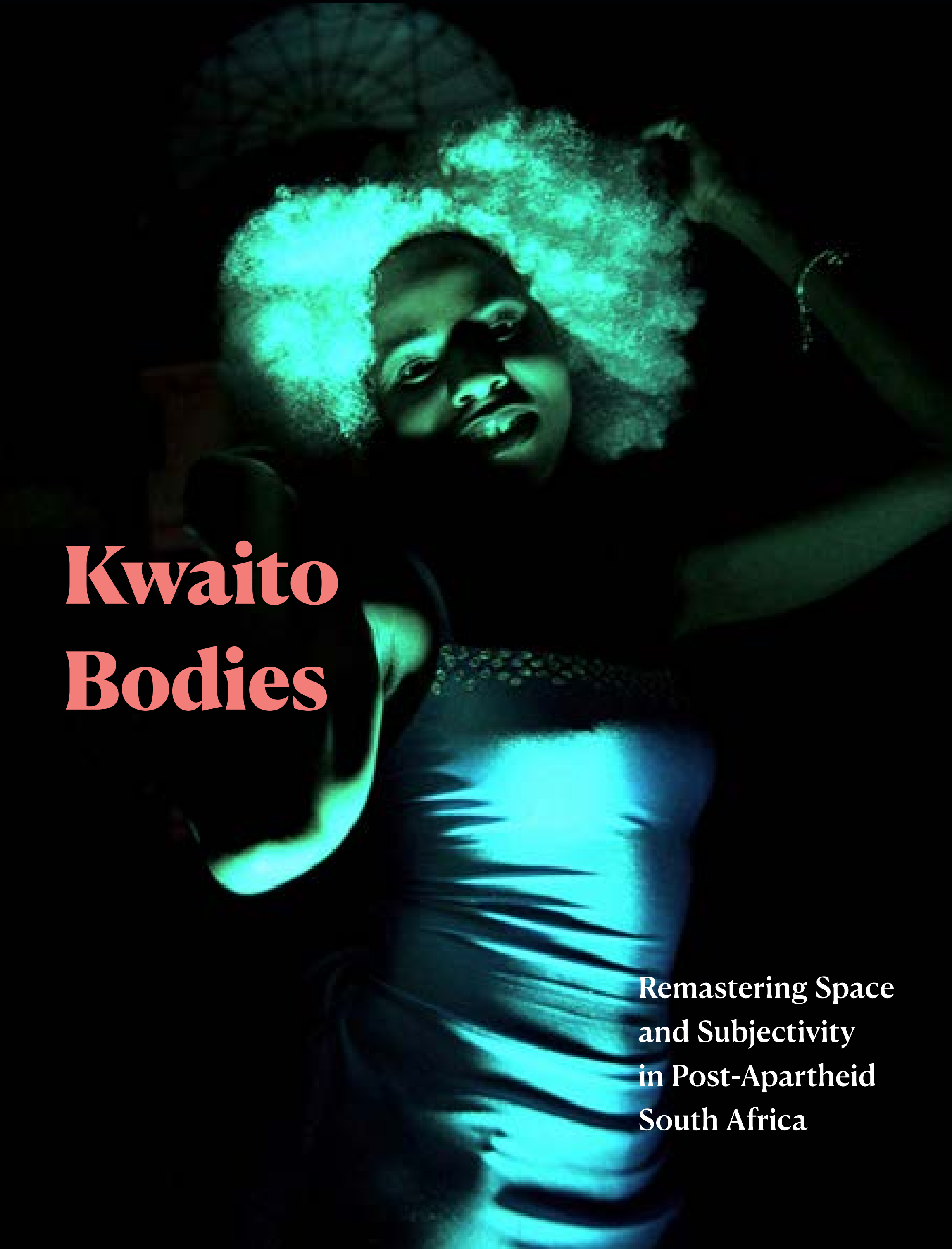
Xavier Livermon



Kwaito Bodies

Remastering Space and Subjectivity in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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BUY

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To my dad, Eugene Robertson

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Introduction

Waar Was Jy?

YEOVILLE CIRCA 1996

Yeoville is a neighborhood that sings to the heart. From the moment of my first sojourn in Johannesburg, I found myself drawn to the neighborhood's vibrant, resonant streets. Beyond the front door of my student guest house right off of Raleigh/Rockey Street, I began to explore the neighborhood with gusto. I found a city so cosmopolitan, so alive: the Congolese barbers who gave the best haircuts, the café that served the fluffiest pastry, the bar with the best—and cheapest—drinks, the clubs with the most eclectic mixes. So much seemed possible at night in Yeoville; I wanted to be a part of that possibility.

Twenty years later, those nighttime memories bring a sly smile to my face. I remember hearing the 1996 Skeem hit "Waar Was Jy?" (Where were you?) for the first time in a taxi from Johannesburg's main train station as I made my way back from Maseru to Yeoville. The unmistakable thumping of the music, that familiar four-on-the-floor house signature, the electric keyboard melody, and the voice of Ismael, the region's ruling new voice in the heady, rhythm-driven soundscape that is *kwaito* dance music, soaring. Ismael seemed to taunt us listeners with his question: *Where were you?*

> Waar was jy?
> Where were you?
> One o le kae?
> Bowukuphi? (Skeem 2013)

Songs like Skeem's breakthrough hit provide resounding demonstrations of kwaito's play with various sound "traditions"—in this case, the pop and bubblegum era of 1980s township disco—to root itself in a long genealogy of South African music. Now Skeem and early kwaito itself, particularly songs like "Waar Was Jy?," are undoubtedly considered part of those traditions. Listening to the song in our present moment reveals how music shifts and establishes new orders of time. The song, produced in the 1990s, implored its listeners to remember where they stood in the 1980s; today it has become self-referential: "Where were you when you first heard this song?" It has become the index for the very question it asks its listeners to consider, over and again, in its four-minute window of time.

Yeoville by night is an analytical entrance into the kinds of possibilities I witnessed in the bodies of Black post-apartheid youth when approached through kwaito as a time-folding cultural form. These performance practices, set in time to kwaito's beats, are critical to this study. A night out in the Yeoville of the 1990s was an ephemeral experience, the conditions for which will not be duplicated again. Dressed and ready to see what the night had in store, I did what many young Black South Africans living in the newly integrating inner city of Johannesburg did at the time. My crew of young cosmopolitans and I wandered from club to club, absorbing the vibrancy of the streets among other young Black people who may have lived in the townships, or may have been university students, or may have been young professionals seeking new thrills in the otherwise familiar landscape of urban nightlife. We were all looking for opportunities to perform new freedoms.

If any one spot in the social landscape was representative of this early burgeoning Black youth culture and its pulsing nightlife, it was House of Tandoor. Located in the heart of Yeoville, this two-story nightspot was the place to see and be seen. It was decorated in what can only be described as Rastafarian Afro-bohemian chic: a prominent red-yellow-green paint palette complemented by various portraits of Bob Marley covering the walls. Downstairs, kwaito roared from the speakers and the appreciative crowd swayed, grinded, and pulsed to the latest and a few classic kwaito hits. But the fun of House of

Tandoor was always in the blend of the upstairs and downstairs parties. Upstairs was an open patio, rooftop-like deck where one could watch the crowds on Rockey Street stream by while dancing to the latest dancehall, hip-hop, and R&B hits.

While radio (first Bop, then Metro FM, and later YFM) may have been the first medium for the latest sounds that would make up the mélange of post-apartheid Black urban culture, nightspots like Tandoor were often spots to perform and experience these songs. The mix of people roaming from place to place in the area ensured a particular kind of openness to the new, the different, and the experimental. I remember the shock and thrill of seeing openly queer African men and women occupying public space on Rockey Street, a site that seemed somehow open to performances of queer sexuality without being marked as queer space. As I explored my own budding sexuality—enjoying the prospect of flirtatious eye contact and lingering stares, releasing into a hand placed flirtatiously on my shoulder or arms gripped tight around my waist as a new partner and I danced in unison—I embraced a sense of possibility that seemed unimaginable in the spaces I had left behind. In those more familiar corners of my world, queer space was racialized as white and heavily segregated from nonqueer space. This book considers how kwaito artists, and their performances, fans, and representations, illuminate variegated discourses and paradigms of freedom for Black South Africans in a post-apartheid world.

Based on the richness of a long-term, immersive ethnographic engagement, I argue that kwaito—an important site for investigating the politics of contemporary South Africa—is an alternative technology that mediates the Black body. To be clear, my investigation of kwaito is not meant to argue that popular cultural formations overturn the neoliberal contract of post-apartheid South Africa. Nor do I suggest that kwaito's constellation of performances necessarily operate in a one-to-one relationship with liberatory political economic frameworks. Instead, kwaito is important because of the inherent limits of national recognition for Black South Africans, incorporated into the "new" South Africa through a political compromise that fosters and perpetuates continued classed, gendered, sexualized, and racialized inequality. As a cultural formation, kwaito is a means through which young Black South Africans negotiate the limits of national recognition.

Kwaito serves as an alternative site that recognizes the political dimension of age practices (particularly the performative practices) of Black South African youth, even when its work is not meant to directly challenge global capital or the post-apartheid state. It is important to revisit and reevaluate the importance of kwaito's popular performance practices, and the power of Black urban post-apartheid popular cultures as a whole. While, to the outside listener, kwaito may seem apolitical, unengaged, reactionary, or even regressive, the music and its culture stand as an important site of politics whose outcomes are far from guaranteed and fail to easily fit into a resistance/co-optation binary. For Black urban youth, the cultural practices that arise in kwaito are as critical a site for political practice as any political and economic institution or action.

This study is the culmination of more than fifteen years of engaged, carefully contextualized ethnographic research into kwaito performance. As an African American, I immediately recognized that there is much about kwaito that is familiar. The sounds, fashion, and dances are closely related to a combination of contemporary, globally circulating Black musical styles and performances. Yet there is also something distinct about kwaito; it is not simply an imitation of international Black musical and cultural styles. My first engagements with kwaito were primarily as a fan. In the mid-1990s, I took numerous trips to Johannesburg to participate in the fledgling kwaito club scene. I also attended house parties and concerts and collected a substantial archive of early kwaito cassettes. Early on, I could not comprehend the lyrics, but my body understood the music. I danced to it in clubs and at house parties. I cheered for it at live concerts. There is something indescribable in its pace, and the atmosphere created in kwaito party spaces freed me from the strictures of masculinist posturing that had previously dominated my approach to popular and social dance. As I danced I performed a kind of freedom in concert with the other kwaito bodies. Kwaito's rhythms, even and seductively slow, produced body movements in me that were lithe and sensual, with emphasis on the sway of the disarticulated upper body and the pelvis. Simultaneously, kwaito songs seemed to require movements in my lower body that at times appeared to outpace the music itself. This combination of sensuality and freneticism produced in me a joy while listening and dancing, giving me permission to perform my body differently, to deliberately release toughness and "cool" and instead celebrate abandonment and freedom from any cares. In this space I and the other kwaito bodies present could inhabit our subjectivities differently. These early experiences taught me that kwaito is more than simply music. Like other Black musical practices, kwaito is a culture that facilitates the creation of something excitingly new and politically disruptive for post-apartheid South Africa. Together, these performances form the lens through which I analyze kwaito.

Shortly after the first democratic elections in South Africa, media and cultural critics began to recognize the controversial impact of kwaito music. Kwaito arrived on the scene just as South Africa was undergoing its transformation from apartheid. Within the nation-state, sociocultural developments—

which in the past might have been confined to township space—were, like Black people themselves, actively reshaping the South African landscape. And yet kwaito has become more than just a musical genre created by young Black South Africans in the wake of apartheid's collapse. These cultural practices are a fertile site for contemporary South African youth agency; their strength becomes an index by which we can better understand Black life. At the same time, kwaito has become symbolic of the crisis, both real and imagined, of youth culture in post-apartheid South Africa. Issues of violence, sexuality, urbanization, and political economy (especially the rise of neoliberal socioeconomic policies) are just some of the crucial realities of concern for post-apartheid youth. Young Black South Africans use kwaito to negotiate the future of their nation. The tensions in public discourses surrounding kwaito evidence the political nature of the culture as it resists and reimagines the post-apartheid state, particularly in relation to the shifting class, racial, ethnic, and gendered politics of various Black communities. For these youth—as well as a host of associated communities who create and consume the culture—kwaito serves as a site of cultural politics that brokers the constant interrogation and remaking of Black subjectivities.

Both for contemporary African Diaspora communities and for the world at large, South Africa has emerged as a nation full of significant symbolic capital. The racial inequalities of the apartheid era marked South Africa as the last vestige of a system of racial colonialism remarkably similar to slavery for global Black communities. Apartheid South Africa served as a stark reminder that people of African descent everywhere were not truly free. The work of South Africans to heal the wounds of its racial past and to reconcile its stark economic inequalities is of interest to global Black communities as they seek to reconcile less stark, if not less troubling, forms of inequality in their own countries.

Kwaito practitioners, fans and artists alike, often describe kwaito as a soundtrack to freedom both personal and political. As Ishmael (of Skeem) remarked, "Kwaito was an expression of liberation. It was a freedom of some sort. People were becoming more and more themselves. It was a take it or leave it attitude. This is the way I am, the way—ngingakhona" (Nkosi 2014). I asked one of my close friends, Tumelo, to elaborate on what his hopes and dreams were in the 1990s. What did the end of apartheid mean for him? "For me, I just want to have a nice life. I want to give my family a nice life. I want my own house. I want my mom's house to be comfortable. I want my younger brother and sister to have opportunities I did not. I want to live in a nicer place. I don't want to struggle financially" (personal communication, 2004). I looked around at his current circumstances—he lived at home with his parents in a working-class area of his township, there were clearly things around the home that needed fixing, and he struggled with un(der)employment. While there was a level of security in the home (there was always food, electricity, water), it was clear that ten years into South Africa's transition, these hopes and dreams of his remained stalled. I asked him if freedom was only or primarily about improvements in material comfort. "No," he remarked. "I am also a gay man. I am also Black. I am also Tswana. So being able to be openly gay, especially here in the township, is an important part of my ability to be free." Here, Tumelo indexes two critical themes to the way Black youth would describe freedom: through questions of remaking space and subjectivity.

In order to understand the cultural labor that kwaito participates in, it is necessary to sketch some specific aspects of South Africa's apartheid and post-apartheid history. During the 1980s, political and economic tensions were at an all-time high in South Africa. The reinvigoration of the anti-apartheid movement from within the country (oftentimes forgotten in the shadow of the resistance from outside) made the costs of perpetuating apartheid increasingly untenable to the National Party government. A South African friend, exiled to Southern California in the wake of the upheaval, framed the South African freedom struggle through the inevitability of violence: "We really did not believe that political negotiation would bring an end to apartheid; we all assumed that South Africa was headed towards a war, a long bloody war" (personal communication, 2006). While this study focuses on the cultural dimensions, rather than the immense historical specificity, of the negotiated compromise of South African politics, the basic premise held that political power would be shared equally (the mantra of one vote, one person), while efforts would be made to create a more equitable economic structure post-apartheid. During the near revolutionary conditions of 1992 and 1993, the African National Congress (ANC) was tasked with demobilizing urban protests in order to ensure that the negotiated settlement would proceed (Bond and Mottiar 2013).

The South African situation both resonated and clashed with those of the majority of African states that had negotiated and fought for independence in the post–World War II period. Like much of postcolonial Africa, leaders had to make efforts to encourage the entirety of the populace to buy into the idea of the new nation, and to encourage a racially, ethnically, religiously, and linguistically (to name just a few of the major societal cleavages of South Africa) diverse set of people to identify with the new South African nation. Unlike much of postcolonial Africa, however, South Africa had a relatively advanced middle-income economy that was highly integrated into the world economy.

In addition, South Africa had to negotiate the transition of this economy under the simultaneous triumph of global capitalism (symbolized by the collapse of the Soviet Union) and the rise of neoliberal economic reforms (symbolized by the numerous structural adjustment programs imposed on developing economies).

To address the idea of nation building, the ANC and the South African media adopted the notion of the "Rainbow Nation." Desmond Tutu first articulated the concept in a speech against apartheid state violence related to Cape Town city elections in 1989; it was a call to recognize what Tutu called the "Technicolor" of South Africa (Tutu 1994). Rooted in political theology, the concept spoke to the interconnectedness and diversity of South Africa's people, and the folly of the suggestion that any one group of people could singlehandedly determine South Africa's future: "Remember the rainbow in the Bible is the sign of peace. The rainbow is the sign of prosperity and justice, and we can have it [peace, prosperity, and justice] when all the people of God, the rainbow people of God, work together" (Tutu 1994, v). Tutu would elaborate on the notion of the "rainbow people of God" and coin the term "Rainbow Nation" after South Africa's first general elections. Nelson Mandela would lend the construction further credibility when he used it to describe South Africa during his first months in office. Critics of the phrase, and its adoption as a particular form of governmentality post-apartheid, emphasize the ways in which it has spiraled into a facile and apolitical celebration of multiculturalism, imposed from the top down, that rarely poses a challenge to entrenched social divisions (Habib 1997; Valji 2003).

To address the idea of economic redistribution, the ANC, along with its partners the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, pursued what it called the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The RDP was an attempt to address the fundamental socioeconomic inequalities inherited by the ANC government. Central to this strategy was the coordination of social services meant to alleviate poverty. The goals of the program were housing provision, electrification, clean drinking water access, healthcare, land redistribution, and a massive public works campaign. RDP policy documents suggest that early on, however, such a program could be sustained only by steady and increasing macroeconomic growth. Hence, the RDP is often viewed as an attempt to negotiate the tension between the need to provide greater social services outlays while entering into a global economy dominated by neoliberal orthodoxy. That this policy was abandoned in 1996 in favor of Growth Employment and Redistribution has been heavily critiqued in progressive political circles as an abandonment of the ANC's (and to a larger extent the anti-apartheid movement's) redistributive economic goals. The adoption of a more orthodox neoliberal strategy is subject to a number of interpretations, which broadly fall into two camps: the first suggests a fundamental shift toward a "pragmatic" ANC strategy to address post–Cold War global realities, and the second suggests that the ANC government capitulated to an ideologically driven economic strategy that could not help it meet its development goals. These critics feared that the policy would serve primarily to enrich the Black political and economic elite, a danger Frantz Fanon identifies as "the pitfalls of national consciousness" (1963). Perhaps the most obvious example of this pitfall is the Black Economic Empowerment scheme, which promised to diversify the complexion of capital in South Africa, but has, in fact, benefited a small elite to the detriment of more systemic economic redistribution.

In South Africa, the adoption of neoliberalism began in earnest with the late apartheid regime, where hegemonic internal struggles in the National Party gave rise to the emergence of a strong technocratic wing. This group ultimately collaborated with the interests of the English-speaking economic elite and global capital. As part of the negotiation process, the ANC dropped promises to nationalize banks, mines, and other forms of global capital; agreed to pay back $25 billion of apartheid-era inherited foreign debt; ensured the independence of the central bank; joined the General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs; and pursued an $850 million loan from the International Monetary Fund, replete with the usual conditions. As Bond and Mottiar (2013) explain, after the ANC came into power, "privatization began in earnest; financial liberalization took the form of relaxed exchange controls, and interest rates were raised to a record high. . . . [T]he ANC government granted permission to South Africa's biggest companies . . . to move their listings to London. Where corporate profits were retained in the country, they did not feed into investment in plant, equipment, and factories. Instead the financialized economy encouraged asset speculation in real estate and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange" (286).

Taken together, the critique of the "Rainbow Nation" and neoliberal macroeconomic policy speak similarly to the dissatisfaction with the incomplete nature of South Africa's political and economic transition. Scholars across traditions and trajectories (Bond 2000; Desai 2002; Hart 2002; Kunnie 2000) agree that the influence of the elite on South Africa's transition from apartheid led to the reproduction of structural inequality: the result rendered entire classes of Black South Africans disposable and lacking agency to make political change. While some material changes have unfolded in post-apartheid South Africa (despite the critique that only the color of the leaders has changed, not their values), it is clear that the process of transition has inadequately addressed the needs of the majority. Even though the South African economy has grown in size (from a GDP of $57 billion in 1985 to a forecast GDP of $510 billion in 2015), it has actually become more unequal in the post-apartheid period, with the Gini coefficient increasing from .59 in 1994 (CIA 2013; World Bank n.d.) to .65 in 2005 (CIA 2013), .67 in 2006 (World Bank n.d.), or .70 in 2008 (Institute for Justice and Reconciliation 2012), depending on which study is cited (see Harmse 2014).

Perhaps the most contentious issue, which illustrated the increasing inequality of South Africa's transition and demonstrated the ANC's fixation on neoliberal orthodoxy, was the handling of the Marikana mine workers' strike by the South African security forces. In the post-apartheid period, platinum mining (of which South Africa has nearly 90 percent of the world's known reserves) has outstripped gold and diamond mining to become the main source of mineral wealth contribution to the country's GDP. Workers based in Marikana, a platinum-rich mine belt northwest of Johannesburg, had been engaged in a tense wage strike for several days when, on August 16, 2012, South African security forces fired on them, killing thirty-four and wounding at least seventy-eight (the exact number of wounded is unknown). It stands as the single most lethal use of force by the South African Police Service against civilians since the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. Initial reports of the killings circulated by police spokespeople (and subsequently amplified by the corporate-dominated media) suggested that the massacre was a justified police action. They claimed that the miners were destabilizing the post-apartheid economy; that their strike was "illegal" given the miners' lack of support by their own union; and that the miners had attacked security forces in a drug-induced haze inspired by a traditional healer who had given them magic medicine that would ostensibly ward off bullets. The police and press recirculated representations of (rural) Black men, who make up the majority of the mine's workforce, as irrational and violent (long a trope of the apartheid regime's propaganda) as justification for this particular police action. However, under further scrutiny, the story woven by the security forces, Lonmin (the British-based owners of the mine), and high-ranking members of the South African government began to fall apart. Evidence emerged that many of the dead miners were shot in the back and at close range while fleeing. The miners, increasingly frustrated by the cozy relationship between their traditional representatives the National Union of Mineworkers, the ANC government, and mine management, made a logical decision to shift their allegiance elsewhere.

The event laid bare the legacies of elitism that haunted the new ANC government. Far from a crazed crowd charging irrationally at police, the strikers assembled peacefully until they were surrounded and corralled by state security forces. The fact emerged that careful coordination and communication between the mine owners, state police forces, and important representatives of the ANC government (including current South African president Cyril Ramaphosa) had led to the massacre. This was not an impromptu response to a fast-changing and uncertain situation. Rather, the massacre was a result of the pressure Lonmin placed on the South African government to manage worker unrest, and to ensure that profits continued unabated. Instead of acting as an impartial force or protecting the rights of workers to strike, the ANC government colluded with the forces of global capital to end the strike at all costs. The deaths of thirty-four (and the wounding of countless others) were simply a small price to pay in order to keep the status quo of corporate profits and its ancillary distribution to the new political elite intact.

Marikana paints a very grim picture of what South Africa's post-apartheid transition really means; it is symptomatic of the failures of the post-apartheid state. The constitutional promise to shed apartheid's past seems inconsequential in the face of an economy that remains shockingly unequal. Scholars should examine the possibilities inherent in the post-apartheid transition, however limited or constrained they may be by an entrenched political economic hierarchy. Popular culture is a critical space for these alternative political practices. By looking at the urban Black youth politics of post-apartheid South Africa through the lens of kwaito, we excavate the cultural formation as an important site of struggle. To do so evidences the agency of kwaito practitioners located in the culture: the power to contest and negotiate their post-apartheid conditions.

A cultural study of kwaito illuminates numerous dimensions of the political work it does for its fans and practitioners. In particular, kwaito facilitates alternative performances for Black bodies as it contests the constraints of geography, race, class, gender, and sexuality as they are produced through South Africa's post-apartheid transition. For example, Arthur Mafokate's song "Kaffir" (1995) caused controversy precisely because it trafficked in the racially derogatory term for Black South Africans. Many older Black South Africans felt the word should disappear, not be reanimated to create a more assertive Black subjectivity, one that demands, as Mafokate does in the song, that white South Africans no longer call him by the racial slur. Much of early kwaito was about an assertive (re)claiming of space, an announcement of arrival, a demand to be listened to, to not be discounted because of youth or circumstance

(Nkosi 2014). Angered by a lack of nominations at the 1995 South African Music Awards and sensing that this was a discounting of eruptive forms of youth culture, Mafokate simulated anal sex with his dancers on stage (McCloy 2006). The song itself and its irreverent performance of it by Mafokate and his women dancers serve as one example of how kwaito created the space for multiple forms of contestation. Kwaito offers a vision of what freedom will look like from the perspective of young Black South Africans; more specifically, it tells us how this freedom will be performed and what practices will sustain and nurture this freedom.

Kwaito Bodies: Remastering Space and Subjectivity in Post-Apartheid South Africa is an examination of the figure of the youthful Black body in post-apartheid South Africa's public culture, using kwaito—its representation and the sites of its consumption—as its point of focus. While kwaito serves as an organizing theme for the text, it goes beyond an analysis that frames kwaito solely as a music genre; instead, it probes kwaito as a cultural performance that is widely and sometimes contradictorily interpreted and mobilized. Three key contributions animate the text. First, *Kwaito Bodies* emphasizes new consumption practices over the (dis)continuation of struggle politics. Hence, an important contribution is the reorientation of consumption within South Africa's urban youth culture as itself a politic. The analysis hinges on these youths' sense of having the right to consume: to move through the city, to self-fashion differently, to take pleasure in being able to party, to work with the past in seemingly irreverent ways, among other interventions. A second contribution is the borrowing of theoretical and analytical thinking from African Diaspora studies for the South African context. Kwaito is a music that is as local as it is Afrodiasporic. Hence, the text brings questions as inflected in the scholarship emerging from the Caribbean, Black Britain, and the United States to bear on the contemporary South African context. Discussions of Blackness as it relates to gender and sexuality against the backdrop of colonial racism elsewhere help us recognize the ways South Africans are managing the post-apartheid legacy of entrenched heteropatriarchy and racialized inequality. The effect is to move away from the general tendency to theorize South Africa from a position of exceptionalism. Lastly, the analyses emerging from the fields of popular music studies and race/gender/sexuality studies commingle here to animate this text. Hence, *Kwaito Bodies* is the first post-apartheid study of self-fashioning and the mediation of the body and pleasure that arises from the practices of popular performance and social dance. This intersectional analysis prizes the nuanced and contradictory relationship between popular performance as an embodied practice and vectors of power mutually constituted through race, class, gender, and sexuality. In particular, I investigate the ways gender and sexuality are constituted and the multiple yet contradictory ways that Black people—including Black queers—put kwaito to work.

Remastery

To consider what these processes of freedom might entail, I borrow the verb "remaster" from musical production, yet I use it in two different senses. First, I use the verb to speak to subtle shifts in the political economy and the meaning of those subtle shifts—like the process of music remastering, the term is used here to refer to "a much more subtle approach as opposed to remixing since mastering is very limited, you can only do so much. Indeed, remixing involves manipulating separate tracks to create altered vocals and instrumentation. . . . [R]emastering involves taking an original source and cleaning up any sound imperfections, not adding new elements" (O'Toole 2009). It speaks to the racial colonial implications of the post-apartheid transition, the difference that may not be so different after all (Hall 1993). In what ways must freedom in South Africa return to the racial colonial project (the original form—the master), to a process of remaking racialized colonialism? In this sense, I speak of freedom remastered as a performative technology deployed by kwaito bodies to signify differently in a context that is not so different after all. Secondly, I use "remaster" by literally breaking it down into its component parts. What might it mean for freedom to be remastered, to have a new master, for it to signify something new within the residual context of racial colonialism? Significantly, what do these performances of freedom look like when they are remastered by kwaito bodies? At stake is an acknowledgment that the performance of freedom is always contested and that different sociopolitical interests emerge to contest its meaning and implementation in contemporary South Africa.

Is it possible to remaster freedom, to recuperate something in the way we listen for it, to perform it differently, to understand that aural innovation begs to be enacted? Or does the act of remastering reproduce the residues of colonial capitalist hierarchy, offering something that sounds like freedom but is in fact just a clearer copy of an unsatisfying original? This study considers what kinds of future playlists for South Africa have been bequeathed through kwaito and the constellation of performances it has inspired. What has kwaito enabled in the public sphere and how have contemporary South Africans extended its legacies? To reiterate, my use of remastery as an organizing metaphor relies on multiple echoes in the term's meaning. Borrowing from the practice of sound production, I first consider what it might mean to literally enhance freedom in the studio that is post-apartheid South Africa writ large. Second, what might it mean for freedom to have a new master, for the visions of freedom for South Africa to be orchestrated by different bodies? If we consider that placing freedom in the hands of young Black South Africans would also mean its remastery in some significant ways, then we recognize these definitions as symbiotic. In other words, to site freedom in kwaito bodies requires a remastering of freedom, its enhanced reformulation.

While kwaito bodies often insisted that their goal was not political, it is clear that their performances enacted a new political vocabulary: one that was often at odds with various dominant post-apartheid political vocabularies. Writing about the Kenyan postcolony, Keguro Macharia (2016) suggests that what the nation needs is the development and nurturing of alternative political vernaculars. For Macharia, political vernaculars "announce a conversation about politics. They are words and phrases that assemble something experienced as the political and gather different groups around something marked as political. . . . [T]hey create possibilities for different ways of coming together . . . and they also impede how we form ourselves as we-formations, across the past present, the future." Frustrated by the delimited vision of political vernaculars, Macharia calls for new imaginations of freedom and love grounded in practice for contemporary Kenya. Most importantly for him, Kenya needs to develop "political vernaculars untethered to state imaginaries."

Most compelling in Macharia's essay is his call for an *ethics* of freedom and love *grounded in practice* that looks beyond the state as a monopolizing interlocutor. One of the limitations of post-apartheid South Africa has been the substitution of the white heteropatriarchy–led apartheid state with the Black heteropatriarchy–led post-apartheid state. A further limitation has been a political vernacular that cites agency in the heteropatriarchal ruling elite, while constructing citizens of South Africa as little more than recipients of state beneficence. Here, political vernaculars are chained to the state. But what might it mean to tether a post-apartheid political vernacular to kwaito bodies? How might we heed Macharia's call to consider alternative political vernaculars situated in cultural formations, embedded in embodied practices, and committed to an ethic of freedom?

The concept of remastering allows me to imagine the alternative political vernacular that Macharia calls for. I combine the music technological concept of mastering (used as an idea of enhancement) with the Afrodiasporic understanding of mastering (used as the hierarchal relationship of colonialism). In mastering an art (mastery as skills or craft)—here performing on the dance floor and sartorially—kwaito artists and fans remaster (as in rework) heteronormative ideals in the kwaito world. In doing so, kwaito bodies open up the potential to subvert the master-servant hierarchies, the violent history of which produce contemporary South Africa.

Much of what is being remastered through kwaito bodies are ideals of subjectivity and space with perhaps a hope for shifts in materiality. S'bu Nxumalo (known professionally as "the General"), YFM's first music manager and founding editor of *Y Magazine*, suggests that the material hopes of kwaito bodies were misguided: "We didn't understand it [freedom]. We equated this new struggle to bling but we didn't ask why. Why the bling? Why the gold? What does it mean?" (Nkosi 2014). However, kwaito bodies did understand that freedom was at least partially rooted in materiality. The terms of that materiality were decidedly not disruptive to the functioning of capital, but Black youths' demand for material comfort through the existing capitalist system revealed an awareness of economic inequality and a desire to shift that inequality in some way. Hence, they hoped, perhaps in hindsight naively, to remaster the signs and symbols of wealth to work for kwaito bodies. Perhaps more importantly, kwaito was a space for remastering subjectivity. When asked to describe what kwaito meant to Black South African youth, Zola, a top-selling kwaito artist, had this to say: "kwaito for me defines something different. For one, we were trying to figure out who we are and where do we fit in this role of the democratic South Africa as young people" (NPR 2006). Hence, kwaito is a space to remaster forms of subjectivity for Black youth. This study is concerned with the implications of remastery for Black queer youth, but kwaito created possibilities for remastering a number of Black subjectivities related to class, ethnicity, race, nation, gender, and sexuality. Lastly, kwaito is a cultural formation that serves the processes of remastering space. As Nxumalo states, "Kwaito [is a] rebel voice, man. And it's not so much about what you're saying, it's the doing. It's about freeing up spaces" (Nkosi 2014). This study is invested in the doing—the performative as a way to consider how kwaito has been critically important in remastering space, in this case, the club, the neighborhood, the airwaves, in order to create freedom for Black youth.

Kwaito in the Scholarly Imaginary

This book makes three explicit contributions to the scholarship on kwaito. These include (1) a redefining of the concept of politics in kwaito and Black popular culture; (2) a retheorization of the diaspora paradigm as an epistemic practice for understanding kwaito's ontology; and (3) an introduction to the theory of "kwaito bodies" as a concept that goes beyond racialized and gendered subjectivities to elucidate how the bodies of kwaito performers and consumers are sites of subversion, visuality, and sensuality that frame the performative notion of being a Black youth. While journalistic accounts of kwaito emerged in the mid-1990s, scholarly work on kwaito did not begin to appear until the early 2000s. Significantly, early work on kwaito often engaged either implicitly or explicitly the longer genealogy of scholarly work in South Africa that focused on popular music, (Black) youth studies, urbanization, and political studies. For the purposes of my examination, it is useful to identity three themes that emerged in much of this work as a way to recognize both the present study's debts to this earlier work and its critical points of departure. Each of these points concerns the need to identify the political dimensions of kwaito as a cultural practice.

First, much of the early work on kwaito identified, explained, and critiqued the ways kwaito culture embraced consumer culture (L. Allen 2004; Bosch 2006; Coplan 2005; Peterson 2003; Pietilä 2013; Santos 2013; Steingo 2005, 2007; Stephens 2000; Swartz 2008). To the extent that kwaito could be linked to eager consumerism, the literature dismissed the musical form and its adherents as lacking the critical consciousness needed to address the challenges of post-apartheid South Africa. They evaluated the politics of kwaito as either nonexistent or retrograde, claiming that kwaito failed to enact the resistance to (post-)apartheid politics that shaped earlier popular musical cultures. Furthermore, they expressed an implicit, if not outright explicit, panic, convinced that the music trafficked in a kind of capitalist consumption that reinforced rather than challenged the neoliberal state, and revealed a seeming false consciousness among Black youth. Through this lens, kwaito closely mirrored the state's shift to neoliberalism and was political only in its drive to reproduce these relations of inequality (Steingo 2007). To the first generation of kwaito scholars, much of the flamboyant materialism of kwaito represented a form of "bootstrap capitalism" (Peterson 2003, 210) as well as the "internalization of late capitalism and neoliberalism, the disappearance of the political (in the conventional sense) and the colonization of people's consciousness" (Steingo 2007, 33).

Although many of these arguments provide important nuance for some of the larger analyses of neoliberalism, capitalism, and consumption—especially in relation to Black youth cultures—many of these critiques are nevertheless premised on a desire for a more easily recognizable social consciousness and popular progressive politics in Black youth-driven popular cultures. While lamenting the presence of the market in kwaito, other scholars (Coplan 2005; Peterson 2003; Swartz 2008) located redemptive politics in the very textures of capitalist consumption. As Bhekizizwe Peterson suggests, "For one the pre-occupation with consumption can be interpreted as an acceptance of the larger societal ethos that informs many South Africans of different backgrounds and ages. Alternatively, even in its most nihilistic forms, the celebration of consumption in Black youth may attest to their courage and commitment not to give in to the conditions of poverty and strife found in the townships" (2003, 210). Much of this scholarship worked against the tendency to read consumption as social deviance or acquiescence, even at its "nihilistic" extremes, instead championing Black youths' refusal to be reduced to conditions of poverty. The key to much of this work was the "language of aspiration" (Nuttall 2004, 439) that argued that materialism and consumption in kwaito should be read as a reclamation project (Coplan 2005; Swartz 2008). Black youth were reclaiming the spoils of apartheid for themselves even if such displays were politically "diluted" (Swartz 2008, 25) and "self-aggrandizing" (Coplan 2005, 18).

More recent work (Livermon 2015; Pietilä 2013; Santos 2013; Steingo 2016) has approached consumptive practices in kwaito with a marked departure from the earlier moralist framework. Central to these studies is the idea that consumption in and of itself is not deleterious behavior requiring reprimand. Drawing from Manthia Diawara (1998), Pietilä (2013) argues that rather than representing simply another ill of "lost" post-apartheid Black youth, the kwaito market is a key site of struggle among today's Black youth for liberation and advancement. Importantly, she suggests that such forms of consumption in relation to kwaito share corollaries not only with contemporaneous Afrodiasporic popular cultures but also with historical South African musical forms. My own examination of consumptive practices and politics in kwaito draws on Diawara's (1998) and Pietilä's (2013) insights to suggest that market participation is key for Black people precisely because such unfettered participation was denied in the African colonial and South African apartheid context. Similarly, my position owes a debt to the theoretical insights of queer geographer Natalie Oswin (2005), who argues that "commodification is therefore neither above politics nor a signification of their end. It is rather a site in which the political is played out, and in a more complex fashion than the supposition of a resistance/capitulation binary permits us to understand" (583). Consumption is configured not only from outside this restrictive resistance/capitulation binary but also from outside of the moralizing conceptual binary that Oswin names castigation/romanticization. In turn, consumption, materialism, and commodification are approached not as processes to overcome but instead as a "productive social force" (583).

While early scholarship on the growth of kwaito culture is very concerned with the intimate dynamic between the local and global, diverse scholarship has examined how shifting global political economies and available new technologies allowed kwaito to emerge at the precise moment of South Africa's political transition (L. Allen 2004; Bosch 2006; Coplan 2005; Hansen 2006; Magubane 2003; Mhlambi 2004; Niaah 2008, 2009; Peterson 2003; Pietilä 2013; Santos 2013; Steingo 2008b, 2016; Stephens 2000). This scholarship is premised on revealing the multiple global dialogues of Black South African youth and evidencing the significance of these global dialogues within local contexts. Much of this early work presents itself as vindication for kwaito, arguing implicitly or explicitly for the "South Africanness" of the musical form and its connection with South Africa's polyvalent pasts. The specter of cultural imperialism, particularly the dominant American strain, is thus key in these debates. Whereas the discussion of the general political import of kwaito often straddles the resistance/co-optation binary, just as pressing for this scholarship is another key binary in the local-global discursive debate: authenticity versus imitation. To the extent that kwaito could be linked to the local, it represented a form of creative resistance to the forces of globalization, and thus was worthy of being admitted to the lexicon of South African popular music. As Thokozani Mhlambi (2004) asks, "Can kwaito—a genre that is largely influenced by certain kinds of music from the United States of America—be considered a distinctly South African musical genre, or is it just part of a mass expansion of a world youth music genre, cloaked in South African forms? Can kwaito be deemed an authentic South African phenomenon?" (116). Most of these studies take for granted that kwaito emerges as a result of globalization.

A subset of these studies, however, argues for the specificity of the type of "global imaginations" accessed and produced through kwaito (Erlmann 1999; Steingo 2016). These scholars do not deny the import of globalization to the rise of kwaito, but they suggest that the globalization of Black youth cultures and South African popular music occurs through processes of diasporic identification (Hansen 2006; Magubane 2003; Niaah 2008, 2009; Pietilä 2013; Santos 2013). In making these claims, they are arguing for different ways to conceptualize the forms of global exchange occurring in Black South African youth cultures more generally, and within kwaito specifically. Thomas Blom Hansen (2006) uses diaspora theory to suggest that kwaito, particularly among Indian South Africans in Durban, becomes a way to assert an Afro-Indian identity. He argues that kwaito reappropriates the Afrodiasporic sounds and styles that had once been removed from its lived contexts and transformed into a desirable global cultural commodity. Tuulukki Pietilä (2013) discusses the historical and contemporary politics of diasporic exchange inherent in kwaito, while Sonjah Stanley Niaah (2008, 2009) emphasizes how these common cultural genealogies, in particular between Jamaican dancehall and kwaito, reveal shared transnational space rooted in the histories and politics of the African Diaspora. Engaging diaspora theory and its importance to the analysis of kwaito rests on these authors' insights. Different strains of globalization take root through multiplicity across the landscape of the African Diaspora. As Zine Magubane states, "The fact that many of the aesthetic practices the purists decry as 'Western' are in fact African American [and more generally Afrodiasporic] in origin" has seldom been considered for the complexity this adds to analyses of popular culture focused on authenticity, cultural imperialism, and purity (2003, 298). Afrodiasporic connections are approached through notions of shared genealogies, political fates, and identifications that create contemporaneous space. In this configuration, Africa is not figured as a static site of origin from which the diaspora delineates and reconfigures Africanness, but as a place of continuous circulation, mobility, and re-making. As Richard Iton (2008) argues, "This approach to diaspora compels us to resist conceptual templates and metaphors that subsidize thinking in terms of seeds and stems, roots and routes, origins and elsewhere, and that promote the problematic reification and detemporalization of 'Africa'" (200). Iton's interpretation of diaspora as "anaformative," resisting "hierarchy, hegemony, and administration" and producing "an alternative culture of location and identification to the state, [along with] dissident maps and geographies" is central to my approach in this study (200).

A final theme that emerges in early kwaito scholarship is that of gender and sexuality within the music's culture (Blose 2012; Coplan 2005; Impey 2001; Mhlambi 2004; Peterson 2003; Ratele 2003; Stephens 2000). Words such as "violent," "misogynistic," and "lewd" often frame the discussion of gender and sexuality in kwaito. Much like the discussion of consumption, gender is often treated in a totalizing binary frame in which "gender" becomes a metonym for "women." This mode reifies and takes for granted the binary construction of "woman" and "man." In this mode, women are presented either as victims of a patriarchal, misogynistic popular culture or as complicit with their own subjection. Meanwhile, the processes of gender formation that mark normative masculinity in kwaito are often left unexamined. Queers are not mentioned at all and thus are rendered invisible as consumers and producers of kwaito.

Angela Impey (2001) provides one of the few analyses of kwaito that argues for women's use of kwaito space as a forum for feminine agency, a sonic space in which to re-imagine gender relations. Peterson (2003) provides one of the few analyses of masculine gender presentation in kwaito culture, situating the music genre as a response to structural forms of inequality that produce masculinities constantly negotiating the desire to transcend given material conditions. On numerous occasions, while conducting this research, I witnessed women and queers (and queer women) enjoying kwaito as performers and fans. Likewise, I witnessed complicated and nuanced engagements with "manhood" and "masculinity." How, then, do I account for these presences within a popular musical form and that is assumed to be violently misogynistic and, by extension, queer-phobic?

In this study, intersectional Black feminist and Black queer theory provides a more subtle and refined critique of how gender and sexuality work in kwaito and buttress two critical arguments. Drawing from various theorists—included among them Audre Lorde (1984), Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), Patricia Hill Collins (1990), Kamala Kempadoo (2004), and Dwight McBride (1998)—Black youth, who are the primary drivers of kwaito culture and thus of this text as well, are analyzed not only as racial(ized) subjects but also as subjects constituted by gender, sexuality, class, and a host of other modes of difference in a complex post-apartheid milieu. In fact, gender and sexuality often serve as modalities through which race and class are produced, and thus are thoroughly entangled in kwaito as a popular cultural practice. Second, I do not assume the covalence of kwaito and Black cisgendered male heterosexuality; rather, the constructions of various types of genders and sexualities within kwaito are probed to reveal the spaces where forms of heteronormativity are both reified and destabilized. Here, the political lies in the work Black youth do through their embodied practices of race, gender, and sexuality in the realm of (public) kwaito performance.

However, if there is any scholarly text that *Kwaito Bodies* is most in conversation with, it would be Gavin Steingo's *Kwaito's Promise: Music and the Aesthetics of Freedom in South Africa* (2016). In this critical ethnomusicological study, Steingo argues for the political import of kwaito through a reevaluation of theories of aesthetic practices. Steingo and I share an interest in probing the paradoxes that the rise of kwaito culture presents to South Africa. While I attend to the spectacular event and consider kwaito bodies via performance, Steingo attends to musical processes and backyard sociality via technology and circulation. While Steingo turns to Jacques Rancière and the idea of the platform, I turn to intersectional Black feminism and Black queer theory, Afrodiasporic Space(s), and the idea of remastery. Ultimately, both studies contemplate the relationship between aesthetics (or style and cultural practice) and politics. Steingo sets the stage by articulating the vexed quality of the relationship between consumption, political agency, and kwaito art. Distinctively, this study foregrounds African Diaspora theory, gender, and sexuality to open up kwaito as a source of Black pleasure as a politic against the backdrop of years of resistance politics.

Kwaito Cultural Formation in Context

There is much disagreement in the scholarly and popular literature about when kwaito emerged, who decided it should be named kwaito, and the meaning of the name of the genre. These debates have been covered extensively by scholars elsewhere (see especially Steingo 2008a, 2016). Yet it is important to situate the emergence of kwaito culture within the shifting sociopolitical context of post-apartheid South Africa. To understand that context, it is critical to outline the shifts that were happening both on the national scale (the increasing liberalization of late apartheid life) and in the context of shifting global political economies.

If we understand neoliberalism to be a form of sociopolitical governance that did not emerge magically with the post-apartheid regime, but instead was an important feature of late apartheid and the transition period between Nelson Mandela's release in 1990 and the first elections in 1994, then we can recognize these socioeconomic shifts as fundamental to creating the conditions in which kwaito emerges. As Steingo suggests (2008a, 2016), it might be more appropriate to see the emergence of kwaito contextually not simply as the logical extension of political liberation but also as a consequence of shifts in the global political economy and the effects those shifts ultimately had on global popular culture: "I would like to argue that, in historicizing kwaito, it is imperative to consider larger global flows and shifts. In this vein, I suggest that the triumph of neoliberalism and the end of the cold war in the late 1980s were more significant events (or series of events) in the history of kwaito than the end of apartheid" (2008a, 80). Steingo's observation requires us to situate kwaito's rise in relation to the shifts in the global economy, though it might be useful to think of the processes of global economic shifts and internal political compromise as symbiotic, making it difficult to pinpoint which series of events was more significant.

Two processes are of particular concern in considering the rise of kwaito. The first is the urbanization of late apartheid South Africa. Rural areas had long been neglected by the apartheid regime. Attempts to spur industrial development in homeland areas (in order to discourage urban migration and ideologically support the notion of separate development) were never extensive enough to absorb the surplus labor market in the rural areas. In many cases, rural people had little choice but to seek employment opportunities in urban areas; survival in rural areas, mostly impossible, was viable only at the most rudimentary levels. In addition, people fled the rural areas for a variety of other reasons, including political violence and freedom from family strictures.

Urbanization rates in South Africa began to rise exponentially in the 1980s, even before apartheid pass laws were scrapped. This was likely due to the situation of entrenched poverty in rural areas. As petty apartheid laws were relaxed or ignored from the mid-1980s on, South Africa experienced a significant increase in urban migration, exploding the populations of urban and peri-urban areas alike. It is estimated that in 1986–1987 South Africa shifted from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban population, and that the rate of urbanization reached its peak (3.3 percent) in 1993; today it is estimated to be at about 1.5 percent per year. People were likely to move to township areas either because it was affordable or because they had social connections to support their initial transition to city life. The relaxation of petty apartheid accelerated the change in the composition of many of the urban areas of post-apartheid cities (Johannesburg in particular), where inner-city areas and peri-urban suburbs became spaces for relocating Black South Africans (as well as foreign Black nationals from elsewhere on the continent). These inner-city townships became incubators for new Black South African social identities and cultural practices. Inadequate investment combined with lack of viable job opportunities in these new Black spaces created an atmosphere where creative solutions became crucial for survival and prosperity in and around cities like Johannesburg.

The second process of note in considering the rise of kwaito is the late apartheid regime's adoption of neoliberal technocratic policies, which opened up the national market in unprecedented ways to global products. State disinvestment and privatization ensued; as the public sector retrenched, the private sector was unable to provide sufficiently for the growing numbers of people arriving in urban spaces looking for work. For many Black South Africans, the irony of political freedom and increased mobility within their country meant that they were compelled to move to urban areas for work that was increasingly constrained by the twin forces of deindustrialization and neoliberalism.

The accessibility of global products opened up the increasing availability of both imported music and the equipment and technologies that would feed new movements in South African music. Musical production now required less-expensive production equipment; it became democratized (see Impey 2001; NPR 2006). Local DJs were spinning this global music in the burgeoning club scene in Johannesburg and its townships. The inner-city areas—newly available for residential or leisurely occupation—were important incubators for new cultural formations such as kwaito. Part of this was facilitated initially by the now-defunct station Radio Bop, which broadcasted from the independent homeland of Bophuthatswana using AM signals to reach Black urban communities in Gauteng. Radio Bop curated local and international hits that spoke to urban Black sensibilities and reflected new musical cultures emerging in the late apartheid era. To compete with Radio Bop, the South African Broadcasting Corporation launched Radio Metro, the first apartheid-regime music industry recognition that Black urban populations not only were an unavoidable local presence but also were keenly listening to and engaging with a variety of global musical trends. Because much of this music was imported, and hence not widely available due to prohibitive costs or lack of sufficient product, a thriving economy of bootleg cassettes emerged to satisfy consumer need (see Steingo 2016). The convergence of street entrepreneurship, hyperconsumption, proliferating club and party spaces, increasing radio mediation, and amenable government policy served to satisfy the tastes of urban Black youth in late apartheid South Africa; this convergence set the stage for the explosion of kwaito culture as an exponentially popular mid-1990s phenomenon.

The progenitors of kwaito were a mix of club DJs, promoters, dancers, and singers—who may have initially honed their skills in other genres (notably township disco and jazz)—as well as music producers and entrepreneurs looking to take advantage of this fledgling genre. In many cases, these tastemakers had been deeply involved in a series of niches within the Johannesburg nightlife scene before converging in kwaito. Early kwaito was infused with the late-1980s bootleg aesthetic; just as entrepreneurs had sold cassette mixtapes of international music on the streets, early kwaito musicians took their experimental mixes to the street corners, the warehouses, and the trunks of their cars. The transportation of Black South Africans in minibus taxis was an important form of urban entrepreneurship that began to experience tremendous growth at this time. Minibus taxis were literally a driving force behind the explosion and growth of what came to be known as kwaito. Responsible for the transportation of millions of Black South Africans throughout the country, taxi drivers became crucial cultural arbiters, mobile DJs whose music selections began to determine what was popular and cutting-edge. Lastly, governmental policy requiring more local music content on radio and television opened a space on the air waves that kwaito was well positioned to fill, in large part because it appealed to youth in ways that other forms of local music could not.

Kwaito and the Vulnerability of Mixed Methods

How do I, a queer African American man, approach the study of culture and society in post-apartheid South Africa? In what ways does my embodied experience as a researcher affect both the kind of data that I might gather and my interpretation of that data? Living and working for decades in South(ern) Africa, I find myself constantly wrestling with the contradictions and privileges of being a queer African American in various spaces, simultaneously embodying diasporic boundary disputes while also coming upon moments in which I am called on to transcend and remake those very boundaries. Speaking of her own research in Nigeria as a "Pan-Africanist African-American Ethnographer," Omi Osun Joni Jones (1996) argues vociferously for a scholarly practice that acknowledges the centrality of multiple forms of dislocation that occur through and within scholarly practice, particularly fieldwork. In order to account for these forms of dislocation, Jones suggests that researchers acknowledge both the embodied nature of scholarly practice and the necessity of "self-theorizing" (137).

Central to my methodological practice of intersectionality are Black feminist, Black queer, and performance studies frameworks as guiding lenses that allow me to keep a close eye on my positionality as a scholar. If we are to take seriously Jones's (2016) assertion that diasporas are often embodied, then performance ethnography becomes a key methodological intervention for Black diaspora studies and thus a guiding method for this study. Taking embodiment seriously—as Black feminism and Black queer theory contend we must—means recognizing and experiencing ethnography as a necessarily sensual or even erotic experience. Telling my story, revealing myself in the text, not only is critical reflexive practice, but also holds me accountable to my political investments in the work as well as to the limitations of my fieldwork. This is particularly vital once we understand that fieldwork is a political exercise that creates the space for advocacy for specific people, ideas, and positions (O. Jones 2006, 343). "If people are genuinely interested in understanding culture, they must put aspects of that culture on and into their bodies" (J. Jones 2002, 7). Dance, nightlife exploration, and media consumption have allowed me to enter kwaito culture, putting it on and into my body. In this way, I become a "co-performative witness" (Conquergood 2002, 351), acknowledging the fact that I am a co-creator—though hardly ignorant of severe power hierarchies in my relationships—of the very practices that I seek to critique and analyze. As I danced at parties and in clubs, purchased cassettes and CDs, and shared in the latest news about various kwaito musicians, I was not just a keen observer.

Instead, I was—and still am—an invested participant, influenced by and influencing how the very communities I participated in critiqued and transformed kwaito culture. Despite my foreignness and queerness, I was often implicitly or even explicitly implicated in these debates. As Dwight Conquergood (2006) argues, I "spoke to and with" rather than "about" kwaito. Hence, this study is a performance ethnography, not in the sense that I predominantly did my ethnographic research among kwaito musicians and performers (although that was an element of the work). Instead, if we take seriously the performance of everyday life, then this performance ethnography is an attempt to understand the ways in which the everyday cultural practices surrounding kwaito and the methods necessary to map those practices are highly performative.

Performance provides the means through which I can explore critical cultural studies. Following Jones's lead, I understand that "cultural studies seeks to reveal the political ideologies wrapped around everyday human behavior and cultural production, giving particular attention to the way race, gender, sexuality, geography and class shape our understandings of behavior and culture" (2006, 342). And critical cultural studies expand this revelation through the theoretical insights garnered from Black feminist and Black queer studies—especially the centrality of intersectionality as a guiding framework—alongside the keen attention of performance studies. These strategically mixed methods provide the tools with which to investigate the space that kwaito creates for performing freedom in South Africa.

In this study, I frame my analysis of kwaito not through an analysis of the musical form but rather through my understanding of kwaito as a cultural formation that provides space for a number of complex performance practices to cohere—performance practices that remaster freedom. This is not to slight the important work of analyzing the musical form; instead it reflects my commitment to understanding how Black youth in South Africa put kwaito to use. Thus, how kwaito bodies (mostly fans but also in some instances musical performers) perform in the space(s) of freedom articulated to kwaito is my concern here. For me, this choice is political, mostly because, in my analysis, fans' enjoyment of kwaito has been an unexamined area of research in academic literature. Focusing on the performance of kwaito bodies allows me to counter reductionist understandings of kwaito style and practice. It allows me to engage how the concept of freedom can be refracted through these bodies, how freedom as an idea can be variously looked at, listened to, and considered through the spaces of the dance floor. I center kwaito fans, especially Black queer South Africans, as leading the charge through their leisure practices toward a more diverse and equitable South Africa. Because these fans have often been overlooked in both popular and scholarly discussions of kwaito, centering their practices engages new forms of knowledge production that simultaneously call for less traditional evidences and methodologies.

Structure of this Book

In chapter 1, "Afrodiasporic Space: Refiguring Africa in Diaspora Analytics," I use the controversy created by Boom Shaka's 1998 performance of the South African liberation song "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" to introduce the conceptual tools central to the study, most importantly "Afrodiasporic Space" and "kwaito bodies." The debates about their performance center on the polarizing question of whether Boom Shaka was making the song fresh for a new generation or was desecrating the memory of struggle by performing it with a kwaito beat. While "Nkosi" is hardly a song exclusive to the South African nation, it has become one of the potent symbols of the New South Africa if for no other reason than its adoption as the post-apartheid national anthem. I consider what it means to perform the nation to a kwaito beat. I use "kwaito" in this instance as a sound metaphor for the voices, dreams, and aspirations of the Y generation (those coming of age in the immediate post-apartheid period). Ultimately, I am concerned with how the nationalist project of freedom might be remastered by those who find kwaito meaningful to their lives.

In chapter 2, "Jozi Nights: The Post-Apartheid City, Encounter, and Mobility," I explore micro-practices of freedom, taking the reader through two nights of partying with my friends in Johannesburg. This chapter reveals how kwaito bodies remaster space through nightlife and leisure practices. The productive possibility of remastered urban space is explored through the concepts of conviviality and encounter that are introduced as frameworks for understanding urban space. Specifically, kwaito helps to create an alternative geography of the city that reveals the nascent attempts of Black youth to remaster the hierarchies of post-apartheid South Africa. In considering how young Black people repurpose and reorganize space, I show how the city becomes both a physical and a conceptual space where inequalities are destabilized by mobile kwaito bodies.

In chapter 3, "'Si-Ghetto Fabulous': Self-Fashioning, Consumption, and Pleasure in Kwaito," consumption in relation to kwaito performance is examined through kwaito festivals, the opening of the Maponya Mall in Soweto, and the performance practices of *izikhothane*. I explore how kwaito bodies remaster freedom through their practices of consumption and pleasure. Given the history of sumptuary laws regulating how Black South Africans could consume, practices of consumption have always been critically linked to notions of freedom. Excess is explored here as a queering of consumption, a way for kwaito bodies to navigate both their marginal material realities and the forms of social censure and moral panic that surround their consumptive practices. Consumption is revealed as a practice that is deeply connected to individual and communal processes of self-creation. What emerges is a politics of exuberance whose very excess escapes the politics of defeat.

In chapter 4, "The Kwaito Feminine: Lebo Mathosa as a 'Dangerous Woman,'" I engage with the performances of Lebo Mathosa, the deceased former member of Boom Shaka who later enjoyed a successful solo career. She remastered freedom through a disidentification with the "bad girl" persona and the creation of an alternative persona of the "dangerous woman." Mathosa is a dangerous woman because she challenged popular conventions about appropriate femininity through both her onstage performances and her offstage persona. I combine an analysis of her concert and club performances, a reading of her music video for the song "Awudede/Dangerous," and numerous interviews with Mathosa in South African media to show how she performed a type of femininity that contravened accepted notions of Black women's performance. In a context of normalized sexualized violence against Black women, her intervention is dangerous because it boldly confronts the risks and possibilities of reimagining Black women's bodies.

Chapter 5, "The Black Masculine in Kwaito: Mandoza and the Limits of Hypermasculine Performance," builds on the analysis of feminine performance to explore the potential of the masculine kwaito body. Mandoza remasters freedom through his disidentificatory performance of the *tsotsi* (thug). As a figure, the thug has been called upon throughout South African history to do particular kinds of work often centered on the amelioration of (post-)apartheid anxieties regarding poor and working-class urban Black men. Focusing on the thug's post-apartheid meanings for Black South African communities, I explore how Mandoza manipulates and uses the commodified image toward performances of freedom that ultimately encounter limitations. I conclude with an examination of how vernacular thug performances might provide spaces for remastered Black queer subjectivities.

Chapter 6, "Mafikizolo and Youth Day Parties: (Melancholic) Conviviality and the Queering of Utopian Memory," returns to the concerns mentioned in chapter 1: namely, the question of what it means to perform the nation to a kwaito beat. To do so, I listen specifically for resonances of the past in contemporary kwaito performance. The performances of the kwaito group Mafikizolo are used to explore the 1955–1963 destruction of Sophiatown, and contemporary Youth

Day parties are used to examine the June 16, 1976, Soweto student uprising. Kwaito bodies perform and queer the past through their ecstatic (and some might say irreverent) performances of memory. In particular, the performances central to June 16 parties consistently renew the ideals of the liberation movement and provide a space for the kwaito body to live out the possibilities fought for by those who rebelled on June 16. That this is misread by the political elite reveals that we must listen carefully and take seriously the voices, dances, and politics of the Y generation's kwaito bodies.