirror at their literal reflection), and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s mirror stage proposal (the interplay between real, imaginary, and symbolic registers). Socio-cultural behaviour remains inevitably linked to race; one’s position within South Africa’s system of racial taxonomy is based primarily

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21 In a contemporary South African context, white claims to “Africanity” through such attempts at “race-switching” are not uncommon. Meg Samuelson for example discusses the trend amongst some white South Africans to establish indigenous ancestry by claiming Krotoa, a woman from the Goringhaicona Khoisan clan, as a distant biological relation. Renamed “Eva” by the first Dutch arrivals at the Cape, she was known as an interpreter and interlocutor, becoming “the first female cultural broker in the colonial contact zone.” Samuelson traces the shift in emphasis from Krotoa-Eva’s status as translator, to Rainbow Mother – from her agency as “facilitator of linguistic transmission,” to ready vessel “of genetic transmission.” Krotoa-Eva’s marriage to Danish surgeon Pieter van Meerhof, ostensibly allows a certain faction of white South Africans to trace their lineage to the couple’s progeny, thereby asserting a (not unproblematic) sense of national belonging. The appeal of such “native authenticity,” or freedom from modernist social restrictions is noted in Zoë Wicomb’s novel *Playing in the Light*. On discovering the Campbell family’s decision years ago to “pass-for-white,” a secondary character Brenda Mackay exclaims: “Haven’t you heard how many white people, or rather Afrikaners of the more-indigenous-than-thou brigade, are claiming mixed blood these days? It’s not such a tragedy being black, you know, at least you’re authentic. And just think of the other benefits: you need no longer speak in hushed tones – you’re free to be noisy, free to eat a peach, a juicy ripe one, and free of the burdens of nation and tradition.” Meg Samuelson, *Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women? Stories of the South African Transition* (Scottsville: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press, 2007), 15-16. Wicomb, *Playing in the Light*, 102.
on visual assessment. Instances of dislocation – where the social acts witnessed and performed, do not match visually premised racial categorization – call into question both the legitimacy, and provenance of these social acts.

The Fairest of Them All

While the entirety of Zoë Wicomb’s literary oeuvre grapples with negotiations of “coloured identity,” in this chapter I address only three of her novels: You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town (1987), David’s Story (2000), and Playing in the Light (2006). In these examples, Wicomb compels her protagonists to re-consider their own understandings of coloured cultural and racial identity, having inherited the ideological impositions of apartheid social organization, then suddenly finding themselves in the brave new world of postapartheid “Rainbow multiculturalism.” Most often these points of critical (self-)reflection occur when the characters in question, observe their literal reflections in a mirror-surface.22 A scene from You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town describes Frieda Shenton's return from the city, to her family’s smallholding in Namaqualand. The landscape of her childhood has changed substantially due to recurrent flooding, and Frieda struggles to locate the familiar site of a gorra (borehole well). As a young girl, she would lay gazing at her reflection on the water’s surface before reaching down to fill a tin mug and decant the brack liquid into buckets. As the water level receded, so would her image darken, and scornfully retreat. Only a song of supplication could appease the water spirit of her youthful imagination, replenishing the groundwater, and restoring Frieda's mirror-counterpart.

Returning as a young woman to where the gorra had been, the spot now long since

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neglected and filled with mud, Frieda can remember only the tune, and not the words to her plaintive song. Instead, another melody, one that she would sing on her walk home, rushes to her mind unbidden, and refuses to leave. “The traffic of words is maddening,” Frieda narrates, “I am persecuted by a body of words that performs regardless of my wishes, making its own choices...[...]...the water song will not surface, while the bucket chant will not be banished.”23

The effect of this half-forgetting and half-remembering is telling: As a child when the well was still active, Frieda could reliably recover her likeness with song. The disruption of her reflection was temporary, but its restoration was assured at the re-filling of the well. Earlier in the story, Frieda sets her intention never to return to the country of her birth; she will soon be departing for England and imagines the visit to the gorra as a final goodbye to the place where she'd spent so much of her youth. As an adult, when the text of her song refuses to be summoned, when the words that could elicit a change of heart do not arrive, Frieda acknowledges a sense of detachment, of longing and of loss. Neither the land itself, nor Frieda's heightened consciousness allow her the comfort of returning to the innocence her youth.

In a later incident, while sitting in a rural doctor’s waiting room, Frieda catches her reflection in the round mirrored-sunglasses of a young coloured man, Henry Hendrikse. Frieda remembers her father describing Henry, her love interest from years ago, disdainfully as “almost pure kaffir.” The Shenton family, her father maintained, “had an ancestor, an Englishman whose memory must be kept sacred, must not be defiled by associating with those beneath [them]. [The Shentons] were respectable coloureds.”24 Startled by the man’s unexpected re-appearance in her life, Frieda grasps for a novel in her bag, and by chance opens up to the following passage: “The

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24 Ibid., 123.
right side was browner than a European’s would be, yet not so distinctly brown as to type him as a Hindu or Pakistani and certainly he was no Negro, for his features were quite…Caucasian….”

Frieda’s guilt in assessing Henry’s pigmentation relative to her own lighter colouration as a matter of course, is compounded by the explicit racial taxonomy of the text. She covers up the offending words, but fears that “the reflection of light, beams criss-crossing and back-tracking” would find their way to Henry’s “mirrored gaze” regardless.

In the second example, *David’s Story*, protagonist David Dirkse abhors his green eyes – “fake doll’s eyes, dropped as if by accident into his brown skin” – but is nevertheless fascinated by the image reflected in an elaborate mirror console once belonging to his grandmother. The mirror surface itself takes the form of a ship – “a three-masted, lateen-rigged galley, the kind of vessel [David imagines], from which Van Riebeeck stepped on to these shores” – and is constructed in four parts. Each section of the mirror returns facets of David’s identity: his simultaneous positioning as narrator and subject of the text; as coloured individual; as descendant of aboriginal Griqua chief Adam Kok, and also the French Huguenot missionary Eduard la Fleur; and finally, as the Black Consciousness guerrilla soldier “Comrade Dadzo.”

As previously noted, the narrative of *Playing in the Light* follows Marion Campbell’s interrogation into her parent’s decision to “pass for white” and the woman’s re-evaluation of self and social identity in the wake of this discovery. Towards the story’s close, we find Marion vacationing by herself in London, her attention drawn to a rectangle of sunlight projected through an attic window, the image dappled by steady rainfall outside. Wicomb describes the visual effect as “a painting in action…[…]…Held within the rectangle of the reflected window

\[25\] Wicomb, *Cape Town*, 119.

\[26\] Wicomb, *David’s Story*, 98.
frame, the liquid patterns form and dissolve. Only as the rain abates does the light trickle lazily, pearl here and there into a knot that disperses once more into a new abstract image. The trembling of a drop on the pane is a pattern of quivering light on the solidity of wall.”

The dance of light, of pictures becoming and dissipating, constitutes a metaphor for Marion’s shifting conceptions of personhood against an unwavering, and essential understanding of whiteness.

Explicating Frieda’s encounter with Henry in the waiting room, J.U.Jacobs notes: “[B]oth gazers are also the objects of the gaze, both are subjects in the discourse around coloured racial and cultural identities that are brought into focus, projected, mirrored, and refracted….,”

This interpretation can also be applied to David and Marion’s experiences, with anticipated distinctions between “the one(s) looking upon the image” and the reflected/revealed persona(s), instead conflated. Although Wicomb’s characters must confront myriad aspects of identity, it is primarily those “phenotypically white” characteristics, assessed visually – Frieda’s countenance “bleached by an English Autumn;” David’s anomalous green eyes; Marion’s fairness and effective passing – with which they must reconcile. Wicomb’s literary technique of having her narrators gaze self-critically into a mirror is perhaps borrowed from James Weldon Johnson’s *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* originally published in 1912 (the irony of South African and American semantic nuance surrounding “coloured-ness/colored-ness” notwithstanding).

Whereas Johnson’s “mixed-race” character looks upon his reflection, acknowledging for the first time his own physical attractiveness – “the ivory whiteness of [his] skin, the beauty of [his] mouth, the size and liquid darkness of [his] eyes, and how the long black, lashes that

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28 Jacobs, 2.
fringed and shaded them produced an effect that was strangely fascinating.”

Wicomb’s characters are instead burdened by these most visible indices of racial, and by implication, cultural categorization. For Johnson and Wicomb’s protagonists however, the varied, and competing socio-cultural markers they embody, present a composite of lived experiences over which they often have little control. Jacques Lacan’s mirror stage theory presents a similar experience of visual and cognitive recognition, and I employ it in this chapter to emphasize the role of individual agency in the process of self-identification.

At a famed 1949 lecture in Zurich, Lacan described the formation of the ego, using the example of an infant recognizing his reflection in a mirror for the first time. Between the ages of six and eighteen months, a child when placed in front of a mirror begins to distinguish his own body through movement, mimicry, and observation, as separate from the specular image or imago before him. Although the infant identifies with or “assumes” this image, the


30 This theory was first proposed in 1936 at the fourteenth International Psychoanalytical Congress at Marienbad as *Le stade du miroir* (“The Mirror Stage”), revised and presented at the sixteenth Congress at Zurich, in 1949 as *Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je* (“The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I”).


31 The image of the subject’s body, the specular image, is interchangeable in Lacan’s work with the imago/image of the counterpart (the “imago” is constituted of emotions, as well as visual representation). The term “counterpart” refers to “other people in whom the subject perceives a likeness to himself (principally a visual likeness).”


32 As Dylan Evans explains: “To ‘assume’ an image is to recognise oneself in the image, and to appropriate the image as oneself [emphasis added].” *Ibid.*, 82.
relationship is fraught, since the subject itself and the image being viewed are not equivalent.\textsuperscript{33} There is a discrepancy between the infant’s imprecise, uncontrolled physical movements when compared to the wholeness of the “Ideal-I” witnessed in the reflected image. The image represents a stable \textit{Gestalt}, misrecognised as a superior form,\textsuperscript{34} to which the physically uncoordinated and dependent infant can only aspire. Thus, the Ideal-I, constructed as it is in the fictional context of an inverted reflection, fails to provide an accurate depiction of the subject’s lived experience, thus constituting the realm of fantasy, a register that Lacan denotes as “the imaginary order.”

Important to my broader argument is that this mirror developmental stage precedes socialization with others through language – a communicative domain made up of signifiers – which for Lacan, falls under the purview of the “symbolic order.” Additionally, while the mirror stage refers to a singular period of psychic and early childhood development, it also describes a continuous relationship between primordial/originary subject, and projected image. The metaphorical “man in the mirror” presents the full potential of the subject, but it is a potential that throughout the individual’s life, can never be realized.

The process through which Watkin Jones develops the ego of “Ninja” can be understood an attempt to realize a fictionalized ideal, one that simultaneously encompasses elements of Afrikaner and coloured cultures, neither of which Jones as a middle-class English-speaking South African, has plausible recourse to assume. It should be noted that the subject’s moment of recognition as independent of his surroundings, is not limited to the intervention of an actual


mirror, but can also be catalyzed through interaction with others. Referring to my previous example: Xander Ferreira might “assume” in a Lacanian sense, the figure of his black nanny. To identify with an “ideal self” in her image, Ferreira progresses to the adoption of “Gazelle” as his ego.\(^\text{35}\) However, the acts of identification in Jones’ case are multiple: he attempts to simultaneously assume the idealized images of “Afrikaner,” of “coloured gangster,” and perhaps even that of photographer Roger Ballen given the derivative nature of Jones’ artwork, in a recursive and additive loop, with each imago continuously providing “new” imaginative material for the subject to draw on.\(^\text{36}\)

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\(^{35}\) Lacan, Ecrits, 1.

\(^{36}\) I am aware of Frantz Fanon’s contention in *Black Skin, White Masks* that: “It would be interesting, on the basis of Lacan’s theory of the *mirror period*, to investigate the extent to which the *imago* of his fellow built up in the young white at the usual age would undergo an imaginary aggression with the appearance of the Negro. When one has grasped the mechanism described by Lacan, one can have no further doubt that the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely. Only for the white man The Other is perceived on the level of the body image, absolutely as the not-self – that is, the unidentifiable, the unassimilable [emphases in original].” My adaptation of Lacan’s theory in Jones’ case as a white, English-speaking South African, includes within the parameters of The Other: Afrikaner-ness, a white kitsch aesthetic, and colouredness. My argument is exactly that despite the Ninja ego formation’s reliance on these influences, they are “unassimilable.” Despite his best efforts to abandon racial categorization, what Jones succeeds in peddling – and what, in fact, makes him and *Die Antwoord* attractive to the global musical marketplace – is nevertheless a disingenuous version of whiteness. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 124. The same argument can be made of Breyten Breytenbach’s assertion of “black brotherhood” noted in his collection *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (New York: McGraw, 1983), detailing the poet’s experience of imprisonment by the apartheid government on charges of treason. Brian Doherty writes: “The mirror abounds in Breytenbach’s oeuvre, gaining an agency beyond the passive role of mere reflection. . . . The sense of constant and inevitable surveillance [introduced in the poem “Mirror-fresh Reflection” from the collection *Judas Eye and Self-Portrait/Deathwatch* published in 1988 by Farrar] is intensified in prison as Breytenbach writes under the eye of the censor and as he theorizes the relationship between detainee and interrogator. It multiplies when he assesses his role in the structural relation to his ‘dark mirror brother,’ the black South African (228).” As Doherty observes, Breytenbach’s assertion, made in *Confessions*, of “[knowing] what it’s like to be black in a white country,” must be critically evaluated given the contemporaneous “juridical status of blacks in South Africa, who were neither fully realized selves under the law nor in control of their self-definition (238).” Doherty, 228, and 238.
In this manner, Jones who is neither working-class, nor Afrikaner,\textsuperscript{37} might also aspire to the image reflected as such in the figure of Anri Du Toit aka. Yolandi Vi$$er. The development of Jones’ ego therefore transgresses not only cultural, but also gendered boundaries. Of their earliest attempts at working together, Ninja and Yolandi confess:

[Y]: I was just copying the American thing. I didn’t know how to do it in South African.  
[N]: Yolandi was trying to do her own voice and it didn’t work because she was fronting like she was English. I didn’t even know she was Afrikaans. Then all of a sudden she started busting in Afrikaans...[...]...Then we just leaned into the Afrikaans thing.\textsuperscript{38}

This admission reveals Du Toit’s initial unsuccessful attempt to adopt an English-language and US-centric hiphop persona – “fronting” or presenting a \textit{façade} of English-ness – and her subsequent reversion to Afrikaans as scaffolding for the Yolandi persona. It also illustrates Jones’ collusion with Anri to “lean into” or exploit the cultural prerogative of Afrikaans as a potential imago from which to construct the respective egos of Ninja, and Yolandi.

In critical appraisals of \textit{Die Antwoord}, Du Toit’s contribution is largely absent, despite her obvious influence on the group’s presentation, her formidable lyrical dexterity, and hyper-sexualized, in some instances disturbingly infantilized performances as Yolandi (the latter is especially evidenced in the music videos for \textit{Rich Bitch}, and \textit{Cookie Thumper}). This lack of recognition can be attributed to the fact that visually, with her shock of bleached-blond hair, Anri as Yolandi slips more easily into conventional understandings and representations of an


\textsuperscript{38} Diane Coetzer, “\textit{Die Antwoord}: The Rolling Stone Interview,” \textit{Rolling Stone}, February 2012, 110.
excessive South African kitsch aesthetic. The outward presentation of the ego-formation known as Yolandi aligns with “common sense” perceptions of “zefness.” Conforming to social expectation in this way renders her in a sense unremarkable, and not deserving of further assessment beyond that of female sidekick in a male-oriented performance genre.

By comparison, the ego presentation of “Ninja” destabilizes the “common sense” visual and behavioral expectations of Jones’ English-language, middle-class background. Yet despite the violent mullet, rangy physique, and faux-prison tjappies (“tattoos”) that all contribute to a sense of racial-/class-signifier play, he is overwhelmingly acknowledged as performing “a version of whiteness,” as opposed to “a version of brown-ness/blackness.” This is of course due to Jones’ (as an originary subject’s) racial categorization. Hence the assertions of Ninja’s performance as an “alternative whiteness.” In Lacan’s formulation, the point when the analysand/subject recognizes his difference from the mirror image is reflected in dreams of a “fragmented body,” whereas the Ideal-I is represented in dreams by a secure fortress or stadium. Although the figure of Ninja represents Jones’ ego, the ability of critics and fans alike to so easily disentangle the composite parts from the whole, highlights the inherent instability of

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39 In the 2010 video Evil Boy, Yolandi wears a hooded cloak made of faux white rats, evoking the pejorative Afrikaans term for white-trash: wit rot (literally, “white rat”).

40 Laura Mulvey’s use of psychoanalysis to interrogate visual pleasure, further explains the relative dismissal of Yolandi’s character as a topic of analysis in comparison to Ninja’s. In her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Mulvey examines the ways in which “film reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle.” The ideas outlined here relating to scopophilic instinct, the transfer of ego libido, and circumvention of female threat, could similarly be applied to the visual production of Die Antwoord’s music videos, particularly in relation to my proposal of Jones’ “assumption” of a female imago. This investigation, however, is beyond the purview of the current analysis. Mulvey, Visual Pleasure, 57-68.

this imaginary persona. Here the Ideal-I is compromised by Jones’ subject position at every turn. The register of the real (Jones), subverts the efforts of the imaginary (Ninja), even as it progresses through to the adoption of language and into the realm of the symbolic. The dual relation between subject and Ideal-I is inherently one of antagonism. In the “Ninja ego formation” this conflict is mitigated via the adoption of Afrikaans language, a signifier sufficiently imbued with meaning to affirm whiteness without censure.

Recalling the example of Anri as Yolandi, where an ego presentation matches anticipated visual and social behavior, the following sections examine the example of Isaac Williams in the ego formation of “Isaac Mutant,” a coloured MC similarly performing socially imagined habits and experience. These analyses expand the metaphor of the mirror stage, to address ideas of mimicry and reflection, and especially the similarities between the music videos for Die Antwoord’s track Zefside and Dookoom’s debut release Kak Stirvy; the former’s Fok Julle Naaiers, and the latter group’s Larney Jou Poes. Taking into consideration Frantz Fanon’s insistence in terms of Lacan’s mirror stage proposal that “the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely [the real Other for the black man will continue to be the white man],” my adaptation of Lacan in the case of Isaac Williams’ development towards the ego formation of “Isaac Mutant” requires further clarification.

After Fanon, I propose that for Williams, the white Other might be embodied in the “attributes of whiteness” or “the white people’s things” of technological means and access. As my analysis of the Larney Jou Poes video shows, despite his mastery of these im/material possessions, the Ideal-I of “Isaac Mutant” nevertheless comes under reproach for their deployment, reprising Louise Meintjes’ words that such media and their expression are forever

42 Fanon, 124.
“differently accessible to music-makers on the basis of their class and color.” Another interpretation, also having to do with racialized stereotyping, sees Williams’ exaggerated performance of anticipated coloured tropes as trans-coding strategies by 1) “reversal” – re-framing negative stereotypes as positive characteristics, and 2) by “provocation” – drawing attention to the non-white body, inviting negative associations of the racialized gaze in order to critique and call these assumptions into question.

In *Kak Stirvy*, Mutant valorizes the stereotypes and behaviors of coloureds that normally would be considered negative ones. The desolate coloured “ghetto” setting of Heinz Park; pimp-walking down the street in a faux fur coat; drink in hand, lounging on a floatation device in a pool of stagnant water; the numerous references to his sexual prowess; all of these images – supplemented by the line: “I don’t give a fuck, hoor’ie!” (“you hear!”) – reverse the evaluation of coloureds as subservient, desperately poor, and constantly aspiring towards white social mores. Additionally, in *Kak Stirvy*, the close ups of the Mutant’s tattoos, his striking wardrobe changes, and the fact that there is hardly a single frame in the video that doesn’t feature a shot of the MC, force the viewer to address the performed image head-on. In “[making] elaborate play with ‘looking,’ hoping by its very attention to ‘make [the act] strange’ – that is, to defamiliarize it,”^43^ stereotypes are certainly invoked, but at the same time, the tendency to interpret these images as stereotypes in the context of non-white self-representation (especially in the *Larney Jou Poes* video), is challenged.

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I Keep Me *Kak Stirvy* (“Stuck Up/Aloof”)

If the video for *Zefside* introduced the world to *Die Antwoord* via digital media, the 2013 video for *Kak Stirvy* similarly brought the band *Dookoom* to the attention of musical and cultural production pundits. Although each offering featured different directors (Sean Metelerkamp, and Ari Kruger, respectively) parallels can be drawn between their respective visual aesthetics. In both instances the background setting is a working-class/working poor community. *Die Antwoord*’s piece was shot in the white neighborhood of Ysterplaat (although for an interview with South African lifestyle television program *Top Billing*, the group recreated the video setting in the coloured residential area of Mitchells Plain⁴⁴), and *Dookoom*’s work was filmed on location in the coloured township of Heinz Park. Whereas the treatment for *Zefside* tends towards blanched over-exposure, *Kak Stirvy* is darker and oversaturated, suggesting a brooding realism lacking from the first example. Isaac Mutant is shown in interstitial spaces – strutting down the main drag; in a stairwell; an informal corrugated-iron dwelling; an empty lot – pointing to transience, a sense of impermanence and disruption, more in line with his (real) subject position as Isaac Williams. Ninja and Yolandi are mostly posed against the backdrop of a modest suburban home, implying domesticity.⁴⁵ These representations are again in line with

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⁴⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFGiOqFxE7M

⁴⁵ From a musical standpoint, *Zefside* and *Kak Stirvy* both sample tracks popular in the late Eighties: *Bronski Beat’s* “Hit That Perfect Beat” (1986), and *Salt-n-Pepa’s* “Push It” (1987), respectively. “Hit That Perfect Beat” was used as the theme song for *Body Beat*, the aerobics segment of erstwhile news and variety television show *Good Morning South Africa*. For South African audiences, this parodic reference evokes memories of a decidedly middle-class domestic background: mom doing morning calisthenics before shuffling the kids off to school, and her husband off to work. By contrast, the use of “Push It” acknowledges an historical indebtedness to hiphop’s predecessors and imagines *Dookoom* as operating within the established conventions of this performance genre. Although *Dookoom* is a collective comprising both white and coloured members, lyrical content is developed by frontman Isaac Mutant and thus predominantly reflects his outlook and lived experience.
“common sense” assumptions of whiteness as an inherently stable racial identity. This is despite Ninja and Yolandi’s “playing in the dark” (referencing non-white cultural mores), and Mutant’s mobilizing of “white people’s things” (employing previously inaccessible means of production).

The phrase “kak stirvy” is a vernacular Afrikaans colloquialism meaning “stuck-up” or “aloof.” Isaac explained to me: “It used to be a negative word in the [coloured] ghetto...it used to mean uptight, snobbish, self-centred even.” A contemporary interpretation suggests that the term conveys an expression of pride, or braggadocio. Isaac elaborates:

I think coloured people appreciated [the video] more [than white audiences]: “This dude actually makes gutter look stirvy - that was the idea, you know. And that’s how people are in the ghetto bra [“brother”] – Jy ’t die kakste skoen, maar die ding, jy trap nie op die skoene nie. [“This is the shitiest pair of shoes, but don’t you dare step on them”].

Like this (Isaac shows me his wristwatch), this is kak stirvy. I jak [“wear/display”] this like it’s fucking gold bra, dis oorgeblaaste digital, die ding is seker twee rand [“this watch is probably only worth two Rand”]...that's ghetto...that kak [“shit”] you have, you gonna bling the fuck out of that kak that you have.....Plus it’s a South African thing: Rick Ross is “The Big Boss,” Die Antwoord is die larneys [“the bosses”], we kak stirvy.

This latter comment structures the expression “kak stirvy” as an inherently coloured prerogative, as an ethno-racial and cultural perspective equal to the white conception of zef kitsch, adopted in part by Die Antwoord. Although Isaac Williams has performed under numerous monikers (Ike Deny, DJ Brook Squirter, Rebel MC, Yucky Stuff), each of these prior ego formations has resolutely been grounded in a Kaaps and hiphop mode of expression. But it is Isaac Williams’ current ego formation as “Mutant,” together with connotations evoked by the band-name Dookoom (“conjurer”), that asserts an equivalent authority to manipulate and (re)fashion

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46 Personal interview with Isaac “Mutant” Williams, and Mario “Roach” Pieters, 2015.

47 Roger Young, “The Isaac Mutant School of Long Distance Learning,” Rolling Stone January 2013, 59.
signifiers just as white South African artists have done.

*Kak Stirvy* is certainly not the first South African hip-hop music video to articulate non-white socio-political concerns; one can refer to *Prophets of da City’s* “Roots” (1990) and “Boomstyle” (1991), or *Black Noise’s* “Mitchells Plain” (2011), as examples. The adoption of “white people’s things” – the music video format and means of distribution *via* Internet and social media platforms – in this context is nothing out of the ordinary. What becomes clear when comparing *Dookom’s* output to *Die Antwoord’s* is the specific range of visual-dialogic techniques employed. This is most apparent when considering the *Kak Stirvy* video in relation to *Zefside*: from the origin-narrative assumed in the localized setting, to the ubiquitous prefabricated concrete fencing, the cameos featuring bemused locals, and the juvenile, phallocentric humor.

With *Die Antwoord*, these elements contribute to Jones’ movement from originary subject, to hopeful realization of a complete and idealized form as “Ninja.” I submit that *Dookoom’s* work, highlighting Isaac Mutant’s ego formation, perform a regressive function, exposing and reflecting the figure of “Ninja” as simply a composite, fragmentary entity, back to the viewer. Mutant’s “stirvy-ness” is overblown and hyperbolized in the same way that *Die Antwoord* depicts an exaggerated zef-ness, but Williams’ progression to Mutant, is more plausible since the Ideal-I appropriately matches “common sense” assumptions of his racialized behavior. The order of the real, in other words, is closer to that of the imaginary. Jones’ performance as Ninja is too far-fetched, too distinctly removed from his primordial subject position to be imagined as a credible ego formation. This impulse, showing up both parallels and contradictions, is taken to a further extreme when considering *Dookoom’s* video for *Larney Jou Poes*, and *Die Antwoord’s* *Fok Julle Naaiers*. 
**Jy Kan My Nie Vertel'ie (“Can't Tell Me Nothin’”)**

“It seems that no...video in the history of South African music,” writes journalist Benjamin Fogel, “has attracted as much controversy as the Cape Town hip hop collective Dookoom’s ‘Larney Jou Poes’...”48 Several online and print media outlets have commented on the group’s 2015 video (the title of which translates loosely to “Fuck You, Boss!”), because of the hate-speech allegations levelled by a local civil rights watchdog known as Afriforum. An NGO that purportedly focuses on the advocacy of marginalized social groups, Afriforum is particularly concerned with “the rights of Afrikaners as a community living on the southern tip of the continent.”50 They argue that the track incites antagonism towards Afrikaners, and can be read as an encouragement of the “South African white genocide” as evidenced in (supposedly) racially motivated murders of farmers that have occurred in recent years.51

The only lyrical reference that could arguably be linked to this idea is included in an adaptation of the Biblical nursery rhyme “Father Abraham had Seven Sons.” The text of the introductory section reads:

*Farmer Abrahams had many farms,*  
*Many farms had Father Abrahams.*


49 *Jou Ma Se Poes* (‘Your mother's cunt’) is a common vernacular Afrikaans epithet that has made its way in to the general South African vernacular lexicon. *Larney Jou Poes* could arguably be understood as *Larney Jou (Ma Se) Poes.*

50 [https://www.afriforum.co.za/about/about-afriforum](https://www.afriforum.co.za/about/about-afriforum)  
Afriforum has officially brought Dookoom before the South African Human Rights Commission on a charge of purported hate-speech. Members of the band are at the time of this writing, unable to discuss the outcome of the case.

51 [https://africacheck.org/reports/are-white-afrikaners-really-being-killed-like-flies/](https://africacheck.org/reports/are-white-afrikaners-really-being-killed-like-flies/)
Filmed in stark black-and-white, the video begins with an overhead shot of a farmhouse, followed by close-ups of machinery and livestock. At [0’09”] addressing the camera directly in a medium-close framing, Isaac Mutant delivers the opening nursery rhyme with a menacing singsong intonation. The first verse begins at [0’20”] with Isaac taking the role of farm-owner, in his stereotypical khakis and wide-brimmed hat, and driving a tractor. On the trailer behind him is a crew of coloured farm-workers brandishing scythes and other implements. The scene is easily imagined as an angry mob armed with pitchforks and flaming torches, advancing on an unjustly accused fairytale protagonist. The video continues, interspersing cuts of farm-workers drinking from papsakke (spouted bags removed from the inside of boxed-wine containers) and rolling burning tires through an open field. The climax shows a white farmer staring in disbelief as the word “DOOKOOM” blazes defiantly against a hillside on his property.

The imagery evokes scenes from an uncomfortable past – specifically the dopstelsel, and the kangaroo-court penalty of “necklacing” – bringing racially motivated practices supposedly relegated to apartheid history, back into a contemporary focus. The dop or “tot system” refers to a form of social control whereby vineyard farm-workers had their income supplemented with alcohol. Often this led to alcohol abuse, widespread instances of fetal alcohol syndrome, domestic violence, as well as a sense of feudal dependency on the part of the (mostly coloured) workers in relation to the (white) farm-owner. Necklacing was a township-based punitive measure in which impimpis (traitors/government informants) would have tires, doused in gasoline, forced around their bodies and set alight. South African visual artist Kendell Geers’

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52 Haupt, Static, 145-149. See especially the section “Doosdronk at Die Nekkies” as part of the chapter entitled “Racism 2.0: Die Antwoord’s Blackface.”
sculpture *Counting Out Song* (1998) references this practice, highlighting the complicities between structural violence and physical violence. The work features two tires, one positioned upright and perpendicular to the other. White text across the outside wall of the top tire reads: “Eenee Meenee Mainee Mo, Catch A Nigger By The Toe, If He Hollers Let Him Go,” a common children’s rhyme featured in Rudyard Kipling’s *Land and Sea Tales for Scouts and Guides*, the author’s collection of short stories originally published in 1923. Geers’ citation questions the banality of racist thinking, but also suggests the imminence of brutal, and retributive violence for inhumane treatment. However, it is Zoë Wicomb in her 1993 essay “Culture Beyond Color?” who draws a more explicit comparison between aspects of racialized cultural memory. Discussing “the *bonhomie* of the barbecue” – the Afrikaner cultural activity of the *braai* – and necklacing, Wicomb writes:

> Both originate in the need to survive: Boers trekking from British domination relied on shooting buck and eating the roasted meat in the open veld; necklacing eliminates those who endanger the community by spying for the government. Necklacing then is about displacing Boer culture physically and symbolically. It is about positioning; placing the victim as other within an isolating circle of fire and outside of the community....

Overall, Dookoom’s video offers a definitive re-positioning of agency, with authority now located in the hands of indentured-laborers. The most provocative example of this reversal is found in the visual articulations of the song’s chorus. Set against a plain background, the camera offers a succession of close-ups of farm-workers lip-synching along with the lyrics: *Jou poes my larney, jy kan my nie vertel’ie!* (“Fuck you, Boss, you can't tell me nothin’!”).

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The release of *Larney Jou Poes* coincided with media reports of wildcat strikes started in 2012 by farm-workers at De Doorns in the Great Karoo, which subsequently spread to the rest of the Boland. The strikers argued for a daily wage increase and improved working conditions, but their concerns also touched on historical issues of land dispossession, the legacy of imperialism, and white Afrikaner paternalism.\(^{55}\) In our interview, Isaac recalled: “I think ’93 or thereabouts, ‘94, I wrote the second verse...[a friend suggested:] ‘Write about shit that bothers you, that fucks with you, like the farm-workers’\(^{56}\)...that was even before [the strikes]...I wrote the first verse recently...but that was before this whole farm-worker issue...you know...we were not trying to even ride on that...”\(^{57}\) Lyrical structure aside, the concept for the video was the vision of first-time director Dane Dodds, who chose to shoot the production in the farm district outside of Oudtshoorn where he had grown up. Some of the actors featured, were farm-workers drawn from the area who remembered Dane, and who would refer to him deferentially as *kleinbaas* [“little boss”]. He describes the first day of filming:

> We had this generator with speakers on the back, and we put the song on...we couldn't use [the first take], because there were too many smiles...they couldn't believe what they were hearing...we had the camera, and I [said] don’t imagine me as “Dane,” imagine me as all the white people that fucked you over in your life, and then you’re gonna look me in the eyes, and I'm gonna play the track, and then you need to shout it directly at me...I wanted to cry sometimes, some of them did cry, it was the most intense thing I’ve ever experienced, seeing them say that....As soon as I said “Action,” they were in it, as soon as I said “Cut,” the were out of it...they understood that it was a world that was created.\(^{58}\)


\(^{56}\) Isaac grew up in Vredendal, an agricultural hub 300 kilometres north of Cape Town, and still has relatives and friends employed as farm-workers.

\(^{57}\) Personal interview with Isaac, and Roach, 2015.

\(^{58}\) Personal interview with Dane Dodds, and Rasmus Bitsch, 2015.
Rasmus Bitsch, Dane’s production partner notes: “When we arrived...it was quite difficult for [the farm-workers] first to grasp the fact that Isaac and [DJ] Roach...were coloured people who were the bosses, that we were working for them, and not the other way around...I knew that that kind of reality exists, but to suddenly be part of it is a different thing...so I think for the people involved it was a powerful experience...” Isaac puts it more succinctly: “These brasse [“guys”] didn’t want to say ‘Jou poes my larney,’ because there’s the larney that’s standing – it’s unheard of to say that kind of thing against a white person. [I had to tell them] ‘Hier’s nou jou kans, hy sal jou nie fire nie’ [“This is your chance to say it, I promise you won't be fired”].” These examples demonstrate the extent to which roles of dominance and servility are entrenched within the racialized schema of the South African farming community particularly, but also provide a glimpse into the country’s broader social dynamic.

For Isaac, media backlash to the video was unexpected, especially since inequitable working and racial conditions in the South African agricultural industry are open secrets:

I was surprised my bru [“my brother”]...two-thousand-and-fourteen and people are this pissed off about this? Are you serious? The issue is there...it’s not something we created...I was kak [“really”] surprised and proud at the same time....It’s something that matters...Public Enemy shit.  

While not all Dookoom’s work explicitly addresses socio-economic concerns, Isaac’s reference to “Public Enemy shit” situates the track within the lineage of early, politically conscious Cape Town hip-hop (exemplified by groups like Prophets of da City, Brasse Vannie Kaap, and Black Noise), and specifically places it in line with the aesthetic paradigm of late 1980s/early 1990s US-based rap. An iconic collective in the hiphop pantheon, Public Enemy’s most well-known single is arguably their 1989 effort Fight the Power, considered a prototypical anthem in the rap

59 Personal interview with Isaac and Roach, 2015.
and popular culture canons, against authoritarian rule. Discussing *Larney Jou Poes* alongside *Fight the Power* speaks to the former track’s potentially resistive impetus against contemporary social oppression.

On the other hand, Dane experienced public outcry at a more personal level, since the filming took place in his hometown. He talks of telephone calls from community members offering to pray for him, or otherwise receiving outright death-threats for his part in the creation of the *Larney Jou Poes* video. Dane explains that after the video's release:

> I drove to Oudtshoorn to go talk to a lot of the people that were upset about [the video]. It was quite difficult because they couldn't understand that I'm not making the video in praise of farm murders. I grew up as a *laatjie* [“youngster”] pretty scared...I knew people that were murdered on farms...it’s a very real thing. What I did want is to show it to people and then let them talk about it and let them talk about why there’s the discontent...it’s a huge problem, it's not something that’s solvable by a music video...but then that sparks more conversations...and then the general consciousness will come together and somehow start working on improving things....

While the intentions behind the lyrics and storyboard are clear, Afriforum nevertheless managed to impose an injunction on the video, requiring viewers to sign in and verify their age before being able to access it on Youtube.

The file-sharing site’s content-guideline section places restrictions on subject matter that might contain: “vulgar language, nudity and sexually suggestive content, violence and disturbing imagery, and portrayal of harmful or dangerous activities.” Curiously though, some of Dookoom’s more risqué videos, interviews, and audio files are readily available on Youtube without any preparatory verification. Among these are: 1) *Dookoom’s* collaboration with Mississippi rapper David Banner, the chorus of which reads: “The worst thing to happen to the African is the white man,” 2) the audio file for *Murrafucker* featuring the coda: *De La Rey, De* 

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60 Personal interview with Dane Dodds, and Rasmus Bitsch, 2015.
La Rey, Ons het die boere verlei (“We deceived the boers/whites”) an allusion to Afrikaner musician Bok van Blerk’s controversial 2005 single, and the 2016 video for Dirty, directed by noted photographer Pieter Hugo, which features simulated sodomy. The reason for Afriforum’s adamant call to censor the Larney Jou Poes video rests in the challenge it presents to “common sense” assumptions of coloured/non-white individuals in a rural setting as a subservient, docile labor-force, demonstrated at an explicitly visual level. These assumptions find precedent in the portrayals of labor dynamics in early South African plaasromans (“farm novels”), the form of genre fiction dealing broadly with white Afrikaner experiences of dislocation from urban settings (the “painful transition from farmer to townsman”), at the same time, articulating the Afrikaner’s deeply embedded cultural sense of stewardship of the land. In J.M. Coetzee’s analysis of this literary sphere, he maintains that “blindness to the colour black,” was a sine qua non.

Referencing Olive Schreiner’s novel Story of an African Farm (1883), Coetzee describes

61 Haupt, Static, 76-112.

62 The narrative for Die Antwoord’s video Cookie Thumper (2014) follows a coloured gangster named Bra Anies, who, recently released from prison, rekindles a relationship with a former love interest, played by Yolandi. “Cookie” is a vernacular term for vagina, metaphorically and homophonically similar to the Afrikaans term koek, the literal meaning of which is “cake.” The premise of the video is that Anies seduces Yolandi, a young boarding-school student. Anticipating consensual vaginal sex, Yolandi is instead sodomised. Tropes of black masculinity aside, this representation plays on stereotypes of coloureds on the Cape Flats as gang members and criminals. The allusion to male prison-rape, implicates former inmates as unable to successfully rehabilitate and conform to heteronormative sexual behaviour. The further implication is that coloured individuals are incapable of acceding to mainstream social expectation.


the South African pastoral as a narrative trope obliged to satisfy several complex ideological prerogatives. From a Western literary perspective, novelists at the time of Schreiner’s writing were hard-pressed to depict the bucolic setting as more than simply a retreat from the pressures of urban life, and a willful descent into idleness. Specific to the South African context, was an apprehension that white colonists might “degenerate” to the level of indolence associated with the region’s indigenous population. And despite the historical antagonisms between British and Afrikaner settlers, the failure of the latter group to credibly subdue the wilderness landscape, would represent a failure of the colonial project in toto.

Running parallel to these ideas was the imperial attitude of expansion and “legitimate” appropriation: in a Lockeian mode, whosoever purposefully cultivated the land, could justifiably lay claim to its ownership. Thus, pastoral living, and therefore pastoral narratives, had to reflect an ethos of labor. Most importantly though, this labor had to be depicted as being carried out by white Afrikaner protagonists. As Coetzee puts it, such conditions led to the inevitable “occlusion of black labour from the scene: the black man [became] a shadowy presence flitting across the stage now and then to hold a horse or serve a meal…[…]…If the work of hands on a particular patch of earth, digging, ploughing, planting, building [was] what [inscribed] the property of its occupiers by right, then the hands of black serfs doing the work had better not be seen.”65 The overt visual portrayal of dissatisfied non-white workers in Dookoom’s video therefore calls into question long-held notions of the Afrikaner as “heir to the land”66 and more specifically, turns the ideological basis of land ownership on its head.


66 Ibid.
A Big Black Joke?

While Die Antwoord’s video for Fok Julle Naaiers (“Fuck All Y’all Haters”) does not engage the same level of social commentary as Larney Jou Poes, there nevertheless exists a visual-dialogic resonance between the two. Both videos are shot in black-and-white, (musically, a descending four note motif forms the basis of an ostinato loop in each piece), but the most striking similarity occurs during their respective chorus sections: a series of close-ups predominantly of coloured individuals, emphatically shouting invectives at an imagined antagonist. For Dookoom the intended recipient of this anger is the “larney,” an individual perpetuating historical class domination through exploitative labor practice. “Larney” in this instance refers neutrally to an authoritarian figure, but given the context of the video setting, the “boss-man” is implicated as a white character (vide Isaac’s comparison of Rick Ross, Die Antwoord, and Dookoom).

By contrast, with I Fink You Freeky, one of the few tracks in which Die Antwoord makes an explicit lyrical reference to race, Ninja declares: “Ek’s ‘n larney, jy’s a gam/want jy sitinnie mang, met you slang in a man.” The word gam is a derogatory term for a coloured individual, while mang, and slang, are vernacular terms for “prison,” and “penis,” respectively. The entire line immodestly translates to: “I'm a boss, you’re a low-class coloured/you’re rotting in prison, committing sodomy.” While his tattoos hint at prison gang culture, this non-sequitur occurring at the end of a verse establishes the Ninja ego formation as an unambiguously white, and heteronormative superior to the widely accepted stereotype of the coloured Cape Flats criminal from which it is drawn.67 While these examples suggest clear racial and ideological distinctions,

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67 The track begins with Yolandí lying naked in a bathtub, intoning: "Sexy boys, fancy boys, playboys, bad boys/I fink you freeky, and I like you a lot." The Sexy Boys, and Fancy Boys, are notorious Cape Flats gangs, while the Playboy bunny logo, and “bad boy” epithet are common prison tattoo themes. The
the visual sequences for the introductory and chorus sections of *Fok Julle Naaiers*, complicate them again.

The video opens with alternating images of shirtless coloured individuals (one of them covered prison tattoos), a white subject (an ostensibly zef character typified in Roger Ballen’s photographic explorations), and Ninja himself, his tattoos prominently displayed. This visual progression imposes continuity amongst these male characters with all three types as interchangeable, but also reveals the coloured and white figures as component imagos to the Ninja ego formation.68 This pattern continues with the visual accompaniment to the chorus sections. Regarding the song’s title: *naaiers* translates literally as “fuckers,” but given the lyrical context – a “started from the bottom, now we here” type narrative – “haters” is a more appropriate description. I read the track as a response to those who question the stability of Jones’ projection, as evidenced with Ninja’s second verse beginning at [02’07”]. The relevant section of the text reads:

> ...All hail da great white Ninja!
> Every poes [cunt] wif a phone wants to take my picture!
> Ninja? Jis(laaiik), I dig that oke! [Jeez, I love that guy!]
> “Is it real?” No, it’s just a big black joke.
> When dealing wif an idiot, there’s really nuffing you can say,
> The next time you ask me: “Sit real?” I’m gonna punch you in the face!

Throughout this presentation, the dramatic convention of maintaining a separation between actor and audience is disrupted. Yolandi, Ninja, as well as the host of ancillary characters, face the

68 Yolandi is featured in the chorus sequences as well, but the focus here is on the similarity in appearance of the male characters.
camera head-on, addressing the viewer directly. In line with this strategy, Ninja’s promise to “punch critics in the face” when questioned about the influence of non-white cultural signifiers in *Die Antwoord*’s work (*vide* Diane Coetzer’s interview), while simultaneously asserting his own intrinsic whiteness (“the great white Ninja”) is implied through visual and sound effect. Coinciding with the final line of text quoted above, Ninja strikes out towards the camera lens through which he is being viewed. The effect is of the screen being “smashed” accompanied by the crash of breaking glass as Ninja punches through “the fourth wall” [2’37”]. Of course, when considered from the subject’s perspective the screen/camera lens can also be interpreted as the metaphorical Lacanian mirror. On realizing that the concept of the Ideal-I can never be achieved, that his projection is not accepted by local audiences, Jones lashes out in frustration at the image before him and destroys it.

**Conclusion**

With all the potential avenues available for self-expression in contemporary South Africa, apartheid-era racial typologies are still the primary means by which individuals are socially identified and measured. One’s racial category is initially surmised through visual assessment, and ultimately decided by the social behavior displayed. Lacan’s “mirror stage” theory demonstrates the process through which Jones has bolstered his career by absorbing exogamous cultural mores attempting to “assume” the persona of marginalized subjects. Subverting “common sense” behavioral expectations, Jones nonetheless fails to realize the idealized version of something perhaps “other than white” and is always recognized visually as “an alternative version of whiteness.” Even the contentious aspiration to become *die wit kaffir* (“the white kaffir”) is prefixed, is qualified by an assertion of intrinsic racial identity. But the crucial factor
here is Jones and other white South African musicians’ ability to “play in the dark,” or to playfully draw on an archive of diverse cultural influences without censure. After all, “[w]hiteness is without restrictions,” as Wicomb’s character John Campbell muses, “It has the fluidity of milk….” The same however cannot be said of “non-whiteness,” as exemplified in the case of Dookoom.

On the one hand, Isaac Williams’ performance and visual presentation as “Isaac Mutant” in the video Kak Stirvy embodies historical “common sense” conceptions of coloured social behavior: The Mutant ego formation is brooding and confrontational, prowling the mean streets of Heinz Park (a metonym for the whole of the Cape Flats and its attendant social ills). When Mutant exceeds and disrupts expectation as with the Larney Jou Poes video, his actions are publicly condemned, and his expression is curtailed. There is no possibility within this discourse to imagine alternative renderings of coloured identity: Mutant as a landowner outfitted in khaki shorts, or laborers as anything but docile, servile, hidden in plain sight. For coloured individuals, self-identity is not allowed to deviate from socially-inscribed identity.

In a surprising turn towards the end of Wicomb’s novel, John Campbell remarks: “Man, in this New South Africa, we can play at anything, mix ‘n match, talk and sing any way we like. Because of freedom….” The spectacle of race, a consequence of both Die Antwoord and Dookoom’s performances, created under social conditions where what one looks like, and therefore acts like, continues to have a significant effect on the performance and reception of identity in South Africa. It is clear that the freedom to “mix ‘n match” without critical reflection...

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69 Wicomb, Playing in the Light, 151.

70 Ibid., 213.
remains an exclusive purview of the country’s white populace.
Chapter 5:

Afrikaans is Dood! Afrikaans is Groot! [“Afrikaans is Dead! Long Live Afrikaans!”]

I also felt for Afrikaans the disdain that was a badge of honour among the wannabe revolutionaries of my high school years. It was, after all, the guttural language of orders and insults; of Bantu education, the language that had had children up in arms in 1976 as they took to the street to protest against being forced to learn everything from mathematics to science in Afrikaans. It did not help the political cause of Afrikaans among black South Africans that it was the language through which they were supposed to learn that there were stations in life above which they could not rise. So black folks had every reason to hate Afrikaans and not want to speak it or admit to speaking it.

- Jacob Dlamini, Native Nostalgia

It was used as a tool of oppression, so as a coloured person that doesn’t help your identity building....It’s your first language but you know that you are not the oppressor, you’re the oppressed.

- Kyle Shepherd, personal interview

While in Cape Town, I attended a performance of the hiphop stage production Albasters, a project spearheaded by local MC Simon Witbooi aka. Hemelbesem. The show was sponsored by the Dutch Consulate in Cape Town and featured spoken word artists from the Netherlands, Suriname, and the Cape Flats. Albasters translates to “alabaster,” implying “whiteness,” but is also a clever play on the Afrikaans expression Almal Basters, where Basters refers to early “free blacks” at the Cape and bi-racial descendants of settler colonial Dutch and indigenous people [basically translating to “We’re all bastards/mixed”]. The ideological intention was to promote a sense of multiracialism and multiculturalism by highlighting the historical, linguistic connections between (Surinamese) Dutch, and vernacular Afrikaans spoken in the Cape. On leaving the performance venue, I overheard an older, white woman declaring to her equally austere and matronly partner: Dit was nie Afrikaans nie! [“That was not Afrikaans!”].

Gansbaai, about a two-hour drive southeast of Cape Town, like any coastal town in the region has its share of ocean-facing holiday homes and more modest residences. A few friends and I had rented a space there for the weekend and headed into the mostly Afrikaans-speaking burg late one afternoon to get something for dinner. Clearly out of place, we looked like card-carrying spokespeople for the Rainbow Nation, models for a United Colors of Benetton ad campaign, or the beginning of a bad joke that started: “Two coloureds, an Indian, and a white American walk into a fishmonger.”

We placed our order with the white proprietor behind the counter who instructed a coloured woman assistant to scale and gut the fish. At some point, a white guy who probably played rugby in high school and still flew the old oranje-blanje-blou [“orange-white-blue”] South African flag at international matches, took up a position at the front entrance. Among the rows of atchars, fig, and apricot jams, we found a container of preserves marked Makataan Konfyt that none of us could identify. In his best deferential Afrikaans, one of my friends asked the proprietor: Verskoon my Tannie, maar hoe vertaal jy ’makataan’ in Engels? [“Excuse me, but how do you say ‘makataan’ in English?”]. She hesitated before replying: Wel...dis ’n kleiner waatleemoentjie, en hy’s eintlik ’n bietjie bitter. [“It’s smaller than conventional watermelons and somewhat bitter”]. Turning to the guy filling up the doorway whom she clearly knew, the woman then asked: Hoe sou jy dit verduidelik? [“How would you explain it?”]. Arms
crossed, without missing a beat, he answered: *Jy wil net nou nie “kaffirwaatlemoen” sê nie!* [“You just don’t want to say: kaffir watermelon!”]. With a little too much self-satisfied emphasis on the *kaffir* part.

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**Part I: Prolegomenon**

My relationship with Afrikaans is one of marked ambivalence. I studied it as a first language in high school becoming familiar with the work and reputations of N.P. van Wyk Louw, C.J. Langenhoven, Dalene Matthee, Antjie Krog, among other luminaries of the Afrikaans literary pantheon. I can speak, read, and write it without much difficulty, but to be honest my vocabulary has never been great. Also, having moved to the States for graduate school in my early twenties, there really hasn’t been much need or opportunity to speak Afrikaans. It is however still the language I curse in, still the language in which certain otherwise inexpressible memories of childhood experience are preserved. Through what other medium can I accurately convey the sense of trepidation felt after my father, having had enough of our *nonsens* would declare to my brother and I: *Julle maak my nou bedonnerd!* [“You two are driving me crazy!”]? Or the familiarity of my mother’s refrain at the conclusion of an evening soapie: *Fluit, fluit, my storie is uit* [“All’s well that ends well”]? Or the imposing presence of the H.A.T. – the *Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*, a leather-bound thesaurus with gold-leaf print on the spine, comparable in size and aesthetic to an *N.G Kerk* [“Dutch Reformed Church”] bible – placed reverentially atop a set of outdated World Book Encyclopedias in the family study? And although my parents are both fluent in Afrikaans – it was always around the house – I also remember my father once saying that he refused to speak the language to whites, because in his opinion, it was the only thing they had ever given him.

These anecdotes support Mikhail Bakhtin’s contention of language or “the word” as always grounded in social context:
For every individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have the ‘taste’ of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, an age group, the day, and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions.¹

So, there’s Afrikaans, and then there’s Afrikaans. Most familiar to South Africans and those who know a little about the country’s history is the suiwer [“pure”] or standard version imagined as the exclusive domain – populated by the intentions, so to speak – of white socio-cultural hegemony and apartheid legislation, often regarded as “the language of the oppressor.” However, the guttural “g,” hard “k,” and rolled “r” sounds that gave proscriptions like Slegs Blankes [“whites only”] or the insidious invective kaffirboetie [“nigger lover”] their affective power, are also the sonic contours that shape(d) the lived experiences and interactions of non-whites in South Africa.

The intention of this chapter is to examine how articulations of a speech form associated with one particular ethno-racial grouping might credibly travel through time to cross over or alternatively, be delimited within, boundaries of socio-cultural ideology. I argue that contestations of language usage and form amongst the coloured and hiphop communities of Cape Town are motivated by an acute awareness of the characteristic qualia of language – or else, the sensuous qualities bound up in the expression of language – features that are closely linked to the phonic attributes of stylized inflection, accent, and pronunciation. To extend Bakhtin’s metaphor, it is not only the connotative “bitterness” of a language (an abstract quality) then, but the qualitative experience of how it “tastes” to users as it passes from the mind and over the tongue in its expression.

Besides this introduction, I divide my chapter into two main sections. The first addresses the criteria for “acceptable” Afrikaans usage amongst white hiphop/rap musicians, citing examples by solo artist Zander Tyler aka. Jack Parow, and Watkins Tudor Jones aka. Ninja, the frontman of *Die Antwoord* [“The Answer”]. I critique the former’s mobilization of code-mixing within a predominant linguistic framework of *suïwer* Afrikaans (or at least, white Afrikaans); the latter performer’s almost exclusive use of vernacular Afrikaans (coded as coloured); and responses to these strategies by white Afrikaans speakers. Next, I interrogate the narratives presented in the 2010 hiphop stage production, *Afrikaaps*, directed by Catherine Henegan, and the eponymous 2011 “making of” documentary filmed by Dylan Valley. These works discuss the overlooked and actively suppressed contributions of non-white actors in the development of the language that has come to be known broadly as Afrikaans. Drawing linguistic confluences between autochthonous Khoisan speech and the contemporary coloured linguistic variety of *Afrikaaps*, an argument is made for coloured self-identification as an indigenous ethno-racial grouping. Here I draw on perspectives gleaned from interviews coloured MCs Emile Jansen aka. Emile YX?, and Simon Witbooi aka. *Hemelbesem*.²

I structure my analysis on theories of reciprocity – specifically, the intricacies and consequences of gift exchange – contemplated by Marcel Mauss, and Nancy Munn. Mauss describes a contractual system of “total services,” an institution comprising obligations of giving, receiving, and reciprocity, wherein property and services are transferred between groupings in order to maintain social equilibrium. In this system “[e]verything passes to and fro as if there were a constant exchange of a spiritual matter, including things and men, between clans and

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² “*HemelBesem*” translates roughly to “Broom of Heaven.” Perhaps related to Witbooi’s time as a pastor, my understanding is that his work serves as a metaphorical “broom” sweeping away the “chaff of falsehood,” to reveal the “true word” through hiphop.
individuals, distributed between social ranks, the sexes, and the generations.” Munn details how a community creates “the value it regards as essential to its communal viability” by according strict attention to the positive and negative value transformations facilitated through quotidian transactions. Social value is signified through qualities manifested both within the body, and in material objects. These corporeal and tangible entities express qualisigns thereby catalyzing interpersonal relationships of a spatiotemporal nature, social contexts that bridge distances of physical location as well as communal remembrances of events that have occurred through time.

Influenced by these complementary proposals, my writing considers non-whites in South Africa as the recipients of apartheid dogma, and Afrikaner ideologues as the donors of racialized animus. The dawning of democracy in South Africa accompanied by the pageantry of Truth and Reconciliation Commission proceedings, effectively brought about a moral tabula rasa. In a restorative paradigm “social debts” incurred under apartheid while not strictly repaid in kind, were publicly brought to light and cleared. In a retributive sense, reciprocity for the majority of the country’s population was never accomplished, leaving only the unresolved memories of apartheid rule, and thus constituting an incomplete or unfinished transaction. As this applies to my interest in the transference of utterances from one ideological, racialized context to another, I demonstrate how the transfer of speech varieties occurs without consideration on the part of its beneficiaries to reciprocate. The following section expands this contention:

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5 “Qualities which are also signs.” Charles S. Peirce, Philosophical Writings of Peirce, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 101.
In 1997, South Africa adopted a multilingual national anthem stitched together from fragments of autonomous speech forms, creating a supra-national linguistic patchwork. While encouraging ideals of national unity, this move glossed over entrenched attitudes of racialized difference and language ideology. Combining *Nkosi Sikilel’ iAfrika* [“God Bless Africa”] and *Die Stem van Suid Afrika* [“The Voice/The Call of South Africa”], the anthem of the *New South Africa* comprises verses in isiXhosa, isiZulu, seSotho, Afrikaans, and English. *Nkosi* was of course adopted by the African National Congress (ANC) in 1925 as the organization’s official hymn. *Die Stem* was South Africa’s national anthem from 1957 until 1994 under apartheid rule. The merger of these two anthems is neither sonically, nor aesthetically seamless, as evidenced in the artless modulation from tonic G Major chord at the end of the solemn *Nkosi*, to a D Major V/I pivot signaling the triumphant entry of *Die Stem*.

Over the years there have been instances of staunch Afrikaner nationalists publicly refusing to sing the sections of the new anthem composed in black African languages. By the same token, there has also been a tendency for otherwise heterochthonous linguistic phrases to be incorporated into a syncretic, all-encompassing “South African lexicon.” This notion of linguistic “fair use” plays out in the arena of Cape Town hiphop, where white Afrikaans-, and English-speaking rappers include *Kaaps* vocabulary in their performances. Under these circumstances, code-mixing is not so much a “gift” extended by culture-bearers in a reconciliatory mode, but rather a linguistic strategy unselfconsciously *assumed* by the dominant socio-political grouping. Instead of being “offered” with the implicit understanding of requital at some point in the future, *Kaaps* is used without concern for the ideological implications of its transmutation. These sentiments are poignantly and succinctly reflected in a graffiti piece found in District Six, the area in Cape Town proper from which coloured individuals were forcibly
removed without compensation under the 1950 Group Areas Act. The concluding text of the first verse of *Die Stem*, excised for use in the current national anthem, reads: *Ons sal lewe, Ons sal sterwe, Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika* [“We will live, We will die, For you South Africa”]. Overlooking a vacant lot of overgrown weeds and grass, across from a site of razed homes, the graffiti in question re-orients the words of the final line to ask: *En jou vir ons, Suid-Afrika*? [“What have you done for us, South Africa?”].

In this chapter I am primarily concerned with examining the qualia of ideologically charged speech forms, a proposal that is again tied to the actual sound of the voice as it is heard, interpreted, and articulated. Coloureds in Cape Town quite simply are expected to announce themselves in a prototypical “working-class accent” and more often than not, through *Kaaps*. This is an obviously delimiting behavioral and representational assumption. However, when white hiphop artists incorporate *Kaaps* vocabulary and expressions in their work, mimicking the specifically racialized and classed accent associated with it, questions of relative privilege and intention, undoubtedly arise. These kinds of qualic and sensorial tensions are not restricted to the sphere of hiphop performance but play out across social and digital media platforms in South Africa as well.

In early March 2019, for example, Qhama Sinkila along with three friends – Gomolemo Nkwana, Banele Sibanyoni, and Itumeleng Maboko – released a video on Twitter playing up racialized tropes of class and language under the heading #woolieswaterchallenge. The video features the four black African students leaving a branch of the nationwide upmarket department store Woolworths (or “Woolies”), commenting in heavily-inflected English and colloquial isiZulu on the supposedly “special powers” imbued in the bottled water just purchased there. Pausing at the entrance of the store to take a sip, the skeptical young men “magically” start
speaking a variant of South African English, in what can only be described as a distinctly white, private school accent. The video’s humor rests in the “transformative” effects of the water; the sudden shift in narrative expectation (black African guys “implausibly” sounding like white guys); and their self-conscious, exaggerated delivery of the latter English accent. On a more serious note, it speaks to experiences of exclusion, both economically (the extravagance of unnecessary and over-priced bottled water), as well as socio-politically (the clientele of Woolworths is decidedly upper-middle class and predominantly white). These allusions were successfully downplayed by a response video posted a few days later showing a white South African man initially speaking English, but shifting to fluent isiZulu after only one gulp of the Woolies miracle water, and the fact that Woolworths has since enlisted the young men of the original video for appearances in a series of promotional ventures in shopping malls across the country. The biting satire of the first video was defused by the smugness of the second; a critique of exclusivity was absorbed into a marketing campaign designed to appeal to all South Africans. I argue here that coloured hiphop artists’ objections to the parodic use of sound and language by white musicians, are similarly overlooked and dismissed.

Native Nostalgia

In his 2009 memoir, black African writer and academic, Jacob Dlamini, recalls that Afrikaans in addition to being “the language of the oppressor at some level, the language of order and exclusion...was also the language of colloquial expressions and the mode in which [his] mother, her friends and siblings exercised their own form of exclusionary politics.” It was


7 Jacob Dlamini, Native Nostalgia (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2009), 140.
the language of *grootmenspraatjies* [“grown-up talk”] used amongst adults when discussing matters unsuitable for children’s ears, and also the language from which the grammatical basis for *tsotsitaal* [“thug language”] the argot of black African modernity, township jazz culture, and coolness, was derived. Reflecting on the function that Afrikaans performed in his youth as well as its implications for contemporary memory-making, Dlamini insists:

> To say that Afrikaans is the language of black nostalgia par excellence is to strip Afrikaans of its racialised [sic] baggage. It is to say there are many more ways of resisting the depredations of power. Although the forked tongue was not designed for Afrikaans, it sure was articulated by it. Black South Africans could use Afrikaans without necessarily subscribing to the white supremacist ideology of those who claimed Afrikaans, despite history, as a white man’s language.  

Dlamini’s recollection of the performance of Afrikaans by black Africans during apartheid as an agentive move, calls to mind Svetlana Boym’s concept of nostalgia as tending towards either a restorative, or reflective mode.

To briefly describe these overlapping ideas: the former approaches the condition of longing and loss from the perspective of incontrovertible “truth,” a telling of the past as these events “definitively” occurred. The latter tendency allows for the interplay of humor and irony in recounting the past. In this instance, “longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgement, or critical reflection.”  

Dlamini points out that the cruelties of apartheid, corrosive as they were, could not subvert black African capacity for artistic expression, social order, or principled moral reasoning. On the contrary, these attributes persisted in varied spheres of black African life. Presuming a commonality of suffering during this time, a “one size fits all” perspective ardently maintained

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8 Dlamini, 144.

by racial nativists, levels out the particularities of ethnic, and socio-economic standing.

Dlamini’s project explores the utility of reflective nostalgia in critiquing a “master narrative” that reduces the multitude of black African experiences under apartheid to a singular interpretation of overwhelming hardship and indomitable political resistance, fomented in part by the misconception of Afrikaans as a *slegs blankes* [“whites only”] linguistic form.

The imposition of such a master narrative bears implications for the reckoning of coloured experiences as well. For most coloureds in the Western Cape, Afrikaans is not merely the language of their nostalgia, but their present and primary speech context. This is however, the vernacular form known variously as *Kaaps, Kaaprikaans*, or *Afrikaaps*, differentiated from *suiwer* Afrikaans in its frequent code-mixing with English,\(^{10}\) and stigmatized colloquially as a *kombuistaal* [a “kitchen language” used by servants and subordinates]. Despite impressions of *Kaaps* as unrefined, clumsy, or somehow tainted – stereotypes that have been transposed onto its “mixed-blooded” speakers – fluency in vernacular Afrikaans is a point of pride and a cogent signifier amongst members of the coloured hiphop community. In some cases, it is a more significant social marker than even ethno-racial identity. To *dala* [“represent” or “act/perform”] in the cultural form of *Kaaps* is to be marked unmistakably as coloured. This distinction, as well as the attitude that posits those who communicate exclusively in *suiwer* as unequivocally white, is complicated by the broad social category of “Afrikaans *sprekers*,” individuals who, regardless of racialized classification, simply “speak Afrikaans.”\(^{11}\) This attitude amends the widely-held

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\(^{10}\) I have also heard this vernacular referred to as *mengels*, an elision of *meng* [“mix”], and *Engels* [“English”].

\(^{11}\) In a 2018 online op-ed, writer Mynhardt De Kock offers a brief history of categories included under the umbrella term *Afrikanerskap* [“Afrikaner-ness”] that nevertheless all describe a white demographic. De Kock concludes: *Wat is ek? Ek is ’n Afrikaan, want my stamvaders het in 1745 en in 1755 van Duitsland na Suid-Afrika gekom. Ek is ook Afrikaner (van die ‘mondige’ sort), want dit is my taal en*
notion that *Kaaps* and its working-class coloured adherents are subordinate to the standard form, and relatedly, to white Afrikaner culture. It also implicitly acknowledges the fact that statistically, coloureds constitute the largest demographic population of the Western Cape, and that there are more coloureds in the province who speak Afrikaans as their mother-tongue, than whites. On the other hand, the neutral and all-encompassing term “Afrikaans *sprekers*” erases a history of mandated oppression and complicity, thus obviating the need for contemporary white introspection and redress.

I was reminded of some of these contradictions in a conversation one evening with coloured DJs/producers, Jacques Samson aka. Sumo Jac, and Quinton Swano aka. Dark Swan. I had heard them perform individually at “The Waiting Room,” a popular venue in the city, and also as a duo at the electronic music and turntable event “Love All,” where they were billed as “Anderson Paakwood” and “Flying Lotus River” (a play on the names of US musicians Anderson Paak and Flying Lotus, and the Cape Flats neighborhoods of Parkwood and Lotus River). We were joined by Alvhin Adendorff aka. Alvhinator, a promoter and DJ in his own right. These guys had each been in the game for a number of years, living and breathing hiphop in the city. The temporal and thematic connections between seemingly disparate tracks in a set, what Alvhin referred to as “thread DJ-ing” (…“I’ll play some Tribe, I’ll play some Biggie and

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wese, asook Suid-Afrikaner want Suid-Afrika is ook my land. [“How do I identify? I am an African, because my ancestors came to South Africa from the Netherlands in 1745 and 1755. I am also an Afrikaner (of the “cultural/communally-oriented” type described by philosopher Johan Degenaar), because Afrikaans is my language and informs my sense of being in the world. I am also a South African, because this is my country.”]  
then I’ll drop some Joey Bada$$...there’s a thread that connects all of these things”\textsuperscript{12}), was
echoed in the trio’s interactions: deftly picking up where the other had left off, cross-fading to
incisive callbacks, cutting in with timely interjections.

I confessed my frustration during fieldwork, that while I would approach coloured MCs
in Kaaps, on hearing my obviously classed accent, the majority would invariably respond in
English. “Well,” Alvhin explained: “Afrikaners is plesierig” [“Afrikaners are amenable”].
He continued: “You know there are white Afrikaans people in Cape Town that pretend to be
English, because they are actually embarrassed to acknowledge that they are Afrikaans? In this
city!” In this short exchange, Alvhin knowingly code-switched between suïwer and English,
shifting the topic to white speakers. Most interesting though, was his description of coloured
speakers as “Afrikaners,” a distinction commonly reserved for white South Africans of Dutch
descent, thus implying a personalized and propriety regard for the language and culture, while
referring to the latter racialized grouping simply as “white Afrikaans people.”

I brought up the notion of hiphop in Cape Town as a characteristically coloured
expressive form, and its aesthetic basis in Kaaps:

\begin{quote}
Swan: Looking at the identity of the coloured person with hiphop in this city, in this day
and age...it’s weird because...you get where it is [now], and you look at the
youth...these people are coming to gigs...but hiphop as a culture, culturally?
They don’t know the [story]...
Alvhin: I think there are some that do...
Swan: To them, hiphop is a completely different thing! Which to me, is exciting also.
As much as I’m like ‘ugh’ (exasperated)...[hiphop is] a way of expression.
So, if they’re expressing it differently...
Alvhin: If you understand ‘the thread...’
Swan: That’s the thing! It’s not tied into where we’re tied into! So, we might be tied
into...
Alvhin: The elements!
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} “Tribe” here refers to the US Golden Age collective A Tribe Called Quest, “Biggie” is of course
Swan: The elements... I’m part of the spine, I’m a nerve ending of the spine, I’m coming off that... so it’s cool, I can see it.... But for them they’re like: ‘F*ck that, nigga, we out in the air! We’re particles!‘

Alvhin: (Jokingly) [They’re] dabbing!

Swan: And that’s the weird thing! Because as it evolves, which it should, it’s natural, it should evolve, and it’s evolved to where it is right now... I feel like the culture, especially that side of it in Cape Town, has gone.... There’s a lot of MCs in Cape Town, a lot of MCs. But every MC I’ve come across, they love that (putting on an American accent): ‘Cape Town represent! What up, son? Yo, yo, what up, B...?‘

Alvhin: That’s New York slang.

Swan: I’m like [to these MCs]: ‘What are you talking about?‘

On the one hand, Swan and Alvhin seemed to be reiterating the familiar “Old Skool versus Nu Skool” generational dichotomy commonly found within hiphop culture. (Imagine two old ballies sitting on the front stoep, wagging their fingers and scolding: “When I was your age....”). Despite the newcomers’ use of East Coast or “New York slang” in reppin’ home turf, the two established MCs acknowledged a continuation of the narrative that hiphop in the city derived of coloured cultural provenance; as the genre had “evolved,” these parvenus were simply “expressing it differently.”

The question of anticipated ethno-racial/linguistic congruity within the context of hiphop, but also more generally, piqued my interest:

Me: But by the same token [if you can accept coloured use of ‘New York slang’], when you hear a white dude use the word: Aweh....

Alvhin: (Inhaling deeply): Ja, that’s a fair point....

Swan: It hurts....

(Sumo, quiet until now, reluctantly agreed).

The trio’s concession, their collective sigh in response to my final question, resonates with Valentin Volosinov’s assertion that “the immediate social situation and the broader social milieu wholly determine – and determine from within, so to speak – the structure of an

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13 And comically, their proclivity for “dabbing” – a dance move originating in Atlanta and popularized by Migos’ imaginatively titled 2015 track, Look At My Dab.
The participants and context of a speech event shape the very nature of the language used, governing the appropriate deployment of sonic inflection and intonation as the language is implemented. Moreover, their intersocial relationships attune relevant participants either to apprehend or to miss nuances of stylistic performance and linguistic behavior, all of which contribute to a relative degree of structural meaning and experience. To illustrate these connections, I quote HemelBesem’s heartfelt description of the social orientation of the greeting “aweh:”

As coloured mense mekaar groet, is dit ’n la-a-ang affêre. Dis seker waar vir ander kulture ook, maar dis definitief iets wat ek van my mense waardeer. Amper alle sintuie raak deel van die groet...[...]...Dadi groet waar hande en skouers aan mekaar raak, sê indirek: Ek is saam met jou, en ek dra dieselfde burden wat jy op jou skouer dra. Of: Ek wil daar wees vir jou. Dis die ‘ervaar’-deel van die groet. Ek het jou gestien, ek het jou gehoor, gevoel, en nou ervaar ek jou...[...]...Behalwe dat ons ‘aweh’ groet, word dit ook gebruik om iets te bevestig of wanneer jy snap as iemand iets probeer verduidelik...[...]...Sommige spel hom as ‘awe,’ maar dis te na aan die Engelse awe... ‘Aweh’ moet vir my lank genoeg wees, dis hoekom die ‘h’ vir my daar werk.15

When coloured people greet each other, it’s a long, and drawn out affair. This is probably true of other cultures, but it’s definitely something that I appreciate amongst my people; almost all five senses are involved...That specific encounter where you clasp hands, drawing each other close to then touch shoulders, says indirectly: I’m with you and I carry the same burdens as you do. Or to put it another way: I want to be there for you. It’s the experiential part of the greeting. I’ve seen you, I’ve heard you, we’ve shared a physical bond, and now I acknowledge you...Apart from using ‘aweh’ as a greeting, it’s also used as an affirmation, or when you finally ‘get’ something...Some people might spell it a-w-e, but that’s too close, in my opinion, to the English word ‘awe’...‘Aweh’ has to feel long enough, that’s why the ‘h’ at the end, works for me.

Hemel’s word choice and code-mixing with English (the word “burdens” in line four of the original text), index or provide social information in this instance of his status as working-class and his membership of a specific racialized grouping. The utterance itself, “aweh,” as he


explains is inseparable from a complex of physical gestures, and only wholly appreciated by those in/by whom this repertory of signs has been inculcated. This physical interaction is both anticipated and prolonged by the lengthening of the unrounded final vowel sound [ε].

Volosinov reminds us that “a word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant...[...]...a word is a territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor” (emphasis in original).16 Following this line of thinking, Bakhtin’s distinction between the simultaneously operating “centripetal” and “centrifugal” forces of language, is helpful in determining the exact ownership of an utterance as well as its intended audience. Centripetal forces, as manifested in centralized national languages impose an assimilationist stability of form and discourse, striving towards a coherent merger of verbal-ideological thought. The heteroglossia of centrifugal forces run counter to this unitary model. These influences are evidenced in the ever-developing expositions of socio-ideological language, the languages for example, of “a profession, a genre, a tendency,” referenced earlier.

If we imagine the suïwer Afrikaans of the apartheid state as exemplifying a centripetal category imbued with white supremacist ideology, then the heteroglot proclivity of Kaaps in a centrifugal mode chafes against this model, exemplifying a counter-ideology of resistance. It is understandable that members of a marginalized socio-linguistic grouping would necessarily be familiar with centripetal and centrifugal forms, capable to a certain extent of both dominant suïwer, and resistive Kaaps expression. If Kaaps constitutes a cultural form for working-class coloureeds, exposure to suïwer Afrikaans might occur through an educational rubric, work, or social experience that prioritizes the standard variety. In a system of pervasive linguistic and contextual hegemony though, versatility of form is not required of the dominant racialized

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16 Volosinov, 86.
grouping. Thus, when language is mobilized by those *for whom it is not intended*, this act represents an encroachment upon linguistic and ideological territory – not to mention, recalling the history of Group Ares Act removals – eliciting in the “legitimate” addressee a visceral response. Put more plainly, and quoting Swan, “it hurts.”

**Communal Remembering and the Qualia of Pain**

I liken Swan’s response to the description of “communal remembering” found in Laurence Ralph’s inquiry into the qualitative experiences of violence – the “qualia of pain” – within a poor African American neighborhood of Chicago (referred to in Ralph’s writing as “Eastwood”) and the intentional obfuscation of these qualia by local law enforcement authorities. Ralph examines the consequences of individual experiences of violence, how the telling and retelling of these encounters circulate within victims’ communities to shape a collective worldview, and come to engender a metonymic historical and communal consciousness. The study revolves around white former police commander Jon Burge’s habitual torture of African American criminal suspects during interrogation procedures. In court hearings, recounting their treatment at the hands of Burge and his fellow officers, survivors were observed to re-inhabit the traumas inflicted on them in the past. The qualia of their pain were resuscitated in these moments, enlivened by police officers’ bold accounts of the injuries they casually wrought under Burge’s supervision, and actively covered up by members of the police force and municipal administration.

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The qualia of pain were also evoked through victims’ narratives being presented at community forums in Eastwood. Through this process of public testifying, individual experiences of injury were embodied by the collective. Jon Burge’s longstanding enactment of torture was maintained within his work environment through the “code of silence” assumed by his peers. Although he was finally brought to justice, because Burge had managed to evade criminal charges for so long and had garnered a reputation for breaking even the most hardened criminals through systematized physical abuse, his name alone conjured amongst the affected civilian community a wary notoriety, and a distrust of police in general. Jon Burge became a point of reference around which collective memories of police violence were produced (some victims spoke of “having been Burge-d”18), and the African American community of Eastwood’s quotidian reality of surveillance and repression by police, was endured.

Just as Burge’s infamy traversed both space (from his precinct, to the urban neighborhood of Eastwood), and time (a long history of injustice left unsanctioned), aspects of the qualia of pain similarly cut across spatiotemporal parameters. Individual, qualitative experiences of violence were corporealized and remembered through time by Eastwood residents, and placed alongside contemporary instances and sites of police persecution in an historical trajectory of violence. For the residents of Eastwood “the act of remembering entail[ed] a subjective conversion in which the pain of the past [became] the generative basis for holding Burge accountable in the present.”19 An injury to one, became an injury to all.

Drawing on Nancy Munn’s consideration of how social and symbolic capital are accrued, and relationships established through the act of giving or transferring objects amongst the Gawa

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18 Ralph, 114.

19 Ibid., 113.
of Papua New Guinea, Ralph figures Jon Burge as a “donor” transmitting injury to the residents of Eastwood.\(^{20}\) The terms of this system of “giving” are such that “the gift should not only make the recipient remember the donor so that he subsequently repays him...[...]
the donor must remember his own transactions in order to stimulate, if necessary, the memory of the recipient” (emphasis in original).\(^{21}\) The act of remembering is crucial to resolving this circuit of transmission. For the Eastwood community, sustaining the memory of Burge’s infractions is imperative for holding the former commander accountable for his heinous actions and for “paying him back” in kind.

Returning to Volosinov’s idea that discourse between a speaker and addressee is intrinsically shaped by the socio-cultural context of its occasion. For some coloured South Africans, \textit{suiwer} Afrikaans connotes both white authoritarian rule, and to hear it spoken (still) elicits the qualitative experience of psychic and physical violence enacted during the apartheid regime. The centrifugal nature of \textit{Kaaps} – infused with the historical consciousness of its coloured speakers – mitigates these qualia in a posture of resistance. As I argue, the notion of reciprocity is fundamental to the relationship between the ideologies of \textit{suiwer} Afrikaans and \textit{Kaaps}, and also between the respective users of these speech varieties. I suggest that the injuries transmitted by apartheid legislation through the medium of \textit{suiwer} Afrikaans, have not yet been fully reconciled in the contemporary moment.

A completed loop of reciprocity or reparation for these atrocities has not been accomplished, leaving only a compensatory remembrance of the past and an acknowledgement

\(^{20}\) Ralph, 113.

\(^{21}\) Munn, 61.
of how these prior events are connected to contemporary instances, “a remembering of the present,” to paraphrase Johannes Fabian22 (Think back as well, to the incomplete transaction implied by my father’s refusal to use suiwer Afrikaans when speaking with white Afrikaners, because “it was the only thing they had ever given him”). Compounding matters, when “illegitimate” speakers use a speech form to which they are not socio-culturally and ethno-racially attuned through cultural familiarity and accent, it evinces a “failure to remember” a series of historical transgressions on their part, and an unequal trade. Moreover, these “illegitimate speech acts” imply the closure of a transaction, but importantly, one that has not been ratified by the recipient linguistic audience – the “victims” of the initial violence – thus re-inflicting old injuries and fostering distrust.

Part II:

Afrikaans is Dood! Afrikaans is Groot! [“Afrikaans is Dead! Long Live Afrikaans!”]

The process of asymmetrical giving and receiving plays out in the performative sphere of Cape Town-based hiphop and not just in casual verbal interactions as I have just described. This section details occasions of Afrikaans by white hiphop artists – particularly, their incorporation of code-mixing with Kaaps – and the reception of these composite linguistic performances by members of the white Afrikaans speech community.

In a country with eleven official languages, it is not unexpected that utterances from one speech form might find themselves reconstituted in others, gradually becoming part of the general South African lexicon. I begin the following analysis with descriptions of South African

code-mixing disseminated \textit{via} television advertisements dating from the late nineties, up until the early two-thousands. My reasoning is that audio-visual media sway not only consumer behavior, but also reflect, refract, and influence interpersonal and therefore socio-linguistic behaviors. This is important to my contention throughout this dissertation that in a South African context, visual cues are superordinate to auditory signals when seeking to determine an individual’s racial categorization. I argue that the presentation of an accessible and widely-used \textit{lingua franca} at this time in the country’s political history (apart from being an astute marketing ploy), served to promote ethno-cultural empathy and cohesion, but only as it pertained to oppositions of ethnic whiteness and black Africanity, without similar attempts to reconcile with “colouredness.” A salient deployment of this strategy took place with the restructuring of the SABC 1 (South African Broadcasting Corporation) television channel in the mid-nineties. The channel’s inclusion of programming in English and local Nguni languages, was accompanied by the theme-song and tagline: “Simunye: We Are One!” (this line was followed by the persuasive English lyric: “One Nation, One Station!”). Another example of stylized code-mixing is the phrase “Yebo, Gogo,” popularized by a television advertisement for the Vodacom cellular network company premiering nationwide in 1993, just prior to South Africa’s first democratic election the following year.\footnote{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpoJXoiJIGM} The narrative of the ad proceeds as follows: A couple of white out-of-towners in a flashy Beamer pull up to an older black African man selling handmade wire maquettes of wind-pumps on the side of the highway. Slicked-back hair, gold chain, and leather jacket to match his partner’s black miniskirt, the white man haggles over the price of the roadside trader’s souvenirs. Rejecting the quote as too expensive, the man then returns to his Beamer only to discover that the doors are locked with
the keys inside. The trader laughs, waves his cell-phone at the couple, and teases: “Hello? Vodacom?” The final sequence pans through shots of a locksmith’s truck, the old man counting a wad of cash, and the white couple driving off down the highway, their convertible loaded up with the trader’s wares.

The humor of this ad operates at two levels: The white guy’s hubris is deflected when he is forced to buy all of the trader’s wind-pumps in exchange for using the older man’s cell-phone to call for assistance in unlocking the vehicle. Secondly, the patronizing phrase with which he greets the male trader: “Yebo, Gogo,” translates from the original isiZulu to: “Yes, Grandma.” In the spirit of Rainbow Nationalism, the white, late-period-Elvis character’s attempt at a black African indigenous greeting is commendable, but his bungling of grammatical gender implies insincerity, and the tone of the exchange reiterates apartheid-era racialized dynamics of white superiority and black deference. In the mood of a Br’er Rabbit trickster tale, the black African protagonist, although appearing helpful, ultimately outwits the white character and takes his money. For a time, the catchphrase Yebo, Gogo, came into common vernacular use by S’efricans [a colloquial contraction of “South Africans’] of all hues as both a greeting and an endearing affirmative response. The same linguistic transferal from a black African language to everyday usage was inspired by a television advertisement for a rival cellular communications company, MTN, a few years later. Here, the expressions “ayoba,” and “not ayoba,” were used to describe situations that were either “good/cool,” or “bad/unhip,” respectively.24

I propose that in the wake of South Africa’s monumental transition to democratic rule, code-mixing with elements of black African ethnic languages was propagated through media as an index of multiracial reconciliation, producing a linguistic context or “language of futurity”

24 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwFYgshmSIY
(to adapt Dlamini’s phrase), and a condition of rhetorical “fair use” particularly for white South Africans. In this vein, I reference a popular television advertisement for Klipdrift brandy, flighted in 2005.25 A black African couple on a road-trip have stopped along a secluded stretch to enjoy the scenery, when they are suddenly approached by a white Afrikaner man in a pick-up truck. Even in contemporary South Africa, one might expect such an interaction to end in racially motivated antagonism. Tension quickly dissipates when the Afrikaner bounds out of his truck and, assuming that the couple’s car had broken down, eagerly begins attaching straps to the towing eyes of their SUV. Despite the black African man’s assurance (in English) that they were simply on their way to a town called “Touws River,” the Afrikaner insists: *Ja nee, ek tow julle sommer gou plaas toe* (“Not a problem, I’ll just tow you guys to my farm”).

The joke is that the Afrikaner man (mis)interprets the meaning of certain utterances due to their phonological likeness to his own experience: the homophonemic semblance in this instance between the words “Touw” and “tow.”26 Franz Boas attributes this “mishearing” or incorrect apperception to: 1) the hearer classifying new sounds in terms of those present in his own language, and 2) the fact that without knowledge of the semantic context of a complex of new sounds, the hearer then conflates them with known, similar sounding words.27 Misunderstanding

25 The text accompanying the advertisement’s posting on Youtube states that Millward Brown, a noted market research firm, named this commercial “The Best Consumer Liked Advert of the Past Decade.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9UzhcBahGQ

26 It could be argued that the Afrikaner should be familiar with the town of Touw’s River, as it is presumably near where lives and more commonly known in Afrikaans as Touwsrivier. Additionally, the man’s response to “tow” the couple’s car features brief code-mixing into English; the Afrikaans term for this action might be *om te sleep*. The efficacy of this commercial is to exploit the notion of cultural and linguistic (mis)understanding. As such, the ad is broadly *illustrative* in its use of varied languages to emphasize that such mix-ups can nevertheless lead to mutual recognition, rather than strictly *demonstrative* in its use of linguistic and sonic indices.

is used as a comedic device throughout the rest of the ad. In the following transcription of the two men’s dialog, I notate their corresponding utterances as underlined and in bold font.

The black African man insists: “We really don’t need any **help**,” and is met with: *Ja, ek help graag* [“Yes, I’m happy to help”]. Back at the farm, he is offered a tumbler of *Klipdrift* brandy and responds: *Enkosi* [isiXhosa for “thank you”]; the Afrikaner replies: **Kos? Nou praat jy, ek’s ook lekker honger** [“Food? Now you’re talking, I’m hungry too’’]. Sitting outside on the porch, the Afrikaner host asks: *Nog eenetjie?* [“Another drink?”], to which the black African man answers with a smile and a heavy sigh: **Eish!** [“Phew!”]. His new white bestie counters with the phrase that constitutes the punchline of the whole exchange: *Met ys, ja...met ys* [“Yes...this time with ice”].

The sharing of food and drink brings to mind elements of Munn’s inquiry into how the Gawan community create social value through exchange, and how “value transformations effected in given types of practice can be viewed as transformations of the value of the actor’s self.” Through his hospitality the Afrikaner constructs an impression of generosity, with the intention (following Munn’s analysis) that the black African recipient will interpret his host’s character as one of benevolence and be inspired to close (and effectively instigate a continuation of) their transaction by reciprocating with offerings of his own in the future. As noted earlier with the example from Laurence Ralph, this practice instantiates modes of spatiotemporal relation or “spacetime” between the two men, one of whom is traveling through the region and is expected at some point to return the hospitality extended to him. To initiate a transaction with the expectation of having it reciprocated, implies that the participants enter into the agreement on an equal footing; any past transgressions are forgiven through the contractual acts of giving and

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28 Munn, 15.
receiving. Moreover, a refusal to complete the obligation of reciprocity is “to reject the bond of alliance and commonality”\textsuperscript{29} and invite negative value transformations unto the recipient.

Amongst the Gawa, offering food to an overseas visitor represents an expansion of spacetime in that it potentially extends the reputation of the Gawan actor beyond his own person and the perimeter of his own island, and also brings esteem to his larger community in the manner of a positively conceptualized and aspirational qualisign of “lightness” or “buoyancy.” By contrast, eating too much food (and not sharing the bounty with visitors), leads to sleep. This in turn yields a negative qualitative transformation of “heaviness” unto the prone subject and “a minimization of social activity and of the physical space controlled by the body;”\textsuperscript{30} in other words, a contraction of spacetime and curtailing of status.

The intention of any product-based ad campaign is to inculcate in the potential consumer a desire to embody the prestige connoted by the object being promoted. Klippers, as the brand is colloquially known, thus becomes a signifier of bonhomie, of charitability. Now, suppose that adding ice (eish/ys) to the drink, effects a tangible quality of “coolness.” Robert Farris Thompson describes the “metaphor of moral aesthetic accomplishment, the aesthetic of cool...[as one of]...control, having the value of composure in the individual context, social stability in the context of the group” (emphasis in original). These ideas, particularly as they are related to water, are further associated with contexts of purification and the restoration of social equilibrium, “means by which worlds are taken out of contingency and raised to the level of

\textsuperscript{29} Mauss, 17.

\textsuperscript{30} Munn, 75.
aspiration.” Linking these concepts to the construction of value through qualitative experience: when two men of seemingly incommensurable ethno-racial and linguistic ideological backgrounds ingest a liquid qualitatively regarded as cool and metaphorically associated with purification, an iconic identification occurs between the liquid and those who imbibe it. The positive social values of “control, composure, and social stability,” are transferred to and embodied by both parties, a significant outcome in advancing a sense of multiracial reconciliation and parity, as I argue this ad seeks to do. (Recall as well the “Woolies water challenge:” The second video where a white English speaker transmutes into an isiZulu speaker by ingesting bottled water, restores social stability and “coolness” to the potentially “fiery” situation that could ignite as a result of the continued socio-political inequities highlighted in the first video).

For the white Afrikaner the transaction of food and drink “away from [the] body...produce[s] further positive value products that transcend the body of the donor.” The act of giving potentially extends to others of his ethno-racial classification, thereby suggesting (in Alvhin’s words) that all white Afrikaners are indeed plesierig [“amenable”] despite what one might have surmised given South Africa’s history of anti-black African antagonism.

Remembrance is crucial subjective component of Munn’s description of exchange. The black

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32 Chumley and Harkness observe that: “Peirce’s notion of iconicity – when something stands for its object to someone by virtue of a perceived resemblance or formal similarity – was central to Munn’s analysis of qualitative experience.” Lily Hope Chumley and Nicholas Harkness, “Introduction: QUALIA,” *Anthropological Theory* 13(1/2)/2013, 7.

33 Munn, 50.
African character is encouraged to remember his obligation to return the Afrikaner’s hospitality and spread the word of this positive experience to his peers; not to dwell on the associations of Afrikanerdom with white supremacist rule. By failing to remember the kindness offered, the black African man risks drawing negative aspersions of character unto himself, and by extension risks (re)invigorating widely-held (pre-)apartheid anti-black African sentiment amongst white Afrikaners.

The fact that this transaction is catalyzed specifically through linguistic means in spite of numerous and cringeworthy comic mis-apperceptions implies a fundamental capacity for mutual understanding. The homophones around which the ad’s dramatic narrative pivots demonstrate that these specific utterances and even the languages themselves, can be used interchangeably regardless of their contradictory ideological impulses; the white Afrikaner in repeating elements of the black African’s dialog (enkosi/kos, eish/ys), inadvertently incorporates the latter’s utterances into his own speech. Moreover, in witnessing the Afrikaner’s incongruous reactions to his verbal responses, the black African character (like the viewer of the ad) must necessarily apprehend that a linguistic misunderstanding has taken place. In “going along with” and perpetuating the Afrikaner’s performance, the black African man concedes to a code-mixing of isiXhosa with Afrikaans.

The title of this section, Afrikaans is Dood! Afrikaans is Groot!, is taken from white Afrikaner rapper, Jack Parow’s eponymous single featured on the 2011 album Eksie Ou [“I’m the Man/I’m the Shit”]. In view of my analysis of this particular ad, the “sanctioned” inclusion of black African utterances in Afrikaans speech intimates that in a new democratic era the hegemony of unadulterated, suïwer Afrikaans is dead. The language, the culture, the bearers

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34 In a more cynical vein, the racial animosity of whites under apartheid towards non-whites, might also be read here as simply a “mis-apperception” on the part of the latter demographic.
of this notorious speech form, are revivified through willing embrace of the “finishing gift” – the tribute that closes a transaction – of redemptive black African influence.

_Hosh Tokolosh! Die Ding Gaan Bos! [“Hey Tokoloshe! Things Are Getting Crazy!”_]

The quotidian linguistic overlaps I have described are exemplified in the realm of hiphop by artists such as Jack Parow aka. Zander Tyler. “Parow” is the working-class neighborhood in greater Cape Town where Tyler grew up, separated by a system of expressways from other historically white areas to the North (Goodwood, Edgemead, and Bellville), and coloured boroughs to the South (Elsies River, and Belhar where I was raised and my folks still live). The artist Jack Parow frequently code-mixes using English, elements of black African vernacular, and _Kaaps_, as evidenced in his collaboration with white, English-speaking musician Xander Ferreira from the electronic outfit “Gazelle,” entitled _Hosh Tokolosh_ [sic], [roughly: “What’s up, Tokoloshe?”]. Ferreira incidentally, is known to perform wearing leopard print headgear referencing Congolese dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, or in other instances, a _mokorotlo_, a conical grass hat indigenous to the Basotho black African ethnic grouping.

The narrative of the song _Hosh Tokolosh_ and its accompanying music video, describes Parow, Ferreira, and Ferreira’s sidekick DJ Invizible being chased by the _tokoloshe_ (a malevolent spirit in black African cosmology) through an open field, eventually outsmarting, and manipulating its physical movement (controlling the _tokoloshe_ by pulling on his dreadlocks). Knowledge of the _tokoloshe_ within South African popular culture and use of the isiXhosa word

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35 “DJ Invizible” is the _nom de plume_ of white Capetonian musician Nick Matthews.

36 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcK0GjTHv_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcK0GjTHv_o)
itself, is sufficiently prevalent that Jack Parow’s evocation of this urban legend (as a white Afrikaner), doesn’t raise any eyebrows. Parow even mentions the well-known safeguard of lifting one’s bed up off the floor to protect against being accosted by the tokoloshe while sleeping: Boeta, bou ma’ jou bed oppie klippe! [“Brother, you’d better raise your bedframe up on a platform tonight!”]. The cultural and occult ubiquity of this character can be compared to that of “Pinky Pinky” depicted in a 2002 series of paintings by South African artist, Penny Siopsis.

“An intricate imaginary composite appearing, disappearing and then reappearing in social time,” the mythic figure of Pinky Pinky is said to present itself only to young girls, although boys can feel the creature’s presence, existing as it does in the physical space between male and female bathrooms in South African schools.\(^{37}\) The heyday of Pinky Pinky seems to have been 1960s apartheid, after which the character receded in public memory, only to resurface during the 1990s. Sarah Nuttall describes Pinky Pinky as “neither black nor white but a hybrid, a racial in-between which eschews any particular categorisation.”\(^{38}\) By Nuttall’s account, Siopsis’ critique of “pinkness”/“the color of flesh” as a conventional index for whiteness and the artist’s exploration of historical trauma, allows for more expansive readings of identity that delay anticipated recourse to and reliance solely on negative, apartheid-era conceptions of whiteness. Although the influence of apartheid still lingers as “a signifier and a symptom,” Nuttall argues, it is creatively “re-fused, [and] modified, as potent after-effect, now in combination with new formations of self and meaning” (emphasis added).\(^{39}\)


\(^{38}\) Ibid., 104.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 106-107.
This coming to terms with post-apartheid whiteness is nevertheless accomplished via “hybrid and racially in-between” proxy, which, in the South Africa consciousness invariably signifies “colouredness.” Add to this, Pinky Pinky’s characterization as “half-man, half-beast” – the implication that coloureds are to be understood as some type of human-animal hybrid – and Nuttall’s generous appraisal of how white identity in South Africa is re-imagined through Siopsis’ work, demands closer scrutiny. Put another way, the author’s insistence that the possibilities of whiteness suggested in the Pinky Pinky series occur at a benign remove from apartheid-era conceptualizations of white identity, quickly loses traction; even contemporary instantiations are intimately, and always already linked to the past. The pervasiveness of Pinky Pinky in the South African imagination, and relatedly the tokoloshe, does not render these mythical figures ideologically neutral. Neither does Jack Parow’s racialized representations and use of code-mixing in the track under review.

The opening lyrics of *Hosh Tokolosh* are presented as a dialog between Parow and the tokoloshe, before shifting over to the MC’s first solo verse:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speakers</th>
<th>Transcription of lyrics:</th>
<th>English translation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack Parow</td>
<td><em>Hosh, Tokolosh!</em></td>
<td>What’s up, <em>Tokoloshe!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tokolosh</em></td>
<td><em>Aweh, bra, hoe lyk ‘it?</em></td>
<td>Hey, brother, how’s it going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Parow</td>
<td><em>Netjies!</em></td>
<td>Sweet!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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40 Nuttall writes: “[Pinky Pinky is a] figure of blurred gender, [thus], he and she is a blurring, too, of what is human and what is not, and even of feline and canine.” *Entanglement*, 104.
In a curious formulation the tokolosh’s lyrics are comprised exclusively of Kaaps yet articulated by Parow. As with the scene in which Parow and his accomplice, Ferreira, are shown directing the tokoloshe’s movements, it is clear who is pulling the linguistic and ideological strings. An allegorical black African character speaks in coloured vernacular (effectively merging these two racialized identities) and is voiced by a white Afrikaner. The depiction of the tokoloshe as having pitch black skin and shoulder-length dreadlocks marks the character as decidedly non-white, but it is the inclusion of fangs and a necklace made of (presumably human) bones, that recalls racist imaginations of indigenes as primitive and innately savage (black African peoples are unquestionably considered indigenous groupings, whereas this identity is claimed by only certain members of the coloured community).

At this point, I digress to contemplate similarities of racialized representation found in the Hosh Tokolosh music video, and the 1932 Betty Boop animated short film I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead, You Rascal You. By no means do I make the assertion that the contemporary video is a remake of the 1932 Fleischer Studios production (although as I demonstrate, certain visual

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41 *Boer*, Afrikaans for “farmer” is a colloquial referent for white Afrikaner, and also an epithet for the police, similar to “pig.” *Soutie* is a contraction of *soutpiel* (literally: “salt dick”), a colorful descriptor for a South African of British descent with one foot in England, one foot in South Africa, and his genitals dangling in the Atlantic Ocean. *Toby* is an abbreviation of *toebroodjie*, meaning “sandwich.”
correlations are striking). Rather, I offer the following analysis as an example of how historical racialized tropes are recapitulated in the present; how they contribute to a sense of “communal remembering” for the subjects of these representations, but also assist in reappraising the notion of community by observing the continued reiteration of such representations and their outcomes as they operate across spatiotemporal boundaries. The wilful conceit in the South African example is that in the post-apartheid moment, although racial categories and the social inequalities based on these divisions persist, depictions of negative racialized imaginaries are no longer acceptable in the public sphere. While doubtlessly recalling erstwhile stereotypes, through a formidable process subjective conversion, historically presumed behaviors of “the Other” are presented instead as impartial, yet nevertheless intrinsic, social typifications. A case of Boym’s restorative nostalgia disingenuously presented as reflective nostalgia.

Filmed in black and white, the Betty Boop short begins with animated opening credits accompanied by Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra performing their standard *High Society*. At [0’29”] Armstrong and his cohort are shown in a live action scene on a small studio stage before the cartoon feature begins at [1’09”). Betty is carried along a jungle path by her compatriots Bimbo and Koko the Clown, in a palanquin made of bamboo shoots with a canopy of leaves. The trio are stalked and attacked by knife-wielding “natives” dressed in grass skirts, their button-noses and exaggerated lips complemented by top-knot hairstyles and giant hoop earrings. Betty is whisked away by the locals, leaving Bimbo and Koko to pick up their trail and rescue the damsel. In a daring escape the three friends scramble over a mountain-top, the “natives” – armed this time with spears; literally “spear-chuckers” – hot on their heels. Betty, Bimbo, and Koko make it safely to the other side, but as their pursuers cross its peak the mountain erupts sending the “natives” hurtling toward the sky.
Beginning at [2’05”] Bimbo and Koko track a set of the kidnappers’ footprints, only to find themselves trapped in a cauldron being heated with burning logs, and surrounded by their dancing, chanting captors. The cartoon clearly positions the Betty-Bimbo-Koko trifecta as its narrative protagonist. Their differentiation from the story’s antagonists (the explicit “othering” of the antagonists), is also achieved through a series of familiar visual binary oppositions. The trio, for example, are fully-clothed. Betty Boop wearing a pith helmet and khakis, embodies the trope of intrepid, masculine, Western explorer. The locals are dressed in (feminizing) grass-skirts. Additionally, Betty, Bimbo, and Koko outmanoeuvre the “cannibals” and their premodern weaponry, using only their intellect, their wits.

The musical accompaniment in this section contributes to such distinctions as well. Film music,” as Claudia Gorbman explains, “is...the hypnotist that lulls us into a hyperreceptive state, in order that we receive and identify with the movie’s fantasy.” While visual cues hint at the setting as the quintessential “African jungle,” the musical patterning here invokes instead a Native American tribal aesthetic. Describing the inventory of film score tropes used in pre-World War westerns to represent “Indian-ness,” Gorbman writes:

Accompanying the onscreen Indian savage one usually hears a ‘tom-tom’ rhythmic drumming figure of equal beats, the first of every four beats being accented. This percussive figure is typically heard either played by actual drums or as a repeated bass note or pair of notes in perfect fifths, played in the low strings. Additionally, a modal melody might play above the tom-tom rhythm, sometimes monophonically, sometimes in parallel fourths, often with a falling third (e.g., F-D) concluding melodic phrase.43


43 Ibid., 235.
This “Indian-on-the-warpath” motif is evoked in the section [2’27” – 2’55”], with some variations to Gorbman’s template. The “tom-tom rhythm” is played in perfect fourths by low strings, before being joined halfway through measure 5 by an insistent drum accompaniment [Figure 5.1]. The sixteenth-note melo-rhythm is also “voiced” throughout by the “natives” using syllabic vocables (importantly, Betty, Bimbo, and Koko speak “intelligible” English). The modal melody, a natural minor built on G sharp omitting the anchoring dominant degree of the scale, is doubled by piano and xylophone and concludes in a descending perfect fifth. In the first pass of this motif (measures 1-9) Bimbo and Koko escape the cauldron by climbing adjacent trees. Measures 10 through 13 show them walking away using the trunks as stilts, their “footsteps” accentuating the motif’s underlying quarter-note pulse.

This vignette segues into a lengthy sequence where Bimbo and Koko are pursued by a lone tribe member. Musical accompaniment consists of the titular piece I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead You Rascal You played by Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra, with the famed bandleader on vocals. Just as Armstrong’s gravelly tenor voice enters, the cartoon figure of the “native” transforms into a giant disembodied head. Looming over the retreating heroes, the head subsequently “sings” the first verse of I’ll Be Glad [3’10”]. If this sonic device alone is not enough to establish a surrogate relationship between “savage cannibal” and Armstrong (the “native” as voiced by Armstrong), at [3’19”] the cartoon head morphs into a live action visual image of the bandleader’s face [Figure 5.2]. The same visual technique is used in the section [5’57-6’09”] where a grinning “native” pounding on a cauldron is momentarily interrupted by a live action studio scene of a smiling Alfred “Tubby” Hall playing drum kit. Audio and visual device collude similarly in the Hosh Tokolosh music video to produce imagery that is undeniably racially-coded.
The track itself is built on an eight-measure ostinato oriented around a G minor tonality, modulating to the subdominant for measures 5-6 and returning to the tonic for measures 7-8 (an abridged twelve-bar blues scheme, excluding the V-IV-I pattern of the anticipated final four measures). Rhythm guitar power chords falling on beats two and four emulate reggae “chops,” while the percussive backbeat consists of a supporting “one-drop” rhythm throughout. Alternating bass lines are also syncopated to avoid falling on the downbeat of the quaternary tactus, contributing to the feeling of the first pulse being “dropped” or left unaccented. In this way, elements of genres known to have their origins in African American and Black diasporic performative aesthetic (not to mention characteristically coloured Cape Town hiphop), are cannibalized to create a hybrid texture consisting of multiple musical languages.
Figure 5.1: “Indian-on-the-warpath” motif [2’27”-2’55”], with G sharp natural minor melody in treble, and “tom-tom” rhythm outlined in the bass.
Just as Betty Boop, Bimbo, and Koko find themselves exploring unfamiliar terrain at the beginning of *I’ll Be Glad*, the *mises en scène* of the *Hosh Tokolosh* video situates Jack Parow – a white, working-class hero and Afrikaner *boerseun*— in the midst of a socio-cultural milieu conventionally understood in a South African context as the exclusive domain of black Africanity. The introduction has Parow sat in a crudely-constructed one-room dwelling with adjacent outhouse, in an isolated, undeveloped landscape criss-crossed overhead by powerlines attached to a sequence of obtrusive electricity pylons; basically, a township. The lyrics of the bridge section at [2’18"] effect a provocative subversion of this idea, asserting Parow’s ownership of the space and implying his socio-economic parity with non-white communities historically forced to live under such conditions.

Taking refuge in a tree canopy in an effort to avoid the *tokoloshe*, Parow sings: *Hosh tokolosh, wat soek jy in my bos!* [“Tokoloshe, what are you doing in my neck of the woods?”].

44 In the second verse, Parow describes himself as the quintessential Afrikaner: *Kam in my sokkie, en ent(tjie) in my oor* [“Comb tucked into my sock, cigarette behind the ear”].
The following line is interesting as well: Watch it, *jy moet my vrou uitlos!* [“Watch yourself! Leave my woman alone!”]; in *I’ll Be Glad*, Armstrong sings: “Well, I let you into my home, you gonna leave my woman alone!” The most notable visual and narrative likeness between the *Hosh Tokolosh* video and the *I’ll Be Glad* short film, is the former’s inclusion of a chase scene beginning at [1’24’’]. By the light of a full moon, Parow and his cohort are likewise pursued by an “angry native” hellbent on their demise [Figure 5.3]. While the similarities between these images may be coincidental, the visual and musical grammars employed in the respective examples, are not. As in the case with Pinky Pinky, intrinsically racialized source material is treated in the post-apartheid setting as “value-free,” open to new subjective interpretation stripped of its former ideological content. Jack Parow further normalizes the impact of this subjective conversion by including a cover version of *Biskuts en Biltong* [“Rusks/Hard Biscuits and Jerky”] a track originally penned by renowned white South African musician David Kramer, on the *Eksie Ou* album as well.

Figure 5.3: Jack Parow and his cohort being pursued by the *tokoloshe* [1’30’’].

45 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0rkLuxRYiU
In addition to his role as impresario and co-producer of the musicals *District Six (Revisited)*, and *Kat and the Kings* (stage works celebrating coloured cultural and musical life) with coloured musician Taliep Peterson, David Kramer made a name for himself on the South African musical and cultural scenes as a solo performer of *blikkitaar lekkerliedtjies* (tin guitar, simply-constructed Afrikaans folksongs usually in an upbeat *vastrap* dance-style). Later in his career Kramer incorporated elements of *ghoema* – the characteristic rhythm of the eponymous musical genre associated with the coloured/Cape Malay Coon Carnival – into his work. With his trademark *rooi velskoene* [“red leather chukka boots”], porkpie hat, and bicycle, singing predominantly in the regional Afrikaans of the *platteland* [“rural farmland”] where he grew up, an English-speaking Kramer epitomized both working-class Afrikaner and white kitsch personas. This aesthetic endeared the musician to South African audiences as a “man of the people” (if not the *volk*), through his participation in a series of memorable Volkswagen minibus advertisements aired in the late 1980s/early 1990s.

In Kramer’s track *Biskuts en Biltong*, sentimental images of the countryside pervade the narrative of a *plaasjapie* or small-town kid tired of the city lights, and yearning to return home:

[Excerpt from third verse]:
*Terug tussen die wynlende en terug met die tang,*  
*Terug op die damwalle waar ek lekker visse kan vang.*  
*En waar die tannies by die tuisnywerheid pies bak vir my.*  
*Waar die kinders in die straat speel,*  
*Want dit altyd ruik na braai!*

[Translation]:  
*Back amongst the vineyards, working the land,*  
*Or sitting and relaxing, catching fish in the dam.*  
*Where people still wave “hello” as you drive by,*  
*And all the old ladies are busy baking pies.*  
*And it always smells of braai [“barbecue”]*  
*That’s the place that I call “home”!*

[Chorus]:  
*Biskuts en biltong,*  
*Ek is ‘n Weskusklomp!*  

[Biscuits and jerky,*  
*I’m a West Coast kid at heart!*  

Parow’s acoustic guitar-based cover follows a standard C Major: I-(IV)-V-I progression, modulating to relative minor for the plaintive third verse, and returning to the major tonality with
the inclusion of *ghoema* kit drum beat for the final series of refrains [2’13”]. Parow and Kramer alternate singing the first and second introductory verses, joining together for each iteration of the chorus, as well as the closing section. Much like sampling in hiphop, Jack Parow’s collaboration with David Kramer evinces a spaciotemporal transaction whereby the younger musician gains access to the older performer’s share of cultural capital built up over a lengthy career, thus fast-tracking Parow’s own accrual of social prestige. Additionally, by agreeing to partner with Parow on this cover version, Kramer implies a tacit sanctioning of the problematic visual, linguistic, and musical representations in the younger musician’s body of work. Jack Parow is not the only white South African rapper to dabble in non-white optic and verbal signifiers. Watkins Tudor Jones aka. Ninja, frontman of *Die Antwoord* is guilty of the same.

Parow and Ninja both draw on culturally specific South African references in their work, and while their respective oeuvres raise many of the same questions of propriety, because the former relies on a more familiar repertoire and manner of deploying racialized tropes, his performances are accepted without critique by a target and knowledgeable, white Afrikaner audience. Parow’s evocation of the extreme local – his mention of place-names and descriptions of habitus, for example – are important features of hiphop/rap performance, situating the artist within a specific geographic and socio-cultural milieu. These strategies also demonstrate an intimate awareness of expected aesthetic behavior for a member of the dominant ethno-racial grouping in a context where space is socially produced, and social relations are spatially contingent. Citing John Western’s interrogation of these dynamics in Chapter Two, Jack Parow “knows his place.”

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Ninja, and his band *Die Antwoord* steadfastly eschew these conventions, opting instead to assimilate a broader range of extrinsic musical and cultural influences, and not only those signifiers aligned with an exclusively Afrikaans/Afrikaner modality, as their name and linguistic preference for *Kaaps* might imply. As opposed to a hyper-local referential praxis, Ninja’s aesthetic is one of ecumenical and predatory *bricolage*. One need only consider the infamous spoken introduction to the track *Enter the Ninja*, or the unrelenting use of “Dark Continent” visual and ideological tropes in their *Fatty Boom Boom* video, positing Johannesburg as the ultimate African city. Racialized stereotypes are still very much at play here, but Ninja’s character intends in my view, to corporealize and reflect a quintessential (South) African persona, and not the self-effacing Afrikaner everyman proliferated in the South African popular imagination by Kramer and Parow (not to mention, the *Klipdrift* guy).

By faithfully adhering to and reframing long-established racialized tropes as social ones, Parow, in contrast to Ninja, simultaneously revives the complaisant notions of white Afrikanerdom evoked in Kramer’s work, and revitalizes the language itself in an attitude of seemingly benign code-mixing. Jack Parow’s *de facto* vetting by an Afrikaans language- and cultural-broker such as David Kramer no doubt bolstered his popularity amongst mainstream audiences. André le Roux du Toit aka. Koos Kombuis’ public reprimand of *Die Antwoord* in 2010, likely had the opposite effect for this latter group within the Afrikaans cultural establishment.

In an op-ed for the Afrikaans language broadsheet *Rapport*, Kombuis, a stalwart of the 1980s alternative Afrikaans music movement known as *Voëlvry* [“outlaw” or “free as a bird”], wrote:
Ek will nie vir hulle pa staan nie en ek
distansieer my van hul nihilistiese filosofie....
Ek veroordeel hulle nie op morele gronde,
soos die kerk sou doen nie, maar ek verwerp hulle
op estetiese gronde. As jy verby die skok en tinsel lyk,
is hulle eenvouding vervelig.

I won’t tell them what to do, but I’m certainly
not comfortable with their obvious nihilism....
I’m evaluating them from purely an aesthetic view,
not on moral grounds, as the Church might do.
Honestly, once you see through all the hype,
you’ll realize they’re actually pretty boring.

Important to the present case, is Kombuis’ conclusion that Die Antwoord's version of Afrikaans
is “not the language of his heart [emphasis added].” The group’s rebuttal was just as emphatic.

In their track Evil Boy, released shortly after the Rapport article, Ninja ominously intones: Koos
Kombuis se ma se fokken poes [basically: “Fuck Koos Kombuis”]. Kombuis is not averse to
using profanity in his own work: look no further than the lyrics to his well-known track Johnny
Is Nie Dood Nie [“Johnny’s Not Dead, He’s Just Passed Out”] with the nostalgic line: Onthou jy
nog die maande van fokkol doen en kak praat? [“Remember those months where we’d do
absolutely fuckall, just sit around talking shit?”] released in 1994 or Die Fokkol Song [“The
Fuckall Song”] of 2008. And in terms of rap performativity, responding to a disrespectful,
dismissive comment or a “diss,” is a stock in trade rhetorical device. So, what exactly is the
problem here? How does Die Antwoord’s Afrikaans articulated by Jones in the example above
differ from “the language of Kombuis’ heart”?

The idea of a distinguishing or singular vocal character as being associated with
corporeality relates most obviously to Roland Barthes’ famed description of the singing voice –
“where melody explores how the language works and identifies with that work” – and his

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This link is no longer active, but the above quotation is cited in: Sarah Woodward, “Ownership and
Power: Debate and Discourse Around the Subcultural Phenomenon of Die Antwoord,” in African Theatre,

theorization of “grain.” By Barthes’ account, “[t]he voice is not personal: it expresses nothing of [the singer], of his soul; it is not original...and at the same time it is individual: it has us hear a body which has no civil identity, no ‘personality,’ but which is nevertheless a separate body....The ‘grain’ is that: the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue...” (emphasis added).49 The tenor and delivery of the phrase Jones used, is linked unequivocally to the Kaaps of the working-class coloured and hiphop communities – a speech variety that is decidedly not the performer’s mother tongue – and also the particular accent in which the language is articulated.

In a 2018 online piece for the Afrikaans media syndicate Netwerk24 entitled:

Wie is ‘n Afrikaner? [“Who is an Afrikaner?”], Kombuis muses:

[Text:] Ek hou van die ou ‘Die Stem,’ op die regte tyd en plek en in die historiese konteks, want ek hou van Langenhoven. En soms hou ek net so baie van Nathan Trantaal se rubrieke en Isaac Mutant se musiek.... Dalk is dit tyd om te vergeet van ‘Eendrag maak mag’ en eenvoudig te erken dat daar groter diversiteit van sienings binne die konteks van Afrikanerskap is as wat ons ooit kon droom.

[Translation:] I appreciate Die Stem, at the right time and place, and in the appropriate historical context, because I enjoy Langenhoven’s writing. And sometimes I enjoy Nathan Trantaal’s articles and Isaac Mutant’s music just as much.... Maybe it’s time to do away with the ‘Unity is Strength’ laager mentality, and simply acknowledge that there’s a broader diversity of expression within the context of ‘Afrikaner-ness’ than we could ever have initially imagined.50

Here, the mention of C.J.Langenhoven’s poem Die Stem [“The Voice” or “The Call of South Africa”] scripted in suiwër Afrikaans (the text on which the apartheid national anthem was based); the introspection of coloured author and poet Nathan Trantaal who writes exclusively in

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49 Barthes, 182.

"Kaaps; and MC Isaac Mutant’s hard-hitting, provocative lyrics, suggests an embrace of diverse Afrikaans speech varieties.

From a linguistic standpoint this approach represents an acknowledgement of difference according to typification (Dyer 1977). Despite his proposal to leave the (white) Afrikaner nationalist motto *Eendrag Maak Mag* in the past, the implication that there is ever “a right time, place, and historical context” to uncritically celebrate *Die Stem* (the statement *ek hou van* translates literally to “I enjoy”) either in its written or erstwhile sung form, brings the sincerity of Kombuis’ acquiescence to the possibility of a *racially* diverse conception of *Afrikanerskap* into question, and reflects a worldview closer to Hall’s understanding of stereotyping as a way of fixing social expectations of “the Other” (Hall 1997). As long as vernacular white Afrikaans is mediated via long-established conventions of cultural representation as in Jack Parow’s case, and *Kaaps* remains confined to its own particular set of racialized socio-cultural constructions as exemplified by Nathan Trantaal and Isaac Mutant, these actors can be considered members of the mother-tongue speech community that communicates in Afrikaans.  

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51 In a piece entitled *Afrikaans Se Future Issie Die KKNK* [“The Future of Afrikaans Isn’t the KKNK”], Nathan Trantaal reflects on his experience as a first-time attendee of the annual Afrikaans-language *Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees* [“The Klein Karoo National Arts Festival”]: *Ookant òs sit daa ’n tafel van newly-baptized belangrike skrywers, die future van Afrikaans. Die future van Afrikaans lyk asof hulle ’n baie lekker tyd het. Ek kyk hulle an virre second en dink, is sieke lekker om te kan sit inne restaurant en wiet jy kan vi jou eie kos betaal. Is sieke lekker om byrie KKNK te sit as jy wit is en jy wiet niks van die racism wat yt ie plek emanate is directed at jou nie. [“Sitting at the table across from us is a group of newly-minted “writers to watch out for” – the “Future of Afrikaans” – having a grand old time. I look over at them and think: Must be nice to sit down at any restaurant you choose, order anything off the menu, and know that you can pay for it. Must be nice to attend the KKNK if you’re white, and to know that absolutely none of the racism emanating from this place is directed towards you”].*  
Thus far I have adopted a flexible or contextual approach in my use of the term “Afrikaans.” As I consider them here, both suiwer as the “standard” variety (or at least, the variety disciplined by a fixed orthography) and Kaaps fall within the broad register of “Afrikaans.” The former derives prestige historically as the medium through which apartheid South Africa’s nationalist, legislative, and economic aspirations were constructed and transmitted. As the versatile apparatus of a separatist state, suiwer Afrikaans imbued its white speakers with socio-cultural and political authority over those subjugated by apartheid rule. In this context, it is important to remember Volosinov’s contention that “the word functions as an essential ingredient accompanying all ideological creativity whatsoever,”52 and further, that “[t]he ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign...to make the sign uniaccentual.”53 In the same way that suiwer normatively indexed ideologies of apartheid whiteness and hegemony, Kaaps, as expressed in a regionally specific accent, was an unequivocal index of working-class colouredness and inferiority. The continued manifestation of these precepts in contemporary South Africa, as well as their contestation, are the basis of the present study.

Writing in 2004, Gerald Stone considers Kaaps “a distinctive dialect (mother tongue of a region or community), and not merely slang. [Kaaps] is a marker of the [working-class coloured] community’s identity, which is reflected in endogamy, ties of descent, kinship and preferential

52 Volosinov, 15.

53 Ibid., 23.
association, and shared residential areas, both voluntary and enforced.”

Kay McCormick refers to *Kaaps* (although in her writing she uses the term *kombuistaal*) as “the vernacular,” describing it as “a mixed code in itself” (coloured hiphop artists themselves refer to *Kaaps* as “vernac,” an obvious abbreviation of “vernacular”). The occurrence of code mixing in *Kaaps*, McCormick suggests, “is not just a speaker strategy. English loanwords form a high proportion of its speakers’ vocabulary and there seems to be English influence in verb-placement rules. But for the rest the syntax is clearly Afrikaans...[...][...]...while the gates of its lexicon are open, its grammatical structure is fairly stable.”

The speech variety employed by Jack Parow might properly be considered a sociolect, demonstrating passive and active acquisition of exogamous linguistic practice. While signifying association with white, working-class Afrikaner or contemporary hiphop cultures, it is nevertheless a register of *suiwer* Afrikaans.

The autonomy of *Kaaps* and its status as a precursor to the appropriative interventions in 1875 of *Die Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (“The Society of True Afrikaners”) and *Die Tweede Taalbeweging* of the early 1900s (“The Second Language Movement” occurring in the wake of the Anglo-Boer War) – both of them, efforts to standardize Afrikaans and establish the language as the basis of white Afrikaner nationalism – are the subjects of the following section. I examine the revisionist implications of the 2010 theatre production, *Afrikaaps*, and the 2011 “making of” film documentary of the same name. Both works have attracted media and academic attention as examples of linguistic activism, aiming explicitly to challenge notions of

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**suiwer** Afrikaans language and by extension, white racial hegemony in South Africa. Through lyrical, musical, and ethnographic exposition these works, directed by Catherine Henegan and Dylan Valley respectively, tell the tale of Afrikaans’ origins as a creole language at the Cape. Audience members/film viewers learn of the contributions made to Afrikaans’ formation by indigenous Khoisan people who acted as interlocutors for early European traders and colonizers; how Afrikaans was first transcribed phonetically in Arabic by Muslim clerics exiled to the region from Dutch protectorates; and how these histories and their non-white protagonists were disavowed by white Afrikaner nationalists in their quest for cultural and political autonomy from British rule.

**Part III: Kom Khoisan, Kry Terug Jou Land [“Come Khoisan, Reclaim your Land”]**

In their 2017 co-authored essay, H. Samy Alim and Adam Haupt interrogate the ideological implications of *Afrikaaps* – both theatrical and filmic representations – within a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) framework, a rubric that supplants the Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) model as one that regards the multivalent linguistic and cultural knowledge of communities of color as crucial sociopolitical and educational resources in themselves. CRPs by contrast, tend to view these endemic systems as teleological stepping-stones. Multiethnic and multilingual students might be introduced to pedagogical standards (read as white and middle-class) through vernacular practices, and then abandon these localized scaffolds as they assimilate to and became increasingly familiar with more “accepted” norms of academic behavior and achievement. (Drinking the KoolAid, or the Woolies Water, as the case may be).

The authors contend that hiphop arts in general offer a recuperative platform for the organic or self-sustained development of CSP practices “providing marginalized youth with the
means to reclaim, reimagine, and reconstruct themselves and their histories, cultures, and languages.” As such, Alim and Haupt conclude that the performers involved in *Afrikaaps*:...do not straightforwardly ask for inclusion into Afrikaans, but rather, for an anticolonial reinterpretation of how the history of that language is even understood...*Afrikaaps* is not merely a variety to be accepted: *Afrikaaps* is in fact, the appropriate name by which we can refer to a language variety that began with and belongs to indigenous Africans of the Cape (emphasis in original).

These sentiments were echoed by jazz pianist/composer and musical director of the show, Kyle Shepherd, who conceived of the intended soundscape as “a more culturally sounding hiphop.” The idea was to “elevate Khoisan consciousness” by weaving elements of indigenous mouthbow music (as well as *ghoema* and Cape jazz), into the production’s sonic fabric. In my interview with Shepherd, he noted:

...a lot of coloured people will say: ‘No, we’re not from there, that’s not true!’ [But the reality is] that the language that people are speaking has a Khoisan element to it, culturally....So, this is the thing with coloured people, they say: ‘Ja, we’re mixed, but you know...there were Europeans involved, we’re mixed with Europeans.’ That, we’re fine with, but throw in the fact that actually, there were Khoisan mixed in as well, and it’s like: ‘What?’...We’re fine with the fact that we’re mixed, but we’re not [willing] to acknowledge...this indigenous, this Boesman [lineage]. That, we can’t stomach...the contribution from Khoisan culture in Afrikaans and in coloured culture is actually – is always – overlooked, so we thought we have to bring that in....There was of course a certain group of people that said: ‘Nah, this is not us,’ denying the facts....Then there were a lot of Afrikaners who had mixed emotions about it, like: ‘Oh damn!’ (laughs). ‘Everything we thought we knew about our culture might not be true!’ And so, there’s that realization....We knew that a topic like this would be provocative...because it upsets the Establishment, it really does....

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57 To give an idea of the variety of musical influences heard in *Afrikaaps*, among those performers featured in the original show and documentary were: Hiphop headz Emile Jansen aka. Emile YX, Charl Van der Westhuizen aka. Bliksemstraal [“Lightning Bolt”], Janine Van Rooy-Overmeyer aka. Blaqpearl, Quinton Goliath aka. Jitsvinger [“To electrify with music created through his hands”]; Cape Minstrel singer/storyteller Moenier Adams aka. Monox; indigenous performer/activist Jethro Louw aka. Kerneels Persoon [“The Everyman”]; and jazz pianist Kyle Shepherd.

58 Alim and Haupt, 169.
Afrikaners, that whole culture of people, built their culture on that language, built it on the notion that ‘This language is ours!’ I mean they [even] call themselves Afrikaners! (laughs).  

Reading Shepherd’s commentary, it appears that as much as the production’s linguistic and historically revisionist propositions disturbed the foundations on which white Afrikaner identity had been constructed, Afrikaaps clearly unsettled coloured socio-cultural imaginaries as well.

Shepherd is clearly of the view “that the language coloured people were speaking, had a Khoisan element to it.” That linguistic propriety signifies indigeneity, is affirmed in the piece Kom Khoisan, Kry Terug Jou Land performed by Emile YX? (a version of which was originally featured on his 2013 solo album Born and Bred on the Cape Flats). Used as the opening mantra, and also as the closing song in the documentary film Afrikaaps, an evocative excerpt is considered here:

[Verse:]
Kom Khoisan, kry terug jou land,
Coloureds kom van Khoisan verstand!
Kykie, verstaan, die San behoort annie land,
Marrie land kannie gekoop wotie,
So, hou jou bleddy Rand.
Gat vra die Xhosa en die Zulu wie was eerste hier,
Die naam Xhosa en die clicks het die Khoi an hulle gegee.
In Khoi, mean Xhosa, ‘angry looking man,’
Elke click in isiXhosa is oorspronklik vannie San.
Boesman en Hotnot is gebruik om te beledig,
Maar ooral staan die rotskuns nog stewig.
Vi duisende jare nie eens Rock Grip kan só maakie,
The Gods Must Be Crazy, ma die San issie vaak ie!  

[Translation:]
Come Khoisan, reclaim your land,
Coloureds come from Khoisan knowledge.
Listen up, the San people belong to the land,
But none of this/us can be bought,
So, put away your damn money!
Ask the Xhosas and the Zulus who was here first,
The Khoi gave the Xhosas their name and language.
In Khoi, ‘Xhosa’ means ‘angry looking man,’
Every click in their language comes from the San.
‘Bushman’ and ‘Hotnot’ were intended as insults,
But their rock-art has stood the test of time, for
Thousands of years. Rock Grip can’t do any better!
The Gods Must Be Crazy, but not the San!

59 Personal interview with Kyle Shepherd, 2016.

60 Dulux “Rock Grip” is a brand of paint known for its “durability” and “luxuriousness;” the idea here is that not even this modern contrivance is as long-lasting as the early visual expressions of Khoisan rock-art.

61 Afrikaaps, directed by Dylan Valley (2011; Cape Town: Glasshouse), DVD. Emile’s performance begins at [47’05’’].
Bringing together a number of ideological and localized historical inferences, Emile’s verse establishes the connection between Kaaps as spoken by the working-class coloured inhabitants of the Flats, and the archetypal form developed by the Khoisan people. In a seamlessly subjective, ethnonational move an assertion is made between marginalized coloured communities and their autochthony; the entirety of this contemporary ethno-racial demographic is posited as Khoisan, as direct descendants of South Africa’s indigenous people by virtue of linguistic heritage.

From this perspective – conflating “Khoisan-ness” with colouredness and vice versa – Emile’s opening line “kry terug jou land” [“reclaim your land”] becomes especially significant. A spatiotemporal relation can be imagined between the displacement of coloured individuals from Cape Town proper under the 1950 Group Areas Act, and the expulsion of indigenous Khoisan from the Cape region centuries prior with the arrival of Dutch East India Company representatives and their subsequent settlement, theorizing these physical removals as consecutive points along a path of colonization initiated as early as the mid-17th Century. As Patrick Wolfe writes: “Whatever settlers may say...the primary motive for elimination is not race...but access to territory. Territoriality [in a Lockean mode] is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element.” This contention disrupts the narrative that apartheid separatist policy was fundamentally motivated by incommensurable racial dissimilarity.

Citing the contrasting responses of American settler-colonialists to enslaved Africans on the one hand, and their treatment of indigenous groupings on the other, Wolfe states: “As opposed to enslaved people, whose reproduction augmented their owner’s wealth, Indigenous

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people obstructed settlers’ access to land, so their increase was counterproductive.” Related to this idea is the fact that because non-white labor was crucial to the economic maintenance of the apartheid state, it was unfeasible to completely eliminate coloureds from the Cape. This was an important factor in the specific racialization of coloureds as subservient, infantile, and docile, as well as the decision to include broad range of “mixed” sub-categories under the heading “coloured” in the 1950 Population Registration Act.63

Lines 6 and 9 in the quoted verse reassert the notion of Khoisan/coloureds as original owners of the land, emphatically declaring: “Ask the Xhosas and the Zulus who was here first....Every click in their language comes from the (Khoi)San....” Additionally, Nguni speech varieties and their speakers are cast as recipients not only of name (lines 7 and 8), but also the characteristic features of language articulation. Volosinov’s contention that “a word is a shared territory between addresser and addressee” is evoked again;64 dispossessed historically of both geographic and linguistic territories, the Khoisan/coloured individual as voiced by Emile, announces his intention to reclaim both.

Continuing with a lyrical analysis, lines 10 through 12 point to the resilience of Khoisan/coloured cultural practice (notably cave-/rock-art), despite “thousands of years” of socio-political subjugation. The derogatory epithets “Bushman” and “Hotnot,” allude to the adage “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never break me.” Finally, the

63 In the early and mid-1700s, as a direct result of Dutch occupation, the indigenous Khoisan population was decimated by smallpox, while their agrarian subsistence was threatened by livestock disease. By 1800, those Khoisan who hadn’t been displaced to the interior, served as indentured laborers for European settlers. The progeny of Khoisan, European, and enslaved people at the Cape were known as “Basters,” and included amongst the various subcategories of “coloured” codified by the PRA. Paul T.Roberge, “Afrikaans: Considering Origins,” in Language in South Africa, ed. Rajend Mesthrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 80-81.

64 Volosinov, 86.
phrase “The Gods Must Be Crazy,” is a reference to South Africa’s most commercially successful movie of the same name, written and directed by Jamie Uys in 1980. Flying over the Kalahari Desert, the pilot of a small-engine aircraft carelessly discards an empty glass Coca-Cola bottle out of the window. Khoisan hunter, Xi, discovers the bottle and returns to his village with the object, where the community regards it as a gift bestowed by the gods. The Coke bottle is put to a number of uses (as a musical instrument, as a cooking utensil, as a weapon), before becoming the source of intragroup conflict; after all there is only one to go around. Resolving to end the strife amongst his formerly peaceful fellow Khoisan, Xi embarks on a journey to the end of the world to return the troublesome thing to the gods. The movie relies heavily on slapstick comedy to depict Xi’s unlikely encounters along the way with wildlife conservationists and members of an insurgent, paramilitary organization. The indigene’s worldview is humorously contrasted with the idiosyncrasies of modern life, a narrative device that contributes to perceptions of the Khoisan as naïve and childlike. Despite this negative portrayal, in the final line Emile insists: die San issie vaak ie; the Khoisan/coloured people are not to be underestimated.

The predominant coincidence of accented syllables with quaternary tactus, the end-rhymed couplet scheme, and the epigrammatic nature of Emile’s lyrics, fulfills the didactic intention of the Afrikaaps project as a whole. In the documentary version of Afrikaaps, members of the production cast are shown interviewing and performing with high school students from the Cape Flats neighborhood of Lavender Hill. Addressing a room full of learners, Emile pointedly asks [24’02”]: Sodra ie klokkie lui, dan praat julle ander Afrikaans as wat innie boeke is, nuh? Wat is die maklikste om te praat: die Afrikaans wat in die boek is, of die Afrikaaps wat julle praat? [“As soon as the bell rings for recess, you guys speak a different kind of Afrikaans than
what you find in your school textbooks, right? So, which is easier to articulate: the Afrikaans in
the book, or the Afrikaaps that you speak?”]. Singer Moenier Adams aka. Monox, continues
[24’15”]: Hoe sal julle voel as Afrikaaps ‘n legal taal is, man, of ‘n official taal is? Jou taal wat
jy praat by die huis, djy kry dit in a textbook miskien? [“How would you guys feel if Afrikaaps
was considered an official language? If the content in your textbooks was written in the same
language that you speak at home?”]. One learner’s response draws laughter from her peers: Die
hele (groep) kinders sal Afrikaans só slaag! [Everybody would do so well!].

Some students poignantly addressed the socio-cultural stigma attached to Kaaps and the
prejudices they might encounter as speakers of the language. One learner noted [24’40”]:

As iemand nou vi my gat interview...nou praat ek, en nou ek hettie lekker gehoor nie. Dant ek hom
sê: ‘Jy, sorry broetjie man, kykie wat het jy nounet gesê?’ An gan hy dadelik die indruk kry: ‘Djy,
dies a ganstertjie.’ Nevermind het ek ‘n degree...of hoe intelligent ek is. Ma hy gaan my judge by
die taal wat ek hom nou gevra het. Vi een vraag gan hy my judge ai job. Wat vi my...my lewe kan
impak.

Let’s say I’m being interviewed for a job somewhere, (and I’m speaking suiwer Afrikaans), and I
mishear what the guy just said. So, I ask him (in Kaaps): ‘Sorry, brother, could you repeat that?’
The interviewer would immediately think: ‘Woah, this guy’s a gangster.’ Regardless of my
qualifications, or how smart I am, I’m gonna be judged on the associations of the language that I
speak. I’ll lose any chance of getting that job, simply because of how I speak, when answering one
damn question. And that one slip-up...could have a serious impact on my life.

Alim and Haupt use the same excerpt (although citing director Dylan Valley’s English
translation) as evidence of the concurrence in Kaaps language practice between double-
consciousness (Du Bois 1967) and racial interpellation (Fanon 1967). The student acknowledges
that given particular social settings (in this case, a hypothetical job interview), his cultural
linguistic basis of Kaaps would invariably conjure stereotypes of coloured criminality in the
mind of an addressee. He is also aware that style-shifting and changing his affective register to *suiwer* (what one of my informants referred to as “every coloured mom’s telephone voice”), could potentially mitigate this unfavorable value judgement and help him land the job. However, the quoted section also demonstrates the extent to which the student has internalized societal interpellation based primarily on a visual assessment of his phenotypical features. Neither an upward shift in class status, nor fluency in the dominant speech form of *suiwer* can counteract assumptions of social and moral inferiority scripted onto his racial categorization.

Interrogating *Afrikaaps* from a CSP perspective, Alim and Haupt’s analysis emphasizes the respective structural components of grammar and the representational oppositions between *Kaaps* and *suiwer* Afrikaans. The production as a whole, the authors insist “can be viewed as revolutionary not only because it challenges standard language ideologies; [it] goes a step further by rewriting the history” of the “standard” speech variety understood as emblematic of white Afrikaner nationalism. From a trans-coding perspective: the *Afrikaaps* theatre/filmic presentations and their participants simultaneously and successfully engage the modalities of substitution, and reversal. They “switch out” the narrative that privileges *suiwer* over *Kaaps* (substituting negative representations of *Kaaps* with a positive ones), but then “go a step further” to alter the historical narrative of the development of Afrikaans (reframing a disavowed, negative history as positive). While these approaches extend the palette of representational forms

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65 Asif Agha refers to the “processes whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (or enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users” as “enregisterment.” Asif Agha, “Voice, Footing, Enregisterment,” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15/1 Special Issue: *Discourse Across Speech Events: Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity in Social Life* (June 2005), 38.

66 Alim and Haupt, 167.

67 Ibid., 169.
available, they nevertheless fail to thoroughly dispel negative imaginations of colouredness. Substitution and reversal challenge tropic binaries, but do not completely undermine them.68

Two scenes in the documentary version of Afrikaaps illustrate this point: On the eve of the production’s debut at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK) – the annual Afrikaans-language festival held in Oudtshoorn – singers Bliksemstraal [“Lightning Bolt”] and Jethro Louw are shown distributing flyers to passers-by, advertising their upcoming performance. In the first instance, a young, white Afrikaner enjoins the two dreadlocked musicians to “bless him with weed;” in the next, an older coloured man insists that Bliksem and Jethro’s physical appearance contradicts the positive representational ideals of the show. In both cases, visual markers of “coloured difference” scripted onto the body – phenotype and hair texture, the latter connoting Rastafarianism – superseded suïwer linguistic proficiency as the dominant lens through which the two musicians were regarded.

I suggest (as with Chapter Two) that by considering the sound of Kaaps in its capacity as a (sonic) sign vehicle, expressed via accent, a more productive trans-coding strategy of provocation can be enacted, one that “locates itself within the complexities and ambivalences of representation itself, and tries to contest it from within” (emphasis in original).69 This particular counter-strategy is less concerned with proposing new information (the influence of Kaaps on suïwer, for example) than it is with exploring the possibility of one representational form being able to simultaneously imply several, contested meanings. Acknowledging the potential of

68 Alim and Haupt, 274.

69 Hall, 274.
multivalent readings or signifiers to emerge from a singular sign, “making the stereotype work against itself” to paraphrase Hall,\textsuperscript{70} the fixity of that stereotype is effectively disrupted.

The Qualia of Kaaps

The ideological status of *suiwer* over *Kaaps* reinforces the positioning of its respective mother-tongue speakers in South Africa’s system of racial categorization. While McCormick’s description of *Kaaps* as a “mixed code” also reflects the normative and negative appraisal of its speakers as “mixed race,” an overlooked component of the stigmatization of the working-class coloured community, is *accent*. Speaking with *Hemelbesem* during a break in performances, the MC insisted:

\[...[mainstream Afrikaans] media determines how people speak a specific language. When I started with radio, [the producers] were always like: ‘No, if you read the news, this is how you read it.’ Every other language in South Africa, they don’t mind accents, they don’t mind how you say something. But in Afrikaans news and everything, nobody *breis* [articulates Afrikaans with a characteristic uvular ‘r’ pronunciation], nobody speaks aNamaqualand language, nobody does this, (nobody does that)...I’m talking about *proper* commercial radio stations and television in Afrikaans....And that is where we lose millions of kids, because suddenly they think: ‘This is how it’s supposed to sound, I’m not sounding like that, so I’m not Afrikaans....’\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{70} Hall, 274.

\textsuperscript{71} *Hemelbesem* presents an interesting figure in the discussion of language propriety. On the one hand, he critiques the unwillingness to acknowledge the influence of *Kaaps* and its coloured adherents, to *suiwer* Afrikaans and implicitly, the development of Afrikaner culture. Regarding his track *Ko ’buistaal* [“Kitchen Dutch” or “Kitchen Language”), *Hemel* confided: “[It]...talks about how this language [*Kaaps*] ended up in Mitchells Plain and how the fences fell down and how it mixes with the whole *suiwer* idea...radios and everything are playing it, but it’s not the right faces that’s saying it...*die bediende se taal* [“the servant’s language”]...*that bediende se borsmelk* [“servant’s breastmilk”] that has been sucked out, you understand?...and somehow the taste is still there, but you can’t remember the face of where this taste comes from.” On the other hand, *Hemel* is well-known for his education and promotional work with the ATKV (*Die Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging*, an organization that historically has promoted an Afrikaner nationalist view of language and culture), as well as his 2015 musical collaboration on the song *Pampoen* [“Pumpkin”] with Steve Hofmeyr, a white Afrikaner singer that in recent years has achieved notoriety for his blatantly racist public statements and staunch nationalism. In his own words, *Hemel* is a “bridge-builder,” thus, from a trans-coding perspective, his negotiation of and participation within mainstream Afrikaans media representational platforms might be considered an “integrationist strategy.”
The suggestion of “not being Afrikaans” because of “how people speak a specific language” relates to Grant Olwage’s discussion of the instantiation, production, and conception of the voice as a timbral entity or the instantiation of a specifically classed and racialized “vocal identity.”

Examining the history of black African – specifically isiXhosa – choralism in South Africa, Olwage describes the Victorian-era pedagogical impulse to consciously shape the singing voice (and indirectly, the owner of that voice) to an archetype of aesthetic refinement. If purity of tone and articulation were associated with middle-class, white expressivity at this time, the converse of an uncultured, coarse voice, was articulated by the working classes and by racialized others. “But,” as Olwage observes, “this distinction of voices involved more than the differentiation of identities. It also [in a mutually constituting way] allowed for the pathologizing of other voices as a justification for their reform.”

Introduced to the Cape Colony in the late 1800s, this reformist undertaking known as “voice culture” was part and parcel of the colonial, ethico-social “civilizing mission.” Emphasis on movement and dance as signifiers of the “bodiliness” of black African musical practice was shifted to vocal expression. Voice culture sought not only to erase differences of timbral character, but the black African body as well. However, the coincidence of voice culture in the Cape with the gradual sedimentation of separatist thinking, halted this assimilationist project. There was no need to impose voice culture practice amongst black African communities, because ethico-social parity ran counter to the ideology of ethno-racial segregation. Olwage reasons then, that the timbral identity of the black African singing voice, largely unaffected by such musical colonialism “was never lost...never stopped sounding.”

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72 Olwage, 207.

73 Ibid., 211.
Barthes’ description of the “grain” of the voice as “the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue [emphasis added],” is important to Olwage’s argument. The Victorian bourgeois singing voice was predicated on the stylized enunciation of Received Pronunciation English diphthongal speech sounds and only a specific repertory of vowels. IsiXhosa, the mother tongue of the black African subjects in question, is noticeably absent of diphthongs and utilizes a much broader range of vowel sounds. The techniques of speech sound manipulation inherent to voice culture were largely inappropriate to the medium of isiXhosa, thus the tenacity of black African timbral identity despite the performance of Victorian musical repertoire by isiXhosa choral groups.\footnote{Olwage, 214.}

An analogy can be made between the persistence of the Kaaps accent amongst its speakers and the instantiation of timbral identity explained in my summary of Olwage’s essay. Both accent (related to pronunciation) and timbral identity (the characteristic sound of the voice) indicate the social grouping to which its speakers belong, and therefore, implicate these speakers within the system of racialized power relations inherent to South African society. While there are substantial phonological confluences between suïwer and Kaaps, I posit that speakers of Kaaps (working-class coloureds) have nevertheless resisted complete acculturation to suïwer pronunciation (affiliated with middle-class, white Afrikaner-ness), due to socio-cultural and historical factors.\footnote{\textit{In my experience, the formal suïwer accent is parodied and colloquially referred to by working-class coloureds as “rah-rah” (pronounced with a rounded alveolar rhotic /r/), connoting upper-class pretension.}} The first, is the condition of racialized separation accomplished by the Group Areas Act. Coloured quotidian practice occurred (and still occurs) at a social and geospatial remove from white Afrikaner mores. With limited exposure to suïwer there are few opportunities
to sufficiently acquire its articulation. Secondly, with *Kaaps* as the mother-tongue of the working-class coloured community, it follows that native-speakers when required through circumstance to speak *suiker* – ostensibly a new dialect – would draw on the repository of enunciation most familiar to them. Despite *Kaaps*’ lexical borrowing from the language, English, like *suiker*, can also be regarded as a second language for working-class coloureds. Thus, the characteristic accent types of Respectable South African English (SAE) would also elude this demographic. My point is that regardless of a *suiker* or Respectable SAE interview setting, dialects that imply middle-class employment contexts, the student quoted in the *Afrikaaps* documentary would be overlooked not only for his use of *Kaaps*, but also for his associated and distinctive “timbral identity.” Regardless of the speech variety employed, the learner still fundamentally “sounds like a coloured.”

For working-class coloureds of the Cape, the imbricated factors of timbral identity and linguistic stigmatization coalesce in what Nicholas Harkness refers to as the “phonosonic nexus” of the voice – the “ongoing intersection between the phonic production, shaping, and organization of sound, on the one hand, and the sonic uptake and categorization of sound in the world, on the other.” His proposal explains the relationships between literal and metaphorical understandings of “voice” and “voicing,” respectively. The first term relates to the physiological processes of sound production, framing any discussion of the voice as necessarily involving a

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simultaneous consideration of sound and the body. “Voicing” might indicate metonymic association: a national anthem as “voicing” the collective aspirations of a citizenry, for example. “These two related views,” Harkness notes, “consider voice as a ubiquitous medium of communicative interaction and channel of social contact and as the positioning of a perspective within a culturally meaningful framework of semiotic alignments.”\textsuperscript{78} From the perspective of semiotic function, voice as a phonosonic nexus, and voicing in a rhetorical sense, achieve similar aims. They are both connected to semiotic phenomena through which speakers announce and mediate socio-cultural positionality.

As to the inherent bodiliness of the voice, Harkness emphasizes not only the “anatomical dimensions of vocalization,” but also the qualia (the sensuous experience of abstract qualities) attendant to vocal expression; how the voice can be subtly manipulated through qualitative shifts, to sonically reflect the ideological expectations and categories of value ascribed by socio-cultural environments (what Harkness refers to as “qualic tuning”).\textsuperscript{79} In brief, Harkness’ ethnography describes the cultivation of a Western-style classical voice (songak) among Christian South Korean professional and semi-professional singers, where an abstract sense of vocal “cleanliness” is achieved through specific phonic manipulation. In linguistic practice, the concept of qualia emerges through the “feeling of doing,” extending this pragmatic signal of “cleanliness” to an instantiation of cultural value.\textsuperscript{80} The conscious development of the voice (regarded as a “gift from God”) indexes the singer’s deep dedication to and practice of faith.

\textsuperscript{78} Harkness, Seoul, 12.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 144.

South Korea’s adoption of Christianity is emblematic of the nation’s advancement after the Korean War “from superstition to enlightenment; from dictatorship to democracy; from suffering to grace; from sickness to health; from poverty to wealth; and [ultimately] from dirtiness to cleanliness.” A “clean singing voice” thus serves as an exemplary signifier of identity, reflecting an ethnonational project intimately linked to the Christian aesthetic of progress. It also excises from the body and mind, the “unclean” vocality typified by Korean folksong that is evocative of the county’s past suffering and hardship. The “feeling of cultivating and articulating” a songak voice instantiates personhood. While the qualia of a mature songak voice exemplifies these idealized values, the singer herself, physically embodies them.

From the theoretical standpoint of phonosonic nexus, the sound of Kaaps is instantiated by speakers who are sonically and socio-culturally attuned to its characteristic phonation. An important factor in the (in)ability to engage qualic tuning for Kaaps speakers, apart from the historic contingencies of segregation and mother-tongue affinity as I have suggested, is class status. In Harkness’ account of songak voice cultivation, singers are expected to study abroad for a period of time at Western conservatories and to perform a “homecoming recital” on their return as a precursor to professional musical life in South Korea. There is no strict correlation between Christian belief/the study of classical music on the one hand, and the sociological notion that “simply because both are ‘Western’ and therefore status-raising, modern, and instrumental in Korea for social mobility and class reproduction,” on the other. More simply, not everyone who pursues the serious study of Western art music is in it for the same reasons. However, this rite de passage is in keeping with the semiotic relationship between songak and the ideation of a

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81 Harkness, “Pragmatics,” 8.

82 Harkness, Seoul, 6.
thriving, prosperous South Korea. In contrast, social mobility amongst the working-class, *Kaaps-* speaking community is inherently limited, thus hindering the possibility of this grouping to credibly acquire qualic repertoires alternative to their quotidian experience. The accent of working-class coloureds is phonologically and unconsciously formed as a result of their socio-cultural environment and manifests regardless of the speech variety employed, or the social context explored by its actors. The articulation of speech acts characterized by this accent – the very sound of the voice – in turn, marks the socio-economic status, geospatial locus, and racial categorization of its speakers.

Applying this line of thinking to the binary opposition between *suïwer* and *Kaaps* registers of Afrikaans: The term *suïwer* translates directly as “pure.” The qualia of the *suïwer* voice articulating a dialect imagined as the exclusive ethnolect of white Afrikaners, thus relate to the Afrikaner cultural values of racial and moral “purity” (much like the exemplary “cleanliness” of the *songak* voice). Those who embody the *suïwer* voice, consequently hear *Kaaps* as “impure” or following Olwage, as “coarse.” The qualia of *Kaaps* as it sounds via the working-class coloured voice, evokes the sense of contamination and inferiority assumed to be corporealized by its speakers. What the *Afrikaaps* stage production ultimately proposes in my view, is not so much a “re-writing of the history of *suïwer,*” but a radical shift in subjectivity. The “feeling of doing” *Kaaps* is more than a resistance to racialized subjugation and displacement, but an aesthetic of resilience at attempts to prescribe the socio-historical factors from which working-class coloured selfhood is derived.
Coda

In the prolegomenon to this chapter I pointed out that for some coloured individuals, *suiwer* Afrikaans remains an index of apartheid governance and also evokes the qualitative experience of the psychic and physical violences endured by non-whites under this erstwhile system. I proposed that the communal remembrance of the injuries sustained under apartheid were revisited in the present through the unsanctioned use of *Kaaps* by non-native white speakers, and that compensatory action for these transgressions has not yet taken place. In a candid interview at the MC’s home, Emile YX? discussed the consequences of leaving these frustrations, these qualia of pain, unaddressed:

We never had our (own) ‘76 uprising to claim our version, *original* version of the language, so we constantly buying in (to the notion of white Afrikaner supremacy)....If you’re like: ‘No, fuck youse, this is our language,’ they like: ‘Woah!’ [imitates sound of brakes screeching]. We not gonna have that conversation, and we have the money to stop you having that conversation’....So I almost feel like that ‘76 (idea) and that anger is still funneled to each other....Unless you’re able to vent, you can’t heal...and I don’t think that we’ve vented....So all that anger gets mulled over amongst each other...because we can’t reach [white people], they in this ivory tower...we can’t get them to feel sorry....And they won’t even acknowledge us: when you walk and you greet they don’t fucking look you in the eye...so that anger just gets spilled over in our communities....

The Soweto Uprising of June 16, 1976 is widely regarded as an epochal moment in the anti-apartheid struggle, both galvanizing international opposition to the authoritarian system, and also bolstering student and youth support of resistive efforts spearheaded by the African National Congress (ANC). The event itself was the culmination of black African students’ peaceful protest of the decision to implement *suiwer* Afrikaans as the exclusive medium of instruction for mathematics and social studies (The 1974 Afrikaans Medium Decree). The brutal retaliation of state police – firing on unarmed schoolchildren with live ordnance – was immortalized in Sam Nkima’s iconic photograph of a wounded Hector Pieterson being carried to safety by fellow student Mbuyisa Makhubo. Emile’s commentary speaks at once to the omission of coloured
contributions from conventional narratives of the anti-apartheid struggle; the imposition of white Afrikaner pedagogical as well as socio-cultural mores; and finally, a refusal in the contemporary moment by Afrikaners especially, to “feel sorry,” to acknowledge the physical presence of those impacted by lasting structural racisms.

Following Olwage and Harkness’ formulations, a discussion of the voice is inseparable from the body. The inability to see the coloured body as more than a repository of phenotypical signs denoting negative ethico-social attributes (perpetuated by artists like Jack Parow and Ninja) is mitigated by the voicing of Kaaps, both in terms of its phonic expression, and the instantiation of personhood through which the qualia of the voice emerge. The characteristic timbral character through which Kaaps is announced, and the bodiliness of the Kaaps voice, encourage an alternative way of seeing the body through listening.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

My study examines the lasting impact of apartheid rule on the working-class coloured community of greater Cape Town’s attempts at self-identification, and how the city’s hiphop practitioners in particular, negotiate these socio-political impositions via musical/sonic and phonic expression.

Although separatist ideology had taken root in South Africa long before the white Afrikaner Nationalist party came to power in 1948, the most significant of apartheid’s regulations were introduced in 1950 by way of the Population Registration Act, and the Group Areas Act. The first, codified racial categorization; the second, delimited individual mobility based on racialized, and ultimately, socio-cultural determinants. Restrictive legislation alone was not sufficient to maintain the framework of apartheid social organization. Attitudes of dominance and subordination, authority and deference, were subsumed within a repertoire of “permitted” social behaviors, providing “the script and the interpretive grid within which individual action – and anxiety – was situated.” It is under these conditions that racialized stereotypes then took hold in the South African imagination, imputing a general “flatness of public perception” when regarding racialized Others.

The insistence during apartheid on visually apperceived, phenotypical deviation from whiteness, extended to assumptions of how the behaviors of non-whites diverged from those of whites. Through “the racialized gaze,” ideas of ethical, social, and cultural difference were

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1 Thomas Blom Hansen, Melancholia of Freedom (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001), 7.
mobilized as additional indices of racialized difference. I submit that “the look as predicated by
the racialized mind’s eye,”\(^2\) to paraphrase Zimitri Erasmus, endures in the post-1994 moment.
As a result, negative behavioral tropes written onto and read off the body have become
normalized through their casual repetition in contemporary South African visual and digital
media forms.

Another important signifier of racialized difference under apartheid was language
facility. Culturally entrenched language chauvinism prioritized “standard,” *suiwer* [“pure”] Afrikaans over vernacular Afrikaans known as *Afrikaaps*, or simply *Kaaps* [“of the Cape”]. The former speech variety was associated with Afrikaner Nationalist rule and white Afrikaners; the latter was associated exclusively with coloureds. Linguistic ideology imagined *Kaaps* as an inferior dialect derived from *suiwer*, in keeping with the scientific racist impulse that coloureds as a social grouping were “derived” from whiteness as products of miscegenation between settler colonial Dutch and black African indigenes. (This “bi-racial” status is also an enduring assumption of “colouredness”).

I propose that communication in *Kaaps* is also an expectation of coloured behavior. If media depictions reinforce mainstream, white anticipations and anxieties of coloured hyper-sexualization, criminality, and substance abuse, these stereotypes are overwhelmingly shown to be enacted by their coloured perpetrators in *Kaaps*. Drawing on Jennifer Lynn Stoever’s dual proposal of the “sonic color line” and “the listening ear” that explain how sounds are interpreted

as racially coded, I submit that as much as tropes are “written onto and read off the body,” they are also heard as emanating from the racialized body.

With the idea of intrinsic racial classification so ingrained in the South African psyche, such tropes preclude contemporary disavowal of the category “coloured” as merely a constructed fiction of apartheid ideology, or even the potential for those historically racialized as “coloured” to credibly self-identify as “Black” (both of which are ideological and self-making positions/aspirations disclosed by informants in my study). The continued propagation of unfavorable representational forms not only relies on socially ascribed divisions for its efficacy, but also evinces a nostalgic fixity of character at a time in the country’s history when formerly strict boundaries of socio-cultural propriety have been relaxed. These are the historical and socio-political circumstances that shape the lived experiences of coloureds particularly in the Western Cape, and also the “common sense” imaginations of coloured behavior that hiphop artists from the region actively strive to disrupt.

In conversation with Emile Jansen aka. Emile YX?, the MC remarked:

...they grand [“enjoy”] that, as long as you[‘re] the klopopse [“coons/minstrels”], that funny guy...you know, we dress up like them, we dance like them, we make fun of them in a very underhanded way...[but] never in their face....

Emile maintained that white South African audiences loved when coloureds “put on a show,” especially if familiar tropes of minstrelsy and buffoonery linked to the annual Cape Town Coon Carnival were portrayed. The use of hidden transcripts in coloured expressive and cultural practice was nothing new, he wished instead for the true meanings to consistently be revealed

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more publicly, more explicitly. I contend that this is both the intention, and consequence of Cape-based hiphop, and demonstrate the validity of this proposal by adapting Stuart Hall’s theory of “trans-coding,” a tri-partite approach employed by marginalized communities to challenge the pervasively negative contexts in which they are held by dominant social groups.

As I interpret Hall’s work, trans-coding involves: 1) a “substitution” of negative tropes for positive ones; and 2) a “reversal,” re-interpreting negative stereotypes as positive. Both substitution and reversal mitigate the ideological effect of negative tropes by suggesting alternative ways of imagining colouredness. But neither transcoding method completely eliminates the deleterious impact of these stereotypes. According to Hall, the third trans-coding modality, which I have named “provocation,” operates in the same manner as fetishization and similarly relies on the raced body as its focus. Fetishization engages both an attraction to the taboo, objectified body, and a disavowal of that desire. Provocation allows for an acknowledgement, a reckoning of the positive and negative ways of being, inhabited by the body. This knowing ambivalence calls into question the inherent power of stereotypes to shape how the racialized body is fundamentally evaluated.

Most scholarly accounts of Cape-based hiphop describe how, by articulating the concerns of their communities and intentionally rapping in Kaaps, coloured MCs assert endogenous cultural practices while simultaneously expanding the long-held and myopic imaginaries of these practices. Sociolinguist Quentin Williams observes that academic interrogations of South African hiphop have “traditionally focused on narratives of race, resistance, and counter-hegemonic agency in the context of apartheid and the early days of postapartheid.”

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Adam Haupt, Williams notes further, that “Cape Town became the locality where the struggle against Whiteness and linguistic chauvinism took root, as Hip Hop youth revisited what it meant to be ‘Coloured’….”\(^5\) In other words, studies have mostly shown how coloured hiphop artists subvert prevailing negative impressions of Kaaps itself, through the equally subversive medium of hiphop self-expression. In my work I demonstrate that transcoding is primarily and most successfully achieved through a reconsideration of the coloured voice as it is articulated via Kaaps. It is the sound of the prototypical working-class coloured voice – which listeners conventionally expect to hear produced by the coloured body, and moreover, conventionally expect to be declared in the speech variety of Kaaps – that is chiefly mobilized as a resistive device through transcoding.

Where the raced body is ousted from its spatio-temporal locus (as in Chapter Two), and the raced voice is dislodged from its corporeal origin (Chapters Three, and Four), provocation (re-)locates the voice in the body, and the body in the voice. I suggest that the working-class coloured voice be considered in its capacity as a “phonosonic nexus” – announcing the physiological production of a characteristic timbral identity, in a manner that corresponds to and affirms specific cultural frames of meaning. This move instantiates and re-inscribes the link between the voice “as a practical channel mediating the social world,”\(^6\) and the disregarded racialized body. The emergent positive qualia of the Kaaps voice are not only embodied by its speakers, but metonymically assert ownership once more of the physical and aesthetic domains


from which coloureds had been displaced, offering a means of definitively *hearing* the coloured body.
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