Township refusals (for containment): engaging the cultural production of Sepitori's Amapiano through a Black (Sonic) Studies curatorial lens

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Abstract

Amapiano is one of South Africa's most popular musical exports. As a musical practice, Amapiano falls under the "genre" of Electronic Dance Music (EDM), more specifically, House music. Amapiano's global acclaim and exponential growth is aided by how popular culture is consumed in the 21st century: the internet. Its musical reverberations can be heard from the local minibus taxi to the ubiquitous viral internet sensations and dance crazes on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter). The popular, collective musical practice named Amapiano, is a musical osmosis, referencing a plethora of other sounds and musical traditions, many contextual to South African music history, some global in their innovations. This research explores Amapiano that specifically comes from Pretoria in relation to a Black Sonic Studies lens. The research looks at Amapiano from Pretoria within the scope of the city's lingua franca, Sepitori, to also consider the sociolinguistics embedded in the cultural praxes inherent in Amapiano from Pretoria. The research is not interested in a genealogical historical study of Amapiano, nor is it interested in an ethnomusicological approach to the music. The research exists within an interdisciplinary framework of visual culture studies where Amapiano is investigated through its phonic materiality within the broader paradigm of critical discourses such as Black Sonic Studies, curatorial practice and the dynamism of contemporary digital media and how it influences artistic cultural production in South Africa. The lens in which the research looks at Amapiano moves beyond the music as *just* entertainment or party/dance music (which is often how it is referred to) and treats the musical practice as part of a complex series of sonic ontologies of Black being. Here, the idea of sonic Black ontologies is investigated through township refusals read in the innovations of Amapiano, embedded within Pretoria's socio-sonic cultural character.

Acknowledgements

I would have not done this research if I was not born in Pitori Mahlanyeng and raised in Ga-rankuwa Zone 6, where I learned a lot about how art and culture is produced. In many ways, this thesis should read as a love letter to Pitori, 012 and the family – the Maledus – that encouraged my proclivities of Black popular cultures: ke le vrostana botloko. To my late grandparents, Itumeleng Betty and Gautingwe Elias Maledu, thank you for prioritising different ways of learning in our family life through being. To my mum, Matlodi Christina Maledu, thank you for always indulging my curiosities, gallantly supporting my endeavours and giving me the freedom to be (and create) myselves: o mamaka and kao rata, I will always choose you. To my uncle Tebogo Maledu: you, eccentric wonder you! Thank you for having impeccable music and "cultural" taste, that in part, influenced the many impulses of this study. To the rest of my family – Clement Maledu (who I would bootleg DJ compilation CDs with 'back in the days'), Tsholofelo Maledu, Reneilwe Maledu, Mpho Maledu, Stella Mamogale, Makoma Moloto, Regomoditswe Machaba, Olerato Mamogale, Omphile Maledu, Kopano Maledu and Kaboentle Maledu – thank you for always being constants. Your multiple presences ground me.

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And finally, to the cultural producers, ke ra lena di musicians, DJs, artists, dancers, skit makers, South African students in school uniforms dancing on TikTok: tselang tupa.

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A guide to language: Sepitori's cultural untransferables[1]

This research thesis relies on sparse translations of Sepitori. Unless I am quoting another source speaking a language other than English, I provide translation for clarity in tandem with the context of where the quote appears in the research. In lieu of didactic and direct translations, I offer context with a glossary of all the Sepitori words used in the research as a gestural invitation (and gift) for readers to make sense of the social, linguistic and "cultural untransferables" of the language. By offering a context instead of translations is to think with the linguistic nuances of Sepitori beyond them as speech for comprehension and legibility. This is because, even though Sepitori "is based principally on two mutually-intelligible languages; namely: Sepedi and Setswana" (Ditsele and Mann 2014: 159), the language does not have an official orthography[2] (Ditsele personal communication 2023, March 30). It depends on a specialised context of mutual understanding, making the language fugitive to those without its context. By using the term "fugitive", I do not mean that the language is necessarily incomprehensible (because it is given the linguistic metric base it shares with two prominent official South African languages and it being the lingua franca of Pretoria). Instead, I read Sepitori within a practice of dynamic sociocultural expressions in and out of its utility as merely a communication tool. Thus, Sepitori as it intersects with Amapiano's cultural production from Pretoria appears, in my research, as cultural artefacts of speech acts imbued with symbolic signification that comes with elements of the language's intergenerational "stylects". Hurst (2009: 244) defines "stylect" as "a linguistic phenomenon that … is a performed discursive act of styling to constitute identity". However, this does not account for Sepitori as a "stylect" or a Tsotsitaal per se. Linguists Álcarez-Mosquera, Bornman and Ditsele (2017: 454) made the assertion that Sepitori can be traced to the mid-1800s, and has had many first-generation speakers, as opposed to Tsotsitaal that is less than a century old. As a person who is not trained as a linguist it is important to heed this caution because it is easy to fall into generalisations when it comes to mixed languages as a mere speaker. However, Sepitori has “stylect” elements, especially in popular culture seen in local telenovelas such as *The River* (Ditsele personal communication 2023, March 30) and for the purposes of this research, also in Amapiano songs with Pitori sensibilities.

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[1] Coetzee, C. 2013. *Accented Futures: Language Activism and the Ending of Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

[2] Thus, when I write some of the Pitori words in the thesis their spelling is premised mainly on my aural undertaking of sound to text that is informed by popular spellings, or, because Sepitori is mutually intelligible through other official languages, some of the phrases' spellings are adopted from those languages' standardised orthography.

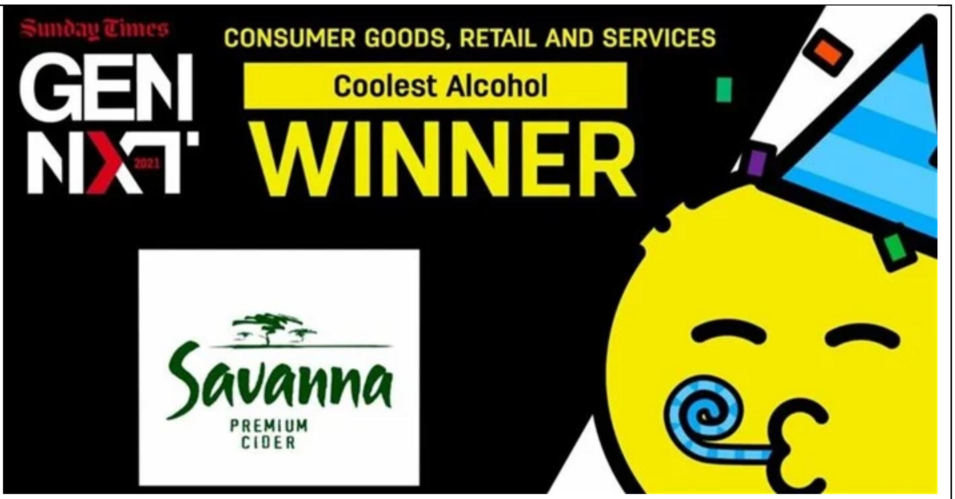
I also do not italicise or use air quotes of the Sepitori words and phrases used in the thesis because translanguaing is a symbolic marker of a multilingual country like South Africa, as per its highly contested nickname alludes: the “Rainbow Nation”. I should also note that my copyeditor attended to the edits in this thesis with an awareness of to its linguistic form and not imposing standardised English editing. Speaking and reading Sepitori alongside English is common in Pitori, what linguists call diglossia, which is when two dialects or languages are used together by a particular language community. I also do not italicise or use air quotes of the Sepitori words and phrases in the research as an act of refusal that my research’s theoretical framework grapples with. In her poetry collection, *Serurubele* (2017) Katleho Kano Shoro’s poem titled “Sesotho sa ka will not be written in italics”, the poet refuses the othering of African languages to a set of assumed universal standardisations, especially in relation to the English language. From South Africa’s imperial and colonial centuries, the country’s official languages were European: Dutch and English, while during apartheid they were Afrikaans and English. African languages on the other hand, spoken by the majority of the country’s population were ignored. However, the South African Constitution of 1996 gave official recognition to eleven of what it considered to be the country’s major languages, and recently in 2023, South African Sign Language was recognised as the twelfth official language of the country (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2023). In addition, South Africa has at least more than thirty historically established languages, some living and some extinct, particularly those of the indigenous people of Southern Africa such as the Khoekhoen and the Sān languages (Alexander, 2023).

Glossary:

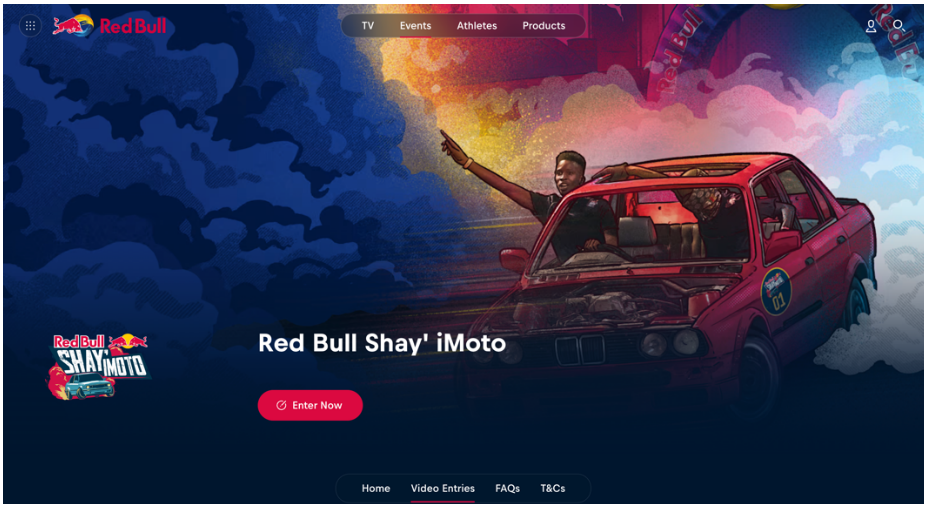
This glossary is informed by my own intimate knowledges of Sepitori as someone who is from a predominantly Sepitori speaking township of Ga-rankuwa. I grew up between the township and another neighbourhood in Pretoria called Orchards in the Akasia suburb. I lean on the linguistic specificities of Sepitori from these regions but understand Sepitori's broader tongues across Pitori's areas where the language is predominantly spoken.

TERM AND/OR PHRASE	**CONTEXTUAL EXPLANATION**
6-12 pack ya Savanna net fela go thapisa mogolo	6-12 pack of the alcoholic cider beverage Savanna Dry to quench one's thirst is a prevalent phenomenon in South Africa especially during Dezemba and is generally a staple of many social practices in the country. Dezemba (December) is the last month of the year that is lived as a lifestyle in South Africa. The spelling with a *-z* distinguishes how culturally transgressive it is – there is an acknowledgement of the month, December, yet, if one does not understand the cultural connotation, the recognition might be lost. The word "vibe" captures a general mood and festive tempo marked by a churning of musical hits competing for the "Song of the Year" accolade. This one song is usually announced by predominant South African radio stations immediately when twelve midnight strikes and the song ushers in the new year. Dezemba is also generally accompanied by endless chisa nyama invitations. The mood is festive spirit wayaya – in perpetuity – preferably somewhere coastal. Inlanders are always to be found at public pools. Dezemba is marked by a reprieve of especially Black labour. Those who often work in the cities – proletariats – also get to

	engage in practices of leisure with family and friends: 6-12 pack ya Savanna is highly recommended. The alcoholic cider beverage Savanna Dry (introduced by the South African company Distell Group Limited in 1996) has an iconic status in the country. It is sold globally in more than 60 countries and is one of the country's leading cider exports (Distell (DGH) interim results…, 2019). In 2023, it was named the second alcoholic beverage of choice in South Africa and leading at number one in the country's cider category (South Africans put cold beer …, 2023). During the Covid-19 pandemic, between Dezemba 2020 and January 2021, the alcoholic cider accrued a reputation when a social media challenge dubbed the #SavannaChallenge took off on South Africa's trending lists where users of platforms such as Tik Tok, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook and Instagram created all sorts of social media content that included videos and photos of people balancing bottles of Savanna on their heads while dancing to Amapiano songs. Furthermore, Amapiano songs such as the eponymously named *Savanna* (2020) by DJ Karri & Da Conga was released, as well as *Banyana* (2021) by DJ Maphorisa & Tyler ICU featuring Sir Trill, Daliwonga and Kabza De Small – both include lyrics referencing the cider. Chronicling memorable moments in South African advertising in her book – *It's not inside it's on top* – Khanya Mtshali (2021: 166) writes how Savanna Dry has become a South African alcoholic staple with a reputation of being an accessible drink of choice no matter the social occasion.

	 Sunday Times GEN NXT 2021 CONSUMER GOODS, RETAIL AND SERVICES Coolest Alcohol WINNER Savanna PREMIUM CIDER Figure 1: Savanna Cider was voted coolest alcohol brand at the 17th annual *Sunday Times GenNext Awards* in 2021. 2021. BizCommunity (Issued by Grey Africa – a global advertising network).
bohlanya	A state of being akin to craziness. In the context of the term’s first appearance in the research it refers to a palpable enthusiasm where craziness, in its complexities as a descriptor, is expressed. The state of “craziness” or being crazy is also considered here in relation to Pretoria’s unofficial nickname as “Pitori mahlanyeng” – loosely meaning “Pretoria where the crazy ones reside”. This nickname is rumoured to be inspired by the fact that the city established the first psychiatric hospital in the country in 1892 called *Weskoppies Hospital* (Plug and Roos 1992: 218) that is still in existence today however renamed *Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital*. In the same breath, it is important to acknowledge the ableist linguistics of the word “crazy” as a descriptor irrespective of its popular parlance and ubiquity in everyday language. Historically, the word “crazy” has been used as an insult for people with mental illness and thus carries with it discriminatory undertones. Thus, conscious awareness to such terminology is important in how ableist language contributes to how people perceive people living with disabilities such as mental health where often, they are stigmatised, contributing to undue levels of harm and violence against them (Ulaby, 2019).

bo dese ko zama	There is pride in trying something versus not trying at all. Sometimes said as a way of responding to a greeting such as "how are you?" where the response recognises attempting as a legitimate response of being alive or trying to survive. The word "zama" is commonly associated with Zama zamas: illegal miners in South Africa who occupy both operational but mostly abandoned mines to mine a variety of minerals in the country. The word "zama" is isiZulu for "to take a chance". Most Zama zamas are from neighbouring Southern African countries such as Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.
chisa nyama	Meat that has been cooked on a braai, often on an open fire. It is as much about the food as it is about the company and social setting where music is often played and close family and friends hang out. There are also establishments such as restaurants in South Africa that premise their food experiences with an affinity to chisa nyama social practices.
bo Grootman	A title often used for men that are generally well respected. As a descriptor, the phrase is wrought with layered respectability politics.
di social club	Social clubs are social, cultural and economic practices of gathering. There are different kinds of social clubs but the most popular are linked to Black people self-organising with aims of economic upliftment. In this way, social clubs share a relationship with stokvels where Black people gather with intentions of creating a collective saving scheme that is sustained over a period of time. Often invited members contribute fixed sums of money to a central fund on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis.
di spini	Streetcar spinning is a South African sub-cultural phenomenon that is popular in many townships in the country where car spinners drive at high speeds performing stunts in and out of the car for spectators. Spinning's specific origins and history is still debatable but its popularity in South Africa can be attributed to the 2000s (Steingo 2016: 210). Spinning has aesthetic

	performative qualities to it that also encompass social practices such as dancing and music, thus it often spills out into (self) organised events. Even though it was illegal in the 2000s and associated with gangsterism, it has accrued some credibility in South Africa's motorsport industry (Steingo 2016: 267) with frequent spinning events, sponsored by international brands such as Red Bull (with their *Red Bull Shay' iMoto* competition). On 26 March 2023 DJ Maphorisa, a prominent Pitori-born Amapiano producer hosted his inaugural spinning event called *Porry Land Spinfest* at Mahem Raceway in Pretoria. An identifiable symbol of Spinning in South Africa is the BMW 3 Series colloquially known as (i-)gusheshe.  Red Bull TV Events Athletes Products Red Bull SHAY' iMOTO Red Bull Shay' iMoto Enter Now Home Video Entries FAQs T&Cs Figure 2: Screenshot of Red Bull website advertising their open call for the 2024 edition of the Shay' iMoto competition with the iconic BMW 3 Series Gusheshe as part of its graphic visuals. 2023. Redbull.com
For nou, ke feditse	An indeterminate pause appearing as an open-ended conclusion to the research, indicating that *for now,* I am finished. What I am suggesting is that the research is ongoing and preoccupies me in other ways outside of the thesis study.
ge dikolo di tswalla, kadi pens down	When primary and high school closes, pupils, usually from high school in Grades between 10-12 have various celebrations dubbed "pens down". These can range from parties to social gatherings at public places such as malls. Granted that South

	Africa has four school terms, the most popular “pens down” happen when schools break for September and December in the summer season. Those two are favoured in the same way as North America’s “summer break”.
ke bo dese	A compliment that offers pride to or in the receiver.
koKasi	Sometimes written kokasi: refers to the township. Etymologically the word comes from the Afrikaans word “lokasie”, which means “location”, however this is particular to township spatial and cultural dynamics.
monate mpolaye	The relationship between the possibilities of death and the experience of transcendental partying where one is having a good time that it evokes deep preoccupations with the possibilities of dying. In the oxymoronic phrase – joy/good times, kill me – there is a delirious danger attuned with pleasure invoking the threshold between pain and pleasure and/or feelings of palpable euphoria. Here, partying spills into the domains of the (sensual) excess of living, which inevitably – eventually – includes dying.
Pitori	The city of Pretoria written in the Sepitori language. It is South Africa’s capital city and administrative capital. In the mid-2000s Pretoria was at the centre of a name change controversy when the ANC-led government wanted to change the name from Pretoria to Tshwane to reflect South Africa’s transformation from its Afrikaner white past (SAHO 2016, 2019). Notwithstanding all the dissent, in 2005 the name Pretoria was changed to Tshwane with the approval on 26 May 2005, by the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC), but was later rejected by many of Pretoria’s citizens. Thus, even though Pretoria was officially renamed Tshwane, migration from the name Pretoria to Tshwane has proven to be challenging for many business organisations, media and other institutions both locally and internationally (SAHO 2016, 2019). This is why the city is still commonly referred to as Pretoria. However, the city’s municipality

	is officially recognised as the City of Tshwane, named after the legendary Manala chief (SAHO, 2010). In the thesis I use Pretoria because of its popularity, albeit acknowledging the polemics of its name.
Sepitori	The lingua franca of Pretoria albeit an unofficial language in South Africa.
Sghubu sa Pitori	The drumbeat of Pretoria that encompasses the city's cultural life, especially where cultural production is concerned in the city's Black social life at its intersection with music and music-making. Sghubu comes from the word *Isigubu*, meaning drum in many Nguni languages but can sometimes take many colloquial meanings such as song and sound. The term is also always indexical to rhythm and is suggestive of the drum's ability to create music that one can dance to. It is sometimes spelt as either Isi'gubu, Isigubhu or Sgubu (Sgubhu).
S'khothanism	As a subculture, it is a phenomenon of Black township youth who would wear expensive clothes, equivalent to their own definitions of "Sunday best". Izikhothane would also engage in social practices of gathering where they would host dance battles on the streets of their townships and spill alcohol or food as a way of showing off. It can also be considered an aesthetic and performative practice many youths engage in and outside of South Africa, albeit in different gestural ways and names. However central to this practice is class signalling or rather the ability to show that one can afford expensive items. Around 2011 the media would report on the phenomenon in sensationalist ways that ignited moral panic amongst South Africa's conservative publics.
wayawaya	In perpetuity.
wie sien ons	In many Pitori townships, and generally some urban areas in South Africa, wie sien ons is a social and cultural practice, also known as, "after tears". It happens at funerals in townships after the formal proceedings of the burial ritual in the cemetery is over.

	Wie sien ons – Afrikaans for “who sees us” – takes place at the home of the deceased or at their immediate neighbours’ home and can sometimes develop into a party depending on the social status of the deceased. The idea of wie sien ons registers particular social and cultural capital with the attendees, imbued with the notion of the “Who’s Who” of particular social groups. In other words, there is coded performative practices that are attached to the phenomena of this gaze of “who sees us” and the particularities of being “seen” or perceived in a particular way that is often connoted to respectability, status/wealth signaling through showing off and consumptive patterns associated with forms of impressing people via brand names one is seen with. From the alcohol one consumes; to the car one drove or drives with to the funeral; the clothing brand one is wearing and so on.

Introduction:
Locating Sghubu sa Pitori

> The more obscure the jazzman the more respect the collector gained. Tumi's father, for instance, discovered Eric Dolphy when no one else in the township knew about him. He had visited a nephew in Lady Selbourne, Pretoria, which was the jazz capital of South Africa those days, and learnt of this new guy. He came back to Soweto with his LP and boasted to everyone about Eric Dolphy. Soon Eric Dolphy had joined the staples in Soweto. That was why when Sowetans wanted to learn more about jazz they secretly went to Pretoria, but would never openly admit that the black townships of that city were more advanced in the fine art of jazz appreciation than Soweto.
>
> Zakes Mda, *Black Diamond*

The sentiments expressed above in Zakes Mda's book, *Black Diamond* – a 2009 novel that comments on South African cosmopolitan life after the demise of apartheid[3] in 1994 – serve as mabarebare[4] on Pretoria's influence as a musical taste-making city. Mabarebare means rumour or hearsay in multiple Bantu languages including Setswana and Sepedi, as well as Sepitori: an unofficial mixed language spoken predominantly by Black residents from the city of Pretoria. The sentiments can also be legitimatised in heretical expressions such as ba ba itseng ba itse – *those who know, know* – often heard broadly in various contexts including in Black South African townships mythologising[5] the cultural life of Pretoria. A city often indexical to its music and sonic cultures: Sghubu sa Pitori. This mythologising also comes from how, often Pitori's cultural life is colloquially known as much more interesting in its non-conformity, than the hustle and bustle economy of its closest city, a major one in both Gauteng and the rest of the African continent, Johannesburg.

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[3] Even though I write about the "demise of apartheid", I recognise the nuances of its continued present-day effects – most of them devastating – on marginalised identities in South Africa who were and continue to be the biggest victims of apartheid, particularly Black people. In his book titled *Music for and against Apartheid*, music historian Grant Olwage (2008: 6) writes about the idea of a "long apartheid" as an extension of both prior to and post official apartheid. Thus, I am careful to pay attention to apartheid's dynamism even post 1994, acknowledging the multiple junctures and gaps that makes up South Africa's apartheid story and consistently being attuned to its continued effects.

[4] Throughout my research I use rumours as a legitimate heretical way of referencing within the economy of knowledge generation in many South African communities marked by informal cultural production that is nevertheless highly organised. Rumours are, as literary scholar Grace A. Musila (2017: 692) has argued, significant in how African societies process, contest and critique knowledge production where they function as a kind of "community intelligence", problematising singular conceptions of credible knowledge. I also want to acknowledge my awareness of George Mahashe's PhD interventionist project *MaBareBare, a rumour of a dream* (2019) even though I do not necessarily engage its research interests here.

[5] This mythology often finds itself circulating amongst people from Pretoria, and as of late, on social media too. The mythology is also particular to the (Black) city's cultural life enveloped in its nicknames such as Pitori Mahlanyeng or social media hashtags such as #PitoriKeCountry to distinguish its unique cultural lifestyle, especially in comparison to Johannesburg.

Nonetheless, Pretoria's socio-political history has been marked by territorial strife[6], much like the rest of South Africa. The city's associations with being the capital city of apartheid and a symbol of Afrikaner political domination (Centre for Development and Enterprise 1998: 8) – granted that it is the country's administrative capital – sits along its street axiom, "Pitori Mahlanyeng". The latter, as an identity-marker, considers its cultural character outside of officialdom, especially by its majority Black residents whose agency had always been restricted by the history of forced removals into townships. As such, in engaging mabarebare related to unpacking Pitori's cultural character through rumors and myths, my methodology follows a speculative framework premised on contextual modalities of unpacking Sghubu sa Pitori.

The city's nickname is instructive: "Pitori" is the city's name and "Mahlanyeng" the city's descriptor, associated with craziness aligned to non-conformity. The nickname evokes a connection between Pretorians and craziness in relation to audacity. As explained in the glossary, mabarebare attributes the name to, firstly: the first psychiatric hospital in the Transvaal[7] – which was known as the

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[6] Archaeologist Thomas N. Huffman researched how the region of Pretoria was initially occupied by the southern Ndebele people, led by Chief Musi, who inhabited the area about 300 to 400 years ago (SAHO, 2010). The period from 1820-1832, known as the Mfecane or Difeqane, was characterised by great conflict among the Black communities in Southern Africa influencing settlements and ethnicities of the African population of the Vaal (SAHO, 2010). Mfecane began as a result of the movement of several Nguni groups across the Drakensberg from KwaZulu Natal, in order to escape Zulu expansion (SAHO, 2010). Mzilikazi (who was a General that fled from King Shaka's army) was the cause of much of the destruction of the smaller tribes in the area across the Vaal (SAHO, 2010). He decimated the Bakwena tribe, who had peacefully occupied the area (SAHO, 2010). Mzilikazi made Pretoria his home by building two military kraals on the Apies River: "enDinaneni" which was situated north-west of Pretoria on the road to Hartebeespoort Dam and "enKungweni" which was built along the Daspoort range of hills (SAHO, 2010). From 1836 the Voortrekkers, led by General Hendrik Potgieter, invaded the contested land that Mzilikazi established as his tribes' and by December 1837, the Voortrekkers managed to successfully make Mzilikazi flee across Limpopo (SAHO, 2010). Later, a trek led by Andries Pretorius from Ohrigstad, together with a few stragglers from Natal and the Orange Free State, also settled in the area (SAHO, 2010). It was through the efforts of Pretorius that the British recognised the independence of the Voortrekkers north of the Vaal, an area that became known as the Transvaal (SAHO, 2010). This resulted in the signing of the Sand River Convention in 1852. By 1853, the son of Andries Pretorius, Marthinus Wessels Pretorius, purchased two farms, Elandspoort and Koedoespoort, with the intention of founding a town that would be the centre of the new state which came to be known as Pretoria (SAHO, 2010).

[7] The Transvaal was a South African province from 1910-1994. After apartheid, with the introduction to a new constitution it was subdivided to other provinces. The name "Transvaal" refers to the

Krankzinnigengesticht te Pretoria (Pretoria Lunatic Asylum) and is now known as Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital – which was founded in 1892 (Plug and Roos 1992: 218). The fact that this mental institution is in Pretoria has often colloquially suggested the city's relationship to a kind of madness. There is an extraordinariness in bohlanya, the verb of craziness, that does not only end with the pathology of mental illness but also opens, through an intentional use of vocabulary, ideas of an expansive imagination that encourages the disruption of normative frameworks of being. The second reason has to do with Pretoria's cultural life, particularly when it comes to partying. During the heydays of Kwaito in the 1990s, Pretorian townships, particularly in Ga-rankuwa in venues affiliated with Setlogelo[8], were renowned for having the best street bashes in Gauteng. Junior, a member of the legendary Kwaito group, Boom Shaka and Oskido who would occasionally DJ and perform with them (Tisani, 2019) reveals:

> By the time everybody caught up with what was happening [in Kwaito through the mainstream], we had been doing it for years in the townships. We were DJing in Setlogelo in Pretoria and we had to put tables together. I just grabbed the mic, go under the tables and then I would start freestyling. People would come to Oskido: "no man we want that song".

Another veteran of the Kwaito music scene, DJ Christos (Tisani, 2019) admits:

> I was kind of like an underground DJ in a sense, even though in those days you couldn't really say you were an underground DJ. That was 1987/88. I was working at a place called Jacqueline's and I moved back to Pretoria to [go work as a DJ] at a place called Gemini[9]. It was a state-of-the-art club in the township and they were already playing the right music.

To which Junior (Tisani, 2019) recalls: "Yho, it used to be like *crazy* (emphasis mine) especially Tembisa and Pretoria… They were like the capitals of street bashes[10]".

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province's geographical location to the north of the Vaal River. Its capital city was Pretoria, which was and still is also the country's executive capital.

[8] Setlogelo Technikon, now known as one of the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) campuses located in Ga-Rankuwa Zone 2, a township north-west of Pretoria was renamed after merging with the former Pretoria Technikon (now TUT) and Technikon Northern Gauteng (TNG).

[9] Club Gemini was a booming legendary club between the late 1980s and early 1990s in Klipgat, Mabopane, a township north of Pretoria.

[10] A street bash is the equivalent of a block party where the street is literally blocked. Many members of a single community congregate to collectively host a party for merry making. It involves closing an entire street entrance to prohibit vehicles from entering the street where the party is hosted. There is often loud music playing, dancing and braais. In consideration with the spatial politics of township homes in South Africa that are often small, social gatherings of various types often spill into the streets. From weddings to funerals or 21st birthday parties, most inadvertently becoming street bashes.

This research aims to locate such mabarebare in a framework that is not necessarily historical in its genealogical tracings, but rather looks at framing Sghubu sa Pitori – its loose translation meaning “the drumbeat of Pretoria” – through the city’s cultural and creative practice of music production. Even though the introductory quote speaks to the musical genre of jazz and its rumored relationship with Pitori’s cultural taste, the research here focuses on engaging the growing musical and cultural archive of the contemporary House musical practice[11] called Amapiano[12]. As a genre, Amapiano is inspired by many other contemporaneous electronic music genres such as Kwaito locally, and Chicago House music internationally as well as references jazz in its name, an aspirational musical index. The research reads Amapiano in a past-present-future oscillation, excavating Pretoria’s musical, cultural and artistic traditions.

The popular genre of Amapiano is generally agreed to have originated from major Gauteng townships, particularly in Johannesburg and Pretoria (Moloto, 2019). My point of interest is Amapiano in relation to its Pitori sensibilities and particularities. The research is not necessarily interested in a genealogical historical study of Amapiano. Nor is it interested in an ethnomusicological approach to the music. Rather, the research exists within a framework of visual culture studies where Amapiano is engaged as a practice beyond its popular signifier as a genre of music. In other words, the research looks at Amapiano produced by artists from the city of Pretoria within an investigation that considers the music’s broader sonic phenomena, while recognising geo-specifies that culturally edifies ’Piano from Pitori. The research’s framework centres an interdisciplinary art and cultural paradigm where it is informed by theoretical discourses such as Black Sonic Studies, visual culture studies and curatorial practice as they intersect with the multidisciplinary and new-age possibilities of the contemporaneous, ever-evolving digital age and its subsequent influence on artistic cultural production and its democratisation.

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[11] The idea of “musical practice” vis-à-vis genre is informed by an engagement with the work of African performance studies scholar, Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja who investigates African musical and sonic phenomena through practice-research that is centred on experimentation in the mobility of sound and music generally evolving and as subsequently perpetually mobile, versus genre that can sometimes fashion, especially popular music, as a fleeting taste so easily replaceable or can be declared “dead” on the onset of a “newer” genre that takes over its popularity. The term “musical practice” signals constant musical experimentation that is expansive and surpasses the containment of “genre”. In other words, the music evolves as per evolution demands and in its evolving nature, it catapults other sound experiments that can point back to the initial experimentations of the said musical practice. For instance, Amapiano is often thought of as another form of Kwaito music especially because of its sonic tempo or BPM being nearly identical to that of Kwaito. However, throughout the thesis I will use the phrase “musical practice” vis-à-vis “genre” or sometimes interchangeably for its general understanding and brevity.

[12] Amapiano is also often also known as *’Piano* or *iPiano* (with the isiZulu prefix *-i*) in the music circles of South African House music.

My research examines the language practice of Sepitori and Amapiano. It considers the linguistics and investigates them as praxes embedded in iconographical cultural characters of music-making in ’Piano from Pitori. As such, I am interested in the intersection between Amapiano and Sepitori as an affective amalgamation that articulates some of the creative innovations of Black South African townships as strategies of survival. Even though this research is interested in Amapiano alongside its use of Sepitori’s linguistic practices from Pitori’s townships, it does not make the claim that Amapiano comes from Pretoria despite it being embraced in this metropolis.

Amapiano reached global status in 2020. Its local and international crescendo was aided by Covid-19’s hard lockdowns that saw the majority of the world staying at home and streaming internet-based content on social media apps which has been the musical practices’ main infrastructures of publicly disseminating the music. The genre’s exponential growth is streamlined by how we consume popular media lately: the internet. Its musical reverberations can be heard from the local taxi to the ubiquitous viral internet sensations and dance crazes on platforms such as TikTok, Twitter and Instagram. The genre falls under the musical practices of EDM, particularly House music. The popular genre as a collective – Amapiano – is a musical osmosis: referencing many other sound and musical traditions. Locally, in South Africa, these musical traditions include Kwaito, jazz, localised subgenres of House such as diBarcadi, Broken Beat and even African sonic cultures situated in the church or within ancestral rituals and cosmologies, as well as interpolated and intertextualised popular songs and rhyming patterns sung in children’s games in townships. Internationally, these musical histories cross pollinate with Chicago House music, influenced by mid-tempo and deep House music playing at approximately 115 BPM’s (beats per minute). The genre’s early development emanates from different townships. In Pretoria, the most popular townships innovating the genre include, but is not limited to Mamelodi, Atteridgeville, Soshanguve, Ga-rankuwa, Mabopane, Eersterust and Hammanskraal. In Johannesburg, this includes townships in the East Rand (such as Tembisa, Katlehong, Springs), Alexandra, Thokoza and Soweto to name the most predominant in embracing the musical practice. Each township developed a localised aesthetic or name for Amapiano because in the music's early developments, the sound was crystallised more as a niche experiment and subgenre borrowing from instrumental House, Deep House, mid-tempo House, Broken Beats or Afrotech musical aesthetics, than a dominant genre intended to be labelled and marketed under one umbrella name for global marketing purposes. In fact, some people attribute the name Amapiano to its earlier days, where producers such as the duo MRF Souls that formed in 2012, would bring the keyboardist Moscow on Keyz (Moses Khumbulani) to their gigs who would improvise live, while the duo were on the DJ decks (Moloto, 2019). MDU a.k.a TRP (Mduduzi Mangena) is also often credited with innovating Amapiano's log-drum sonic signifier (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). The log drum in Amapiano is a hybrid tone somewhere between a kick drum, 808, synth bass, and actual log drum percussion. The log drum creates the bass lines and momentum for the songs. Meanwhile, the biggest catalyst of Pretoria's Amapiano sound – that made it go mainstream locally in its earlier experimental days – is with the song *Mamelodi* (2015) by Junior Taurus and Lady Zamar featuring Odyssey 012. The latter provides the song's iconic saxophone, keyboard instrumentals and distinguishable broken beats. Thus, in a sense Amapiano – in its current iteration, even though it is considered as a "new" House music genre – is not necessarily a new sound or sonic aesthetic. It has been in existence for many years in townships all around Gauteng. Its international success on the other hand, is nonetheless certainly new. It is a product of our increasingly globalised world, made even more porous with the interconnectivity of the internet.

Sepitori on the other hand, is an unofficial South African mixed language mainly spoken in Pretoria. Even though it is considered an urban lingua franca, Sepitori is as old as the city of Pretoria itself (Ditshele 2014: 220). It is a combination of mostly Bantu speaking languages such as Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho with influences of Tsotsitaal and Afrikaans as well as some aspects of Nguni languages (Ditshele, 2014). Because Sepitori is an unofficial language without an orthography (Ditsele personal communication 2023, March 30), it has a reputation associated with being dynamic, as it is spoken and reshaped by various speakers and generations, as well as with its increased popularity in South African telenovelas such as *The River* (2018-present) and on social media with hashtags such as *#LearnSepitori*, *#012Dictionary* and *#PitoriProverbs* to name some of the most prominent. However, sociolinguistic scholar, Thabo Ditsele (personal communication 2023, March 30) notes that Sepitori's base as a metric language is stable, what changes is the language's "stylect". A term coined by another sociolinguist, Ellen Hurst (2009): "stylects" go beyond the lexiconic. In using Hurst's (2009: 244) term "stylect", informed by Ditsele (personal communication 2023, March 30) on the specificities of Sepitori, the language is imbued with performative elements associated with identity-making. Sepitori, within its plural stylects, can be considered as a linguistic phenomenon that draws on performance markers of identity which includes how a person walks, talks, dresses as well as other facets that encompasses personal style. As such, the language can be argued to be fugitive. Its status as a non-standard language variety with a stable linguistic metric base and stylect qualities, alongside its speakers from Pitori townships, engage in literal grammatical forms of self-fashioning. This socio-linguistic performativity is evident within the musical practices of contemporary Amapiano music produced by Pretoria-based or born producers as well as the general sensibilities of the city.

Why Amapiano from Pitori?: Engaging an archive[13] of Sepitori's Amapiano as "an art of Africa"[14]

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[13] I am aware of discussions in art, culture, heritage and the broader humanities about the ubiquitous use of the word "archive", much like the ubiquitous use of the word "curator". Those conversations do not preoccupy this research's scope. What is interesting to me is new discourses that have re-imagined the archive outside of academia's monopoly on its knowledge production. I think about Amapiano in relation to these new frameworks of thinking about the archive beyond academic disciplines. My research thinks about the embodiment of Amapiano's musical practices over and above their saturation on the internet and entering public performance discourse as repertoires that can be organised within archival sensibilities. More so, if Amapiano is not necessarily a new musical practice and is edified through a past-present-future embodiment of the archive via the body, then Amapiano as an archive does not exist in a vacuum. Amapiano as an archive recognises people and generational knowledge of musical practices that live through intergenerational modalities that is shared in idiosyncratic embodied trajectories that archives generally surface.

[14] The term "an art of Africa" was coined by artist and art historian Nomusa Makhubu (2013: 2) to complicate what Western art historical discourses has considered to be so-called "African Art". By using this terminology Makhubu (2013: 2) refers to a cluster of multifaceted art and cultural practices of Africa – including arts made by artists of the African diaspora. The sensibilities that inform this term acknowledges the interest in sculptural objects of Africa by museum practitioners such as anthropologists, ethnologists, art historians and collectors who have contributed to the social and cultural capital of the coinage "African art" as a mixed bag of sculptural objects (Makhubu 2013: 2). The objects are often identified by the ethnic groups instead of the individual artists Makhubu (2013: 2). Thus Makhubu's (2013: 2) insistence of the phrase "art of Africa" expands the notion of "African art" to include various media and interventions such as new media. Even though her term is coined in relation to her research on Nollywood, the coinage is similarly useful for my research on Amapiano where I am proposing another method to reading the musical practice outside of objectness or ethnomusicology and instead looking at the music as an interdisciplinary artistic practice of socio-cultural value in the contemporaneous epoch of African art and cultural production that has been radicalised in medium as a result of new forms of access such as technology and the internet.

There has been some scholarship on popular South African House/Dance music, particularly Kwaito. This includes Stephens (2000); Peterson (2003); Satyo (2008); Hlasane and Peterson (2021) and much recently books by Steingo (2016); Ndabeni and Mthembu (2018) and Livermore (2020). Furthermore, there are a handful of documentaries on the musical practice as well, including Simon Klose's *After Robot: Kwaito Music in Johannesburg* (2002) and Aryan Kaganof's *Sharp, Sharp! The Kwaito Story* (2003). However, scholarship of House music DJ cultures in South Africa in academia is still relatively scant. In fact, DJ and anthropologist, Tom Simmert, in his MA research – *Kasie music for kasie people! House Music in East Rand, Johannesburg* (2013) – notes how "the subject is barely represented in academic literature" (Simmert 2013: 87). In popular press, documentary films on YouTube and much recently, documented on podcast interviews with catalysts of the musical practice, more coverage has emerged in these public, mostly free accessible platforms. Further research of South African House music DJing cultures in academia can be developed not only from a musicological perspective, or musical business and entertainment position, but also to consider what the music signals in the larger practice and milieu of socio-cultural and artistic life. Artist and art historian, Nomusa Makhubu (2013: 2) asks: ''if art history is a particularly Western practice, what are the implications for the artistic and cultural production in Africa?" Makhubu (2013: 2) although speaking from her research interest of Nollywood as art historical, opens an opportunity of considering African popular cultural repertoires as "art of Africa". Makhubu (2013: 6) developed new methodological approaches to African artistic practice beyond the canon of museum objects by insisting that we consider African art's socio-cultural life as an embedded part of its artistic practice. Thus, in heeding Makhubu's provocation for this research – that considers Sepitori and Amapiano as artistic grammatical forms with a "phonic materiality" (Moten 2017: 30) and register beyond *just* speech and notational compositions – to exist in the research discipline of visual arts is to complicate what scholarship has come to popularise as "Art History" and/or art historical. According to Moten (2017: 30) "music is understood not only as a mode of organization but, more fundamentally, as phonic substance, phonic materiality irreducible to any interpretation but antithetical to any assertion of the absence of content". In other words, phonic materiality is the substance that is lost through the interpretative-analytical gaze of music research. Therefore, this research is much more interested in how Sepitori is lived out through Amapiano's socio cultural life beyond analysing and interpreting lyrical content. Furthermore, and perhaps more instructively, this research is not interested in the musicological discourse of Amapiano. It follows Christine Lucia's (2008: 13) caution (speaking to her research interests of Black choral music) about apartheid's intentions to other cultural production that was not aligned with whiteness because such default othering would always be riddled with "misinterpretations … tied to notions of composition that stem from the academy, rather than from the music in question and its context" (Lucia 2008: 13).

Engaging the archive of Amapiano from Pitori with its Sepitori sensibilities need not be mistakenly read as containing the music and its cultural production to regionality. The musical genre as a whole, both Amapiano from Pretoria and Amapiano from elsewhere in South Africa, is an international House music genre that circuits global music festivals, events and international playlist charts. Mobility is significant to the musical practice. Amapiano from Pitori and Sepitori, localised musical and socio-linguistic cultural aesthetics become accentuated elsewhere out of their township geo-specificities where they can easily be misunderstood or othered, but they are not; instead, they are enthusiastically embraced, especially in the Black diasporas of the Atlantic[15]. This is not necessarily unique because music can and does foster connection despite locality – music transcends regionality. And so similarly, through focusing specifically on Amapiano musical practices from Pretoria, alongside Sepitori, the research speaks to the sonic phenomena of mobile popular culture. This mobile popular culture moves through and beyond Black Sonic Studies as well as pan-African exilic moments, whether fleeting or reverberating within communities of the diaspora in the North. This is what literary scholar, Uhuru Phalafala (2019: 22-23) calls "roots en route", as a symbolic term illustrating the confluence of Africa's relationship with its diaspora in the ongoing cultural production of Black collective memory and modernity.

More so, the particularities of Amapiano from Pretoria and its socio-cultural linguistic use of Sepitori reads the Zakes Mda's mabarebare introductory quote of Pretoria's

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[15] Musicians Focalistic and Vigro Deep – both from Pitori – released a remix of their song *Ke Star* (2020, 2021) featuring Nigerian-born artist Davido and it became the first South African song to enter the Billboard Top Triller Global chart with their first entry at number 16 (Billboard Top Triller Global, 2023).

Black township cultural production – albeit with its fugitive (in)visibility – in relation to a continuum that threads sonic and musical histories situated in the early 20th century Marabi music, generally rumoured to have possibly come from the urban township of Marabastad in Pretoria. Wilson ''King Force" Silgee (SAHO, 2011) leader of popular Marabi musical band, *Jazz Maniacs*, described Marabi as follows:

> Marabi: was the environment. It was either organ but mostly piano. You got there, you pay your 10 cents. You get your share of whatever concoction there is – and you dance. It used to start from Friday night right through Sunday evening.

Here lies a continuum – embodied and intentionally unintentional – of Marabi's improvisational and self-taught musical practices of the 1930s that mabarebare alleges to have come from Pretoria. Marabi's musical practices with the use of the organ or piano instruments is reified in the electronic musical practice of Amapiano from Pretoria. An Amapiano that too echoes the musical practices of the keyboard given its eponym, albeit produced with electronic software laced with synthesizers, log drum and on occasion, vocals. There lies an exciting link between Marabi cultural life after the institutionalisation of apartheid in the slums of Marabastad in Pretoria to Johannesburg, that is centered on music-dance parties as part of community life and conviviality. This can similarly be read tangentially with the contemporaneity of Amapiano and the cultural production Sepitori offers. By surfacing Pretoria in some of the musical practices and particularities of Amapiano's cultural production, the research considers these reverberating resonances, frequencies as well as calls-and-responses within the framework of continuums, what I earlier referred to as the musical osmosis of Amapiano.

Theoretical framework: Everyday practices of creative artistic autonomy and survival in post-apartheid township imagination

The poignant line that most people, scholars and activists turn to in speaking about issues of landlessness and placelessness of Black[16] South Africans, is often Sol

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[16] I use the term Black here in relation to Steve Biko's philosophy of a "Black Consciousness" that includes Coloured, Asian and Indian people as Black. However, it is important to acknowledge the historical context of how race and ethnicity have been instrumental in South Africa's history, politics, economy and social life and have subsequently been very hard to shake off because they also come with socio-economic and cultural specificities unique to the country. The imperial Dutch East Indian company introduced racial segregation in the country, while British colonialism maintained it and apartheid made it official through the introduction of formal racial classifications that became

Plaatjie's omnipresent opening line in his magnum opus, *Native Life in South Africa* (1916):

> Awakening on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth.

The Land Act of 1913 is an important socioeconomic and political catalyst of land dispossession in South Africa. However, one needs to bear in mind that the dispossession of land starts much earlier with settler-colonialism when the Dutch landed in Cape Town – the southern tip of Africa – to "develop" a supply station for the Dutch East India Company. The Dutch were later followed by the French Huguenots, Germans and the British, settling and dispossessing the indigenous Africans' land (Simpson 2021: 1). After the Anglo Boer war ended in 1902, the British consolidated their victory by powerfully uniting and making peace with their fellow Europeans (Simpson 2021: 1). Through the 1910 South African Act, the Union of South Africa was formed, followed swiftly by the Land Act in 1913 that allocated 13% barren land to indigenous Africans and the 87% of the country's fertile land to the Europeans (South African Government 1913 Native Land Act Centenary). The passing of the Act entrenched socio-economic inequality for the indigenous people of South Africa, leading to intergenerational poverty that is still prevalent in South African society today (Modise and Mtshiselwa, 2013). In addition, the effects of the 1913 Land Act solidified under the legal recognition of white minority apartheid rule in 1948. Under the oppressive system, the Group Areas Act of 1950 forcibly removed the Black majority population to homelands and poorly planned and serviced township settlements.

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foundational to apartheid laws. Beginning in 1950 under the Population Registration Act, South Africans were classified according to the four official racial categories: 'Native', 'Coloured', 'Asian' or 'white'. The racial classification 'Coloured' in South Africa is nuanced because of its multiracial and multiheritage history that is a result of European colonialism and the intermingling of indigenous African people of the country including the Khoi Khoi, the San and the Bantu. However, post-1994 some people historically classified as 'Coloured' have rejected the term particularly because of its colonial and apartheid history and instead classify as Black and African. Similarly, some people who have historically been classified as 'Coloured' have benefited from their proximity to whiteness when it comes to obtaining better employment, educational, and housing opportunities than Black people, as well as having the possibility of white passing (Brown 2000: 199). Given that race is a social construction often based on arbitrary appearances that nonetheless affect people's material realities and give certain affordances, pass-whites were individuals who obtained legal reclassification as 'white' from the government (Brown 2000: 199). Some of the so-called 'Coloured' people's motivation to pass as white, often with the cooperation of white supporters, took advantage of their relatively closer proximity to whiteness as a survival strategy during apartheid that included ways of improving one's social conditions (Brown 2000: 199). However, because of some of 'Coloured' identity's racial ambiguities, white passing is divisive when it comes to Black Consciousness solidarity as espoused by Biko.

These areas were/are peripheral to urban centres to spatially and racially exclude the population from the country's arable and economically viable land and resources. Fast-forward to post-apartheid South Africa, following democratic elections and a Black government, township landscape infrastructure has largely remained the same, and in some parts of the country, it has further deteriorated. There are even newly developing informal settlements, in much worse conditions than those that the apartheid government developed, both in South African townships and on the outskirts of larger cities post-apartheid. As such, the contemporary township landscape has largely maintained the image and realities of degradation, marginalisation, exclusion and exploitation of Black people despite a new dawn with a Black government. Public service delivery protests, xenophobia, preventable deaths, crime and corruption in municipalities governing these township communities are some of the ontological terrors[17] that have become quotidian and normalised in South African Black townships. However, despite the degradation that came with the effects of colonial cartography and apartheid spatial planning in South African townships that continue to further the systemic entrenchment of Black lives as inferior, cultural and artistic production morph out of townships and often become the zeitgeist. Amapiano is one such zeitgeist and so is Sepitori: everyday creative practices and artistic strategies of "surviving the hood".

The research draws from Black Sonic Studies, particularly in relation to the creative praxes of Black township life and the notion of *refusal* that Black feminist visual culture theorist, Tina M. Campt (2017:10) calls is ''in response to sustained, everyday encounters with exigency and duress that rupture a predictable trajectory of flight''. The notion of refusal is also influenced by literary scholar, Njabulo S. Ndebele framework of *the ordinary* in his collection of essays from 1984-1991, titled *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture*. Ndebele ([1991] 1994: 55) writes about grappling with the fact that even during the most debilitating circumstances of oppression, people find ways to maintain a semblance of normalcy. From applying values retained through tradition and custom, to applying generally observed social behaviours, people find means to survive oppressive circumstances that are often normalised but are certainly not normal. Ndebele ([1991] 2006:71) also proffers that in thinking beyond the social debasement of Black (South African) life, we must also preoccupy ourselves with futurities that:

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[17] I use the term "ontological terror" to specifically relate its syntax to the theorisation of Black nihilism and its potential threats. This is especially influenced by some of the ideas of Calvin L. Warren's book *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism and Emancipation* published in 2018.

> … probe beyond the observable facts, to reveal new worlds where it was previously thought they did not exist, and to reveal process and movement where they were hidden. This way, the social imagination of the oppressed can be extended considerably and made ready in concrete terms to deal with the demands of a complex future.
> The aim is to extend the range of personal and social experience as far as possible in order to contribute to bringing about a highly conscious, sensitive new person in a new society. This, it seems to me, is the function of art in, and its contribution to, the *ongoing revolution in South Africa* (emphasis mine).

As such, the research theoretically frames everyday practices of refusal, some intentional, others contingent and by accident, cited in both Amapiano from Pretoria and the language Sepitori. Both their highly intercultural multiplicities, sociocultural, historical and artistic influence – beyond their common use as entertainment or linguistic communication tools – is being read in this research as praxes of knowledge and cultural production that pays attention to the ordinary. This framework is also sustained by some ideas of Fred Moten and Stefano Harney in their book *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (2013) where they position the notion of “study” – episteme – in the quotidian experiences of social practices that have the potential to be theorised and investigated as exercises of black study and being. Moten and Harney position the notion of (black) study as a criticism to academia – particularly in its selective scholarships of what it considers legitimate knowledge production. Here, my own framework of working with mabarebare follows this criticism as a response in diversifying academia’s monopoly on credible knowledge production. Moten (Moten and Harney 2013: 110) explains their concept of study (which is useful in thinking through the some improvisatory elements of both Amapiano vis-à-vis Sepitori and their ingenuities of citational embodied sound and knowledge cultures) through a communal and social lens of knowledge production such as a rehearsal, workshop, playing in a band, old men sitting on a porch or people working together. By employing the term “study”, Moten and Harney (2013: 110) illustrate how these actives are inherently intellectual. Thus, mabarebare in this research becomes a speculative episteme: a framework and process of enquiry that becomes a valid way of interrogating (everyday) art and cultural practice. This research is thinking *with* Amapiano and its contemporaneity of cultural idioms embedded in the performative contexts of the music's dynamism through registers of rumors. These rumors are generative. They are situated in the pulse of Straata, ko kasi where their heretical syntax is perpetually developed.

Methodology: Deep listening and the curatorial as research-process

The research is explored through a written thesis that engages methods of deeply listening to Amapiano. In addition to this primary practice, the research was conducted through interviews with interlocutors[18] such as music journalists and researchers. Close textual consideration of Amapiano on the internet is engaged as a site of infrastructural growth and development: a legitimate source. Furthermore, I approach the connection of Amapiano in relation to its internet infrastructures from a curatorial perspective.

The way I engage in the practice of deep listening as a methodology is largely solitary, informed by Tsitsi Jaji (2014: 19) via Steve Connor's (1997: 204) observation of the auditory sense as a more open, dynamic and malleable concept of space where the distinctions between who is the observer or who is doing the observing is obscured. This is important because the visual arts' tendency to focus on a singular sense of the ocular can be transformed to encompass the experience of sound into the plurality of space – "one can hear many sounds simultaneously, where it is impossible to see different visual objects at the same time without disposing them in a unified field of vision" (Jaji 2014: 19). By turning to Amapiano's auditory experience through a deep listening methodology, I give way to exploring the music's plural and permeated space.

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[18] I also spoke to popular Bacardi DJ, Hu-Nose (Goitsemang Rakgatlha) who gave me cultural insight on the proclivities of Bacardi music as it appears in Amapiano from Pretoria. This conversation was insightful in its form as a casual conversation that (even though it was intended to fulfil academic prescription on engaging research participants) does not necessarily feature in the thesis because DJ Hu-Nose did not consent to the conversation being shared here. However, I want to acknowledge his contribution. Furthermore, I want to acknowledge such conversations as forms of deep reading too – particularly as it relates to intellectual traditions that are made marginal through their general invisibility in the schema of citational practices in knowledge production here. In some way, this thesis too is written in a form that requires a relinquishing of expectations that come with the conventions of academic research. It is an invitation to the reader to engage other registers of knowing through deep reading that is both linguistically and socially nuanced in its cultural specificities. This also goes back to Harney and Moten's (2013: 110) understanding of the notion of "study".

However, this methodology in the research is undertaken not to privilege a particular sense over another. Instead, the method of deep listening is to take the practice of listening acutely to cultivate the dynamism of meaning-making among the senses, to remind one of how insubstantial thinking of each sense as independent is (Jaji 2014: 19). Jaji's (2014) concept of stereomodernism is useful in thinking about Amapiano music from Pretoria operating within this highly developed, modern and increasingly mobile internet culture that opens the possibilities of not only diasporic collaboration, but also of pan-African solidarity across a plethora of generational continuums in the African diaspora. Stereomodernism is portmanteau of "stereo" and "modernism" developed by Jaji (2014: 14) "as a useful heuristic for analyzing texts and cultural practices that are both political and expressive, activated by black music and operative within the logic of pan-African solidarity". Through her stereomodernism coinage, Jaji (2014: 19-20) notes how musical performance can influence other fields of culture through its common collaborative practices which has the ability to inaugurate ways of convening where solidarity is possible across disciplines and artistic forms such as literature and film, that can have more direct links with political forums.

The research also engages Amapiano through an epistemic justice framework that contextualises its musical practice adding to discourse of Black Sonics as pedagogical. More so, part of outlining Amapiano within the discursivity of knowledge production is to use the curatorial as a method of reading the musical practice's dynamism beyond curating as exhibition output. Here the research draws on Irit Rogoff's (2006: 3) notion of curatorial practice as disparate principles that need not necessarily always be associated with exhibition-making through the display of artworks, but rather as principles preoccupied with the production of knowledge, activism, the circulation of culture and its multiple translations which start to question, model and signal other ways in which arts can be engaged. The curatorial is critical thought that is underpinned by the need to sit in the process of questioning, rather than rushing to cement itself (Rogoff 2006: 3). By sitting with the questions, the curatorial allows knowledge generation that is fundamentally curious, open-ended and unpredictable where the process becomes the research endeavour and knowledge generation. As such, in thinking through "the curatorial" as a method, the research unpacks some of Amapiano infrastructures as what I propose to be curatorial logics.

These are namely: (resource) sharing, mobility and the epicurean excess of monate mpolaye within discourses of partying – groove – as liberatory spaces that advance convivial practices.

Apart from interdisciplinary discourses of visual culture and curatorial discourse, primary research from key interlocutors is engaged. This includes art and culture writers, Percy Mabandu and Setumo-Thebe Mohlomi. Mabandu is an art historian and freelance writer based in Pretoria. He is the author of the book *Yakhal'inkomo – Portrait of a Jazz Classic* (2016). Mohlomi is recognised as one of the writers who were the first to be at the forefront of writing about Amapiano in the public press. He is also a Spotify Playlist Editor in charge of curating editorial playlists on the streaming services app. The streaming services defines their editors as genre, lifestyle, and culture specialists with diverse backgrounds. I also spoke to scholars Rangoato Hlasane and Professor of Sociolinguistics and Linguistic Anthropology at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), Thabo Ditsele. Hlasane is a cultural worker, writer, archivist, DJ and co-founder of Keleketla! Library as well as a lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand. As DJ Mma Tseleng, Hlasane plays music to expand his research into the social, political and economic significance of South African music, with Kwaito at the centre of his work. Prof. Ditsele is a leading researcher on Sepitori. His research interests lie in "contact languages"[19] (mainly Sepitori and Tsotsitaal); language and identity; multilingualism; language attitudes and language policy and planning.

It is important to state that inasmuch as I wanted to speak to a plethora of Pitori-influenced Amapiano artists such as: Focalistic, Vigro Deep, DBN Gogo, Ch'cco, Pabi Cooper, Lamiez Holsworthy and DJ Sumbody, it was a very cumbersome task to get a hold of them; certain barriers to entry are in place through publicists and managers inevitably making my attempts more complicated than I imagined. Managers to Lamiez Holsworthy were fast to respond. She was on maternity leave. While DJ Sumbody had tragically passed away at the time of my interviews in 2023. Despite lukewarm or no interest in my research, I proceeded, knowing that Amapiano artists rarely want to speak with the media and generally treat interviews or publicity with some trepidation and suspicion. In an op-ed published by the Mail & Guardian, art and culture writer Sabelo Mkhabela (2021) asks: “Does trad media get amapiano?” Mkhabela (2021) outlines how various media platforms in the country had been stonewalled by ’Piano artists with reasons varying from general unprofessionalism; a disregard for traditional media platforms (especially considering how the music has catapulted without much help from the mainstream media until it took off globally) as well as language barriers and comfort levels. He identifies the responsibility of the division between mainstream media and Amapiano on both parties, offering that local media platforms should enthusiastically write about emerging popular cultures before they become global phenomenon (Mkhabela, 2021). He concludes by saying that even though artists are nowadays open to having conversations with each other – through platforms such as podcasts – it is important that they extend these conversations to the media and open themselves to external criticism (Mkhabela, 2021).

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[19] Contact languages occur when speakers of two or more languages or language varieties interact and influence each other. These languages are often considered as lingua franca such as pidgins, creoles or mixed languages.

Fortunately, this research welcomes such ambivalences from Amapiano artists who fracture power dynamics that are used to being the status quo. That is one of the characteristics that make the musical practice so disruptive. It is in such disruptions that agency is forged, surfacing the suspicions of mainstream co-option and what that does to its cultural production and independent infrastructures of relation. This also poses as a kind of critique of the production of knowledge in academia and broader official cultural institutions such as the media that assumes unrestricted access to cultural production as the so-called arbiter of knowledge sharing and infomation. This research acknowledges the irony without being dissuaded. Amapiano artists refusing interviews as per how traditional media and standardised forms of qualitative research demands, are themselves also engaging in practices of being fugitive in how they choose or choose not to share what there are doing: guarding their knowhow. This is an emblematic crossroad in the research’s theoretical and conceptual preoccupation of thinking with Amapiano’s musical practice as that of refusal. This refusal inadvertently forces me to tune into my framework of mabarebare in consolidating other knowledges of Amapiano that do not solely depend on its musicians. This also means that the knowledge-plurality of my research encourages fugitive breaks in deducible legibility, much like Sepitori’s multilinguistic dynamisms where its knowledgebase is tacitly stable without depending on orthography for its knowledge-filled linguistic validation. My research embodies Rogoff's (2006: 2) criticality where "…the point of any form of critical, theoretical activity was never resolution but rather heightened awareness and the point of criticality is not to find an answer but rather to access a different mode of inhabitation". As such, this research leads with mabarebare's heretical frameworks that are not interested in absolute truths as a curatorial research-based endeavour and process.

Searching for Amapiano and Sepitori in and out of academia

When I began this research in 2021, there was no scholarly study on Amapiano, let alone Amapiano from Pretoria. This is mostly because from the perspective of the music industry, it is still "a new genre" of dance music irrespective of its long lineage in South African pop music. Nevertheless, it is not surprising because South African popular music and sonic cultures have largely been ignored in academic scholarship. This is outside of South African jazz (Coplan, 1975; McGregor, 1997; Masekela and Cheers, 2004; Ansell, 2004; Muller, 2004; Devroop, 2007; Benjamin and Muller, 2011; Ballatine, 2012; Douglas, 2013; Jonker, 2015 and Mabandu, 2016) and the academic books on Kwaito (Steingo 2016; Mthembu and Ndabeni, 2018; Livermore, 2020), as well as dissertations and journal articles on Kwaito or tangential to Kwaito (Impey, 2001; Coplan, 2001; Peterson, 2003; Satyo, 2008; Steingo 2008; Motsemme, 2011; Livermore, 2014 Simmert, 2015; Ditsela, 2017; Steingo, 2017; Lobley, 2018; Mdlalose, 2019). As for Sepitori, the same applies with the gap in research, with most journal articles looking at the language mainly from a linguistic point of view (Ditsele & Mann, 2014; Bornman, Álvarez-Mosquera & Seti, 2018; Manca, 2018; Ditsele, 2019; Wagner, Ditsele & Makgato, 2020). Unfortunately, Black South African township popular musical forms and culture have not found adequate scholarly treatment in academia, despite South African electronic House music's international reach and the fact that in 2015 the country was declared the biggest House music market per capita in the world.[20] In fact, sociologist Nthabiseng Motsemme (2011: 143) pointed out the gap of scholarship on the sonic and phonic materiality of township life in South Africa more than a decade ago and it still resonates today, writing:

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[20] On a 2015 Cable News Network (CNN) travel article under the title *African Voices*, the news media company charted a brief history of South Africa's popular musical practices, citing Ultra South Africa's Shaun Duvet in an interview with *VICE* news, about South Africa being the biggest purchaser of deep house music per capita in the world.

> I still maintain that in any study of township life, sounds constitute a central aspect of the texture and fabric of everyday life. The constant backdrop of children playing games, sounds of the latest *kwaito,* hip-hop and R & B sounds, minibus taxis hooting at intervals, cars zooming by narrow streets, churchgoers singing religious melodies as they walk the street in unison to visit the sick and mourn with neighbours, politicians announcing community meetings over loudspeakers, and a familiar melody as a woman goes about doing her daily chores, allow one to understand *township moods.* This is the rhythmic backdrop within which township bodies move through this space. Omitting this aspect of sound from the research constitutes a gap that I still propose needs to be filled by future studies if we are truly to formulate complicated readings of these marginalised urban spaces.

The research interest in the contemporary sounds of Amapiano from Pretoria alongside Sepitori provides an impetus in thinking through South Africa's House music landscape. Bearing in mind the osmotic nature of both the musical practice and language, the research charts some dimensions of South African township social life. The lens in which the research looks at Amapiano is exciting, treating the musical practice as sonic ontologies of township Black being.

Given that Amapiano as a musical practice is contemporaneous and evolving, this section serves as a literature review to examine some historical, socio-political and economic developments that influenced South Africa's EDM scene broadly and more specifically to the region of Pretoria in relation to Amapiano. Part of this chapter also briefly looks at the impact of Chicago House Music on the influence of Kwaito and South African House music post-apartheid. Additionally, because mabarebare generally claim Pretoria as the mecca of (Deep) House music in South Africa (Untitled Music, n.d., Guttridge-Hewit, 2023), establishing what informs the city's cultural character is relevant.

Historical, socio-political and economic influences of Electronic Dance/House music in South Africa

The research draws from the history of South African music to excavate suggestions that brings us to the EDM cultures of Pretoria in the contemporary such as Amapiano. An important resource for my research includes David Bellin Coplan's book *In Township Tonight!: Three Centuries of South African Black Music and Theatres* [1985 (2008)]. The book is considered a pioneering seminal text on Black South African urban music, dance and theatre. It looks at South African township life and how art and culture was key for everyday survival in very politicised Black communities. It adds broader context of the music cultures pre-1994. Thinking through a periodisation of pre-1994 is important because the political context of apartheid influences the music's political messaging as well as its production. Because I speak of Amapiano as inherently osmotic, going back into these historical periods illustrates something worthwhile for the research. For example, as it relates to musical production or the precipitation of Kwaito, on *Magic Sessions: DJ Christos* (2011) – a short YouTube by Christos Katsaitis published under *House Afrika,* a record label established in 1994 dedicated to the global heritage of House music in the African continent – explains how he got his name as "The Godfather of House" (in South Africa). He also tells the story in another documentary *How Club Culture Started in 90s Johannesburg – Rave and Resistance* (2019) directed by Zandi Tisani. Both these films look at the beginning of the roots of House music in South Africa as starting with the records of Chicago House music in the late 1980s that found their way to South Africa. However, an opportunity of experimentation and innovation with House music of a South African localisation happened because of the anti-apartheid cultural boycotts: Chicago records could no longer reach South African shores (at least legally). This resulted in South African House music pioneers like Christos, Oskido (Oscar Sibonginkosi Mdlongwa) and Don Laka producing cover songs and experimenting with remixing and sampling, eventually resulting in a company called Kalawa. This subsequently developed into Kwaito, which DJ Christos argues is Dance music and as such, House music.

In Max Mojapelo's seminal book *Beyond Memory: Recording the History, Moments and Memories of South African Music* (2008), he looks at South African House music experimentation from an insider perspective of late 20th and early 21st centuries. Having worked as a DJ for the South African National Broadcasting Cooperation (SABC) Mojapelo gives us his own assessment of Kwaito music in conversation with Marabi music, Mbaqanga, Boeremusiek, Bubblegum and Kwela. The book is a nascent archive of the importance of documenting the musical histories of South African (popular) music since the 1930s with the aim of cultural preservation for future generations. Meanwhile, *Composing Apartheid: Music for and against Apartheid* (2008) edited by Grant Olwage provides contextual scholarship of apartheid musical histories that helps me think about my research in the “history of the present” as Olwage (2008: 2) puts it quoting Foucault in his assessments of genealogising. This book opens questions of quotidian creative practices in South Africa speaking to a past-present-future tradition of reverberation – reverberation that I see in the musical osmotic nature of Amapiano. Another element of this book’s useful scholarship is its focus on music cultures seeped in exilic natures of mobility, historical outlines of South Africa’s music cultures of the everydayness of song and dance as well as the historical context of South African hymnody and the Church.

(Chicago) House music: Black township refusals, ontology and technology

Chicago House is indexical to the origins of House music from the mid to late 1980s in Chicago. The beginning of House music follows the night Disco died: Chicago’s *Disco Demolition Night.*[21] During this gradual decline of Disco records, Chicago radio DJs known as *The Hot Mix 5* and club DJs pioneers such as Ron Hardy, Larry Levan and Frankie Knuckles amongst others played various styles of dance music that included or sampled Disco records. These dance music pioneers added various textures to these records such as sound effects, drum machines and unique electronic experimental instrumentations that were only available on privately pressed vinyl records, mixtapes or heard exclusively at the clubs the DJs played at. With these pioneers, a new genre of electronic dance music started to happen: House music (Brewster and Broughton 1999: 327-328). Characterised by a repetitive four-on-the-floor beat and a typical tempo of 120 to 130 beats per minute, the music was played mostly in underground clubs of the 1980s in Chicago and altered Disco records to give them a more mechanical beat and deeper basslines (Brewster and

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[21] Disco Demolition Night was a Major League Baseball promotion in 1979 at Comiskey Park in Chicago that ended in a riot. At the climax of the event, a crate filled with disco records was blown up on the field between games of the twi-night doubleheader between the Chicago White Sox and the Detroit Tigers. Many of those in attendance had come to see the explosion rather than the games and rushed onto the field after the detonation. In the late 1970s, dance-oriented disco was the most popular music genre in the United States, particularly after being featured in hit films such as *Saturday Night Fever* (1977). However, disco sparked a major backlash from rock music fans — an opposition prominent enough that the White Sox — seeking to fill seats at Comiskey Park during a lacklustre season, engaged Chicago shock jock and anti-disco campaigner Steve Dahl for the promotion.

Broughton 1999: 314-341). Given the enormous influence Chicago House music has had on popular music broadly, it is no surprise that it would reach South African shores in a myriad of ways during the cultural apartheid boycotts and post 1994, influencing the country's sonic and music landscape forever. One scholar who has engaged with this particular topic is scholar and electronic music producer, Tom Simmert in his paper titled *Media and mobility in South African House Music* (2012). Simmert investigates how House music was disseminated to the country and how it had developed and continues to develop locally. He also looks at how process plays a role between the music and the human.

Part of searching for Amapiano in academic literature is to look at the development of House music and its influence globally. There are several scholars and documentaries that investigate the influence of House music (Brewster and Broughton, 1999 and Salkind, 2019). Salkind's *Do You Remember House? Chicago's Queer of Color Undergrounds* (2019) is particularly refreshing and extensively researched publication. Salkind argues that the adaptation and fluidity of House music by crossover communities in its first decade influenced the ways in which Chicago's producers, DJs, dancers and promoters today re-remember and mobilise the genre as an archive of collectivity, congregation and community. Whereas Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton's *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life* (1999) contextualises the history of the DJ as a powerful force shaping the music industry. Granted that House music is largely shaped by the DJ's experimentation and music selection, this book is relevant to my research not just around Chicago House, but on the centrality of the club DJ as one of the significant influencers of and on popular music. The biggest catalyst of Amapiano, after the producer is the DJ. Brewster and Broughton (1999) argue that – through chronicling the first record played over airwaves to House, Hip Hop, Techno and beyond – the DJ is an "unsung hero" of popular music and is an artist themself. Similarly, documentaries such as *Pump Up The Volume: A History of House Music* (2001) and *I Was There When House Took Over The World* (2017) – both created by British television Channel 4 – are also resources helpful to my research. From the story of House music's origins and its pioneers speaking for themselves, to the ascent of the music globally. The documentaries provide some perspective from House music's most iconic artists such as Frankie Knuckles, Vince Lawrence, Ron Hardy and Marshall Jefferson. Most importantly, the documentaries also reveal how the music simultaneously produced other divergent styles of House such as Deep House, Acid House and other dance music genres in major American cities including Techno in Detroit and Garage in New York. Mapping out the historical context of House music is important not only as a contextual container of theorising the musical genre, but also situating it within theories of Black fugitivity and futurity that made its development possible. Because this research is interested in Amapiano vis-à-vis other musical practices, House music being one of its referential containers sonically in terms of form, what sonic ontological phenomena can be extrapolated from the two? Here, it is useful to think about House music itself as a musical practice created by the African American and Latin American LGBTQI+ communities who were resisting queerphobia – creating a safe space of Blackness in its multiplicity in a nightclub called *The Warehouse* that first opened its doors in 1977 in Chicago (Sumner, 2017). One can connect the relationship of House music and creating Black ontological spaces of fugitivity in the club. The term House is not only a name for this significant electronic music but similarly etymologically connects it once more with the gay ballroom culture of *Houses* connoting to structures of kinship by the queer community to not only survive, but also refuse the twin oppressions of white supremacy and homophobia (Bailey, 2021). Meanwhile, Amapiano was birthed from the sonic ontologies of Kwaito, a soundtrack often used as a temporal marker of post-apartheid South Africa. The spirit of liberation sounds out Kwaito's musical practice and the aspirations of a new South Africa for especially its Black marginalised people. Amapiano still borrows from these tropes, this post-apartheid aspirational futurity, because the consequences of apartheid still affect the country's youth today. This includes Amapiano producers as well as some of its biggest supporters, Black South African youth.

Much like House music's early inventions in Chicago, Amapiano too depends on digital technologies. They are central to the music production and ecosystem of dissemination. Part of Amapiano's musical growth is the dynamism of its radical sharing and collaborative ethos. Music writer and Spotify editor, Setumo-Thebe Mohlomi (2019) explores how Amapiano songs are constantly created and shared on online sharing platforms. That democratisation of the music's cultural production is an exciting essence of the music, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic where people all over the world engaged with the sound through the sheer volume of its online presence on social media. Certainly, the link of technology and popular music is not necessarily new to Amapiano or House music and its offspring subgenres. Hip Hop's innovations can also be attributed to this relationship. In a Netflix documentary on Hip Hop's evolution, music critic George Nelson (2016) argues how Hip Hop's foundation in New York can be attributed to the influence of Grandmaster Flash's innovation with the use of the turntable, now considered essential to electronic music-making especially in DJing. Making a clear connection of the agency of the Black innovator and technology. He (Nelson, 2016) argues how the turntable was not only something to merely play records on but also became a musical instrument unto itself.

This reflection of Grandmaster Flash by Nelson is relevant to my research, albeit with a different context. The relationship of technique, technology and the innovative Black musician is indexical to many Black musical practices. Louis Chude-Sokei (2015) also argues that there are intersections between the histories of race and technology in a world made by slavery, colonial conquest and industrialisation. Chude-Sokei argues that the junctures of these facets are part of a history where music has been central to the equation that links Black people and machines. Like Alexander G. Weheliye in *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (2005), Chunde-Sokei argues that sonic and musical technologies are an integral part of Black culture, which in turn is a significant contribution to Western modernity. In charting a diasporic sonic afro-modernity, Weheliye (2005) weaves intentional suggestions of solidarity reverberating through sound. *Phonograhies* (2005) imagines the African diaspora as a virtual sonic landscape that is marked by the 20th and 21st centuries; the circulation of culture through technological reproductions: records and tapes, dubbing, sampling, remixing and more. Here, Chude-Sokei and Weheliye help me think of Amapiano's technological reliance and mechanical process of recording the music and sharing it (mostly independent of the big record companies that would usually get the lion's share of the music's profits) as seeped in a fugitive refusal espoused by the independent Black innovator. Amapiano musicians have found that with the advent of the internet and its possibilities, the means of cultural production has exponentially democratised where their roles as artist-indie businesses have catapulted the creative freedom in their music.

Furthermore, how does that fugitivity of Amapiano from its locale in Pretoria, find global resonance through the internet outside of its region? Jaji's *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music and Pan-African Solidarity* (2014) is useful in answering that question. It helps me think through a charting of the semiotic relationship of House music from Chicago and its resonance in South Africa. This includes its oscillatory patterns of reverberation in contemporary genres such as Amapiano that are being embraced in the diaspora. Jaji's book looks at how Africans of various musical cultures have engaged with certain forms of African American music and its representations from 1890-2011 to produce a new cultural history attesting to pan-Africanism's ongoing and open theoretical potential. Jaji (2014: 69) argues that African American popular music appealed to Africans from the continent as a unit of cultural prestige; a site of pleasure and an expressive form encoded with strategies of creative resistance to racial hegemony.

*Pitori'*s cultural character in relation to Sepitori

Pretoria's cultural character is connected to its musical and cultural landscape, street savviness and reputation of the city establishing the first psychiatric institution in the Transvaal in 1892 (Plug and Roos 1992: 219). This section of the research looks at literature that investigates the city's popular language in townships: Sepitori. It also looks at the roots of Bacardi House music that started in Atteridgeville, named after the alcoholic cider *Bacardi Beezer,* that was popular in Pretoria's township taverns during the inception of the music genre. In the third part of the *Future Sound of Mzansi* (2015) documentary, the focus is on Bacardi House which was pioneered by DJs such as Mujava whose track *Township Funk* (2005, 2006) became instrumental in helping South African Dance music go global (Orlov, 2009 and Sherburne, 2019). *Township Funk* (2005, 2006) was not just a staple song for taxis, house parties and clubs in Pretoria's townships and surrounds, the song crossed over to Europe, "echoing the snap and swing of UK funky, a bouncy style of percussive house popular at the time in London" (Sherburne, 2019). I also look at dance music genres that cement Pretoria's cultural character such as Deep House/mid-tempo House. As a source where one can hear the illusive Mujava speak for himself, Spoek Mathabo and Lebogang Rasethaba's *Future Sound of Mzansi* (2015) is an incredible archive as a documentary – one of its kind – that explores South Africa's sonic cultural landscape post 1994. The sonic and musical focus of the documentary is electronic music, looking at the latest scenes of the country's multiple electronic music sub-genres including Gqom from KwaZulu-Natal; Barcadi from Pretoria; Shaangan Electro from Limpopo and Johannesburg; and the various, white-dominated electronic music styles in Cape Town.

Meanwhile, on Sepitori, Bornman, E.P, Álvarez-Mosquera and Seti, V. (2018: 30), reiterated in Ditshele's (2019: 4) research on the social media phenomena of *#LearnSepitori* notes that the language is perceived to be more prestigious than standard varieties of Southern Bantu languages. According to Bornman et al. (2018: 30) people that migrate to the city tend to assimilate into Sepitori's sociolinguistics as way of separating themselves from their rural backgrounds. The researchers also found out that even with speakers that are from the outskirts of the municipality, they too attempt to learn and speak Sepitori as a way of accessing both its linguistic repertoires and positive social signals they perform through their assimilated identities (Bornman et al. 2018: 30). This include urban culture, street savviness and social recognition of being perceived as cool (Bornman et al. 2018: 30).

South African music landscape post 1994

House Music is currently the biggest and most popular genre both in South Africa and globally[22], yet extensive research on the subject is still to emerge in academic literature. As is often the case with academic scholarship, categorisation of knowledge production of aesthetics and cultural creativity – dichotomies within distinctions between popular culture and art; or high art and low art – determine which scholarship is prioritised, often Eurocentric scholarship. In a quest to fill in this gap, my research charts, loosely, the country's musical landscape post 1994 by looking at documentaries and media interviews with the pioneers of House music in South Africa post 1994.

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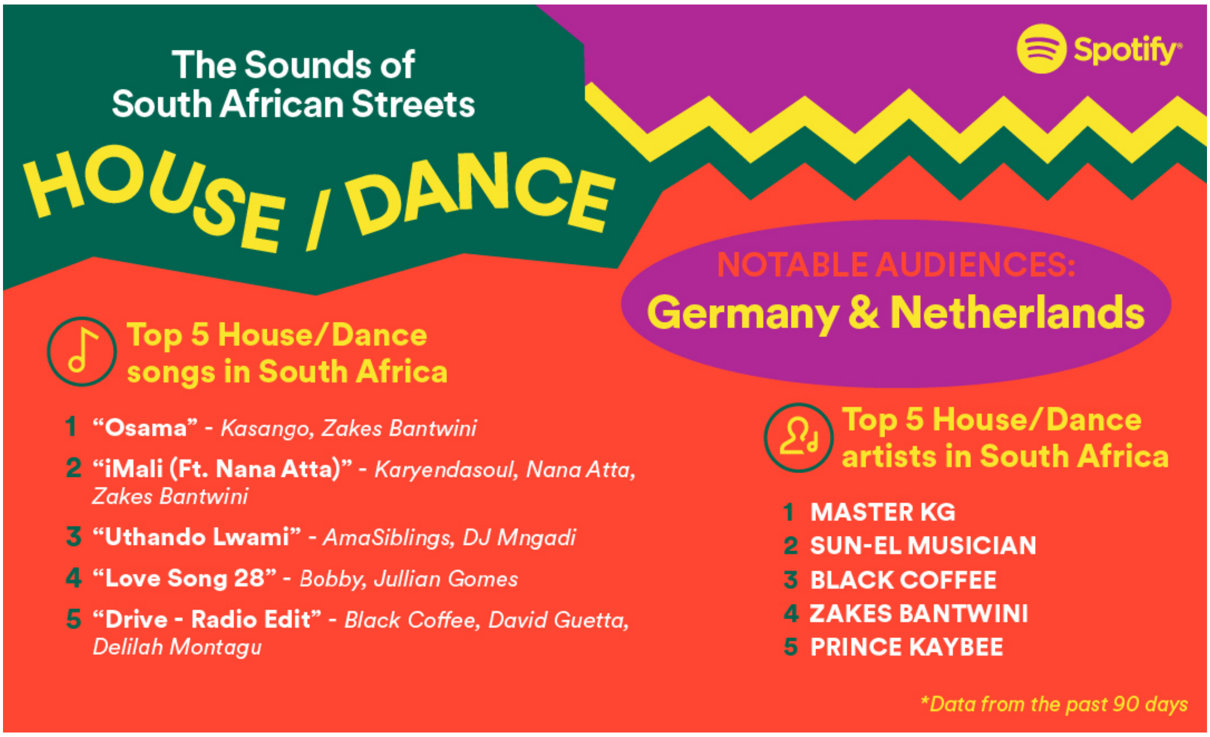
[22] As part of their *For the Record* section on their website where they post noteworthy data, digital streaming provider (DSP) Spotify released data on the eve of South Africa's Freedom Day public holiday on the 26 April 2022, accompanied by a short documentary revealing the country's unique relationship to its music cultures and freedom, particularly focusing on Amapiano, Kwaito, Gqom and House/Dance. Spotify revealed that as per their platform's streaming trends, from January, February and March of 2022, South African-based music lovers led Amapiano listens and generated a whopping 149 million streams of tracks in the genre on Spotify. Meanwhile, combined listeners in the U.K., U.S., Canada, the Netherlands, and France generated streams reaching 42 million. Whereas streams generated in Nigeria, Botswana, Kenya, and Namibia came up to 16 million. In total, the top 10 countries streaming Amapiano over those past months produced a total of 207 million streams.



Spotify

The Sounds of
South African Streets

HOUSE / DANCE

NOTABLE AUDIENCES:
Germany & Netherlands

Top 5 House/Dance songs in South Africa

1 "Osama" - *Kasango, Zakes Bantwini*
2 "iMali (Ft. Nana Atta)" - *Karyendasoul, Nana Atta, Zakes Bantwini*
3 "Uthando Lwami" - *AmaSiblings, DJ Mngadi*
4 "Love Song 28" - *Bobby, Jullian Gomes*
5 "Drive - Radio Edit" - *Black Coffee, David Guetta, Delilah Montagu*

Top 5 House/Dance artists in South Africa

1 MASTER KG
2 SUN-EL MUSICIAN
3 BLACK COFFEE
4 ZAKES BANTWINI
5 PRINCE KAYBEE

**Data from the past 90 days*

Figure 3:
Spotify data from January, February and March 2022 illustrating the reach of South African House Music both locally and globally. 2022. Spotify.

How Club Culture Started in 90s Johannesburg – Rave and Resistance (2019) is an insightful documentary which takes you on a journey of the origins of Dance music in South Africa in the early 1990s. Despite the suggestion in the title that the focus would be on Johannesburg, pioneers interviewed in the documentary make very specific references to how important Pretoria was as a cultural and sonic anchor in the inception and reception of South African Dance music also known as Kwaito. The focus of South African sonic and music cultures post 1994 become relevant for my research because it begins with Kwaito as an anchoring base. Even though there is still more research to be done on Kwaito, texts and books that are useful to my research include Simon Stephens essay on Kwaito in the book *Senses of culture: South African Cultural Studies* (2000) edited by Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael. Gavin Steingo's book *Kwaito's Promise: Music and the Aesthetics of Freedom in South Africa* (2016) examines how Kwaito developed with the democracy of South Africa, arguing that Kwaito is less a form of escapism or illusion that hides reality than it is an aesthetic practice of multiplying sensory realities and as such generating new possibilities. Steingo (2016: 2) notes how "dealing with freedom is hard: if music during apartheid expressed the struggle *for* freedom, then Kwaito expresses the struggle *of* freedom." The book is a dedication to Kwaito's aesthetics of freedom, to Kwaito's promise. Whereas *Born To Kwaito: Reflections on the Kwaito Generation* (2017) by Esinako Ndabeni and Sihle Mthembu investigates the meaning of Kwaito music in the contemporary. This research draws on the inevitable evolution of how House music in this country continues to evolve and create offshoot divergent styles of music with Kwaito being the source. Ndabeni and Mthembu engage with this aspect that becomes relevant to my research because the book presents a timely and active analysis of Kwaito's history as it settles and finds its meaning contemporaneously.

Finally, Xavier Livermon's *Kwaito Bodies: Remastering Space and Subjectivity in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (2020) is similarly relevant to my research in its investigation of youth culture and where it intertwines with performance practices in Kwaito's music and aesthetics. Although Livermon's book is based on his fieldwork in Johannesburg nightclubs, there are some intersections when it comes to South Africa's broader politics of freedom. Turning to the music of young South African people can be revelatory in examining the country's socio-political landscape through the cultural and artistic artefacts of Black youth creativity, often born from necessity.

Sonic Black Studies

The ingenuity of the EDM cultures of Pretoria this research references is in its improvisatory, DIY-nature that generates what artist Spoek Matambo calls "Township Tech" (Macfarlane, 2014). I draw heavily on logics about a localised lo-fi electronic sound that often starts underground – like with many experimental electronic music everywhere. Bogues' (2021) framework of heritage as heresy is useful. He (Bogues, 2021) argues for preoccupations of thinking about Black Sonics in relation to socio-cultural phenomena: taking Black music as an aesthetic expression – a language. Bogues (2021) tells us that the music composition of people who are creative and not necessarily classically or technically trained in the discipline of music, engage in liberatory practices of freedom where labour and the market is not necessarily the primary inspiration of music-making. Nor, in such a configuration, is making money the primary goal. The lo-fi DIY sound – where creative process is not hindered by market-oriented outcomes of fame and fortune; industrial capitalism and mass reproduction – is possible until of course the mainstream market co-opts the music.

Tina M. Campt's *Listening To Images* (2017) offers a method through which to theorise refusal and Black futurity. Campt reads refusal and Black futurity through a Black feminist lens as profoundly grammatical in nature when it comes to a mode of analysing and "listening to" the quotidian experiences of Black life. She speaks about Black futurity as not necessarily a question of hope, but rather ideas linked with aspiration and the notion of grammatical "tense". Because my research is interested in reading Amapiano as a grammatical practice of township refusals for containment, reified in this sound culture whose ecosystems are premised on other sonic cultures that have shaped them from Black pan-African sonic cultures in the diaspora, Campt's (2017: 96) definition of refusal is instructive. She (2017: 96) explains it as being:

> … defined less by opposition or "resistance", and more by a refusal of the very premises that have reduced the lived experience of Blackness to pathology and irreconcilability in the logic of white supremacy.

Like the concept of fugitivity, *practicing refusal* highlights the tense relations between *acts* of flight and escape, and creative *practices of refusal* – nimble and strategic practices that undermine the categories of the dominant. Thus, the research borrows from Campt to think about Amapiano as a grammar of refusal in its quotidian existence in the township as a possible tool of fugitive thinking (and planning).

My research, in some parts, was sparked by an Anthony Bogues project by *The Visual Identities in Art and Design (VIAD) Research Centre* at the University of Johannesburg titled *THE IMAGINED NEW / working through alternative archives: the Black Sonic – Black Sonic Heritage as Heresy*. Here the impetus and inspiration I got from the VIAD project is to investigate Amapiano in relation to certain philosophical positions of the Human, such as, to borrow from Bogues' idea of "Black Heritage as Heresy" (2003, 2021), which proposes heretical positions of Black sonic and musical cultures as heritage and/or symbols of culture beyond them as just sites of resistance or entertainment. Bogues' *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals* (2003) explores the Black Radical Tradition evolving from the Caribbean, Africa and the United States as heresy, prophecy and praxis of radical Black thought. He charts these from Rastafari practices to political leaders championing decolonisation. The book recognises radical thought and ideas of Black being as manifesting in these variegated practices of Black life.

As a way of thinking about Amapiano from Pitori within notions of refusal, the musical practice's Black ontological status and yearnings referenced from Kwaito and where this relates to knowledge production, the thesis is divided in three chapters. Chapter one considers the political, social, cultural and creative makeup of South African townships, particularly focusing on Pretoria's townships. In this chapter, Pitori townships are considered through their socio-spatial everyday aspects by contextualising the Sepitori axiom "Straata": the streets of South African townships alongside a trajectory of "di Pina tsa ko kasi" informed by, but beyond the Amapiano musician, Focalistic's sonic signature "Ase Trap tse ke Pina tsa ko kasi". The chapter contextualise Straata vis-à-vis fugitive refusals within South Africa's broader socio-political and historical township phenomenon that have produced collective knowledges such language, culture and music. The latter, music, is also highlighted in the chapter with a Spotify playlist curated to function as socio-spatial documentary of the mobilities of di Pina tsa ko kasi, beyond notions of "genre" in categorising musical practices.

Chapter two is interested in what Kwaito has to do with Sghubu sa Pitori's Amapiano. The chapter surfaces the legacy of Kwaito's sonic ontologies in South Africa, three decades post-apartheid. I pose the question: "what is the temporal marker of post-apartheid and the soundtracks that follow it?" I attempt to answer the question through investigations of Bacardi and its framing in the three-part electronic music travelogue *Future Sounds of Mzansi* (2014) by Spoek Mathambo and Lebogang Rasethaba. I also expand on Black sonic ontologies in relation to desires of post-apartheid futurities in South African electronic house music, informed by Mathambo's coinage "apartheid after-party" in contextualising the film and musical practices as soundtracks that play at apartheid's funeral, or – to add a Sepitori colloquialism – at apartheid's wie sien ons. The chapter also looks at Amapiano musical osmotic practice as a cultural logic in relation to Bacardi House music that was first innovated in the mid 2000s and has seen a comeback in contemporary Amapiano songs.

The third and final chapter explores the broader knowledge production of Amapiano through notions of epistemic justice, its curatorial logics and infrastructures as well as the context of Covid-19 and the impact of its ecosystems. The chapter engages with Hlasane's insights on a long reading of Amapiano in relation to a lineage of Black popular music cultures that engage in praxes of epistemic justice. This thread is similarly sustained by engagements from Mabandu who posits ideas of thinking about Amapiano's cultural production and infrastructures through Antonio Gramsci's concept of "the organic intellectual" and further extending it in relation to Grant Farred coinage of "vernacular intellectuals". The chapter also investigates some of Amapiano's curatorial logics and infrastructures, contextualising them as inherent methods of both praxis and Being. These include (resource) sharing, mobility and monate mpolaye as an epicurean discourse framed around pleasure-seeking through partying, or what is known as "groove" in South African popular culture.

The confluence of the three chapters allows for a thesis that explores Sghubu sa Pitori in relation to Amapiano. I look at the musical practices' broader infrastructures and institutions of mobility and agency. The research elucidates on the musical practices' criticality when it comes to the context that produces its cultural productions. The genre's musical osmosis is fugitive, revealing and obscuring ideas of the single genius artist with its tacit references to the collective musical practices of di Pina tsa ko kasi. I think with Amapiano's dynamism as it is constantly changing, characteristic of our present precarious moments. This thesis thinks with 'Piano – depending on a framework of mabarebare as a methodology that experiments with the genre's phenomena and socio-political idioms in public performance cultures.

Chapter 1: Bana ba Straata

1.1. *[Ase Trap tse ke] Pina tsa ko Kasi*[23] as a lens of investigating fugitive refusals of Straata and Sepitori:

Thinking and writing about South African urban townships within the strict confines of architectural spatial planning and apartheid legislative policy is limiting for this research's inquiries and provocations. More so, even before apartheid was declared legal from 1948-1994, it would still be simplistic to write about townships in relation to colonial stratifications of urban cartography and the township as merely a labour camp for the South African Mineral Revolution. Even more erroneous would be to speak about townships in relation to a pre-colonial romanticised fiction of an indigenous (Southern) African "traditional" landscape. Art historian Pfunzo Sidogi (2020: 11) offers the term "black urbanisms" vis-à-vis townships to consider the socio-economic, political and cultural dynamisms – mobilities – of townships and how they influence artworks made by Black South African modern artists from townships. Sidogi (2020: 11) argues that the term:

> … debunk[s] the rural-urban dichotomy with all its attendant binaries, such as tradition-modernity, primitive-civilized, by reframing so-called townships and transitional art as intentioned portrayals of complex black urbanisms in their varied and conflicting manifestations.

Meanwhile, historian Jacob Dlamini (2009: 119) problematises the predominant scholarship about South African townships focusing on *only* the realities of their impoverishment through motifs of "the underprivileged"; "previously disadvantaged areas" or "townships as warehouses of labour". He maintains that such descriptors tell us nothing about how the people who reside in the 300-odd spaces relegated as Black townships in South Africa actually live (Dlamini 2009: 119). Therefore, this chapter attempts to not speak of the township from disciplinarian vantage points of plentiful academic scholarship, namely architecture, cartography, the linearity of historicity and development studies. Instead, this chapter considers the socio-spatial everyday aspects of Pitori's townships[24] through the popular Sepitori axiom of "Straata". The chapter unpacks this preoccupation with the sonic materiality of "di Pina tsa ko kasi": part of a sonic signature by Amapiano superstar from Pretoria, Focalistic, who also goes by the self-proclaimed secondary nickname "Presidente ya Straata", loosely "President of the Streets". However, even though the chapter thinks through Focalistic, it also goes beyond him as a reference to think about the social practices of popular Black Sonic cultures in and out of kasi. The chapter develops a theorisation of Straata in relation to fugitive refusals within the cultural production of the South African township, similarly, informed by Black Sonic Studies. Finally, the chapter concludes with a Spotify playlist I curated which functions as a socio-spatial sonic documentary of the mobilities of di Pina tsa ko kasi, beyond "genre-lisations": a term coined by artist and art historian Nomusa Makhubu (2013: 19-21) where she stylistically breaks down the word "generalisation" to "genre-lisation" as a way of questioning how African cultural production in Art History tends to be read in monolithic ways through generalised and sometimes arbitrarily constructed thematic categories.

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[23] I have grammatically broken down Focalistic's sonic signature trademark "Ase Trap tse ke Pina tsa ko Kasi" through parenthesis to illustrate its operations within two dynamic musical practices that its refusal oscillates in negation to. Trap music being the first musical practice in square parenthesis and "Pina tsa ko Kasi" sans parenthesis as indicative of Focalistic's self-proclaimed placement of where his music is situated in.

1.2. Contextualising Straata through di Pina tsa ko Kasi

Engaging Pretoria's Black township cultural production through the Black Sonic includes writing about the township from my embodied, lived experience as a method in this chapter. In other words, engaging my body, in movement and in (re)memory[25] as a knowledge generating tool about Pretoria's Black townships, having grown up in Ga-rankuwa Zone 6 with relatives and various points of connections in Pitori. As such, this chapter takes seriously spatial composition scholar, Abdoumaliq Simone's (2004) argument to see and engage "people as infrastructure" by considering the socio-spatial aspects of Pitori's townships within the broader politics and history of townships in the country.

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[24] Namely Ga-rankuwa, Mabopane, Soshanguve, Mamelodi, Atteridgeville, Eesterus and Hammanskraal.

[25] Re-memory is a term coined by Toni Morrison to speak to recollection and remembering as in resembling the members of the body, the family, the population of the past through radical imagination. Here memory metamorphosises itself into metaphorical and imagistic associations.

Although Simone (2004: 407) applies his concept within the context of inner-city Johannesburg, his coinage – “people as infrastructure” – is applicable as a methodology and praxis of space making and (re)claiming in contexts marked with economic allegiances among residents who have been systematically marginalised from and immiserated by urban life. By applying the notion of people as infrastructure, one considers the endeavour of space making in the township as agentic. Reflecting on how the people that make up that urban landscape are not just socio-historical participants of only Black township culture but are also what Jacob Dlamini (2009: 113) referencing postcolonial scholar, Achille Mbembe says are “integral to city life in South Africa and deeply embedded in the nation’s social imaginary and political unconscious”.

The linguistic register of Straata, which literally means “streets” in Sepitori, is intrinsically fugitive because of the nature of what a street represents. The denotative meaning of the word “street” is defined as a road in a city or town that has buildings that are usually close together along one or both sides (Cambridge Dictionary). Meanwhile, connotatively, the street is indexical to mobility, transientness, pathways and often, people on the move. Movement determines a street’s dynamism, adding to its functionality as a public space (Harber and Parker 2017: 5). However, these general functions and connotations of streets become socio-political, cultural and historical markers too, especially in a South African township context. Sonically and phenomenologically, because Black townships and urban areas have been historically policed in South Africa, the dynamisms of the streets were different because mobility was curtailed. Straata as a socio-spatial phenomena (which I explain in detail below in terms of the country’s social historical and political nuances) is symbolic in post-apartheid South Africa where mobility becomes (or is) something to be actively reclaimed. Kasi in post-apartheid South Africa is less policed, its population is not only able to move freely, but communities are also able to gather in such a way that was considered illegal during apartheid. Such characteristics markedly changed the aural landscape of the township where today, children playing on the streets and singing all sorts of rhythmic chants accompanying various innovative street games, is an everyday and normal occurrence.

During the fight against apartheid, streets as public spaces for gathering played a significant role. The Township Uprising from 1984 to 1985 marked a period of popular revolt in Black townships in apartheid South Africa, beginning in the Vaal Triangle on 3 September 1984 (SAHO, 2011). However, the uprising moved beyond the regional townships of the Vaal, lasting two years and affecting most regions of the country to the point of a national state of emergency being imposed in 1986 (SAHO, 2011). Alongside many other resistance movements against apartheid, the Township Uprising can be considered one of the catalysts that accelerated political mobilisation in South Africa, subsequently leading to a huge shift in the power dynamics that ushered in the winds of change, bringing an end to the apartheid regime (Rueedi 2015: 396). This is what Straata makes possible in its fugitivity as a dynamic socio-spatial public zone: political organising.

These historical protest events in South African townships come with repertoires of cultural production, ones that engage symbiotically with omnipresent ontological possibilities of violent death alongside the possibilities of defiant survival.[26] Despite townships and its Black populous often being connoted to abjection, death and poverty, South African townships and its people have histories of defying those stereotypes and being sources of not only cultural production but also importantly, gallant political freedom. This is why South African social scientists, Nomagugu Ngwenya, Nick Malherbe and Mohamed Seedat, argue that focusing on cultural production within protest events can help develop nuanced perspectives of how politics and the structural collide (Ngwenya et al. 2022: 116). By investigating which symbolic cultural repertoires protesters are drawn from, an exploration of the "performative processes" of protests is possible (Ngwenya et al. 2022: 116). Such a shift to the matrix of cultural meaning within protest begins an investigation of how politics is shaped by an amalgamation of symbols at the disposal of the collective engaging in protest action (Ngwenya et al. 2022: 116). This creates a change where the protestor is a dynamic social actor (Ngwenya et al. 2022: 116), thus a legitimate producer of both knowledge and culture. This is especially evident in the political and cultural repertoires of toyi-toyi: a chanting musical-dance-compound of high stepping and jumping associated with anti-apartheid protests in South African townships that persist in the country's post-apartheid contemporary landscape. In their research on the sojourn of this performance protest symbol of southern Africa, scholars Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor (2020: 924) interviewing former Robben Island prisoners and members of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) write:

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[26] In Steve Biko's seminal text *I Write What I Like* (1987: 75) the Black Consciousness Movement leader writes: "Township life alone makes it a miracle for anyone to live up to adulthood. There we see a situation of absolute want in which black will kill black to be able to survive".

> As Murphy Morobe put it, the MK men brought about 'the translation of the transportation of an art form, or a struggle form, from across the boundaries into prison, from prison into the townships. And you can't think of the UDF, for example, without the toyi-toyi, you can't think of ungovernability of the township politics without the 'toyi-toyi dance'. For South African youth leaders, the 'toyi-toyi dance' was 'as African as big funerals and offered 'an alternative to violent anarchy'. Scholars have credited its upbeat energy with creating 'social solidarity' alongside the 'militarization of youth culture'.

Thus, Straata is at once a description and a method that considers the contextual charged longue durée of operational politics and sociocultural performative life of "the streets" ko kasi. It understands this history to not necessarily be stagnant but contingent to Black township urban life and its perpetual cultural dynamisms. It is a method that operates as a kind of everyday performative practice. Here, Stephanie Newell and Onookome Okome's (2013: 19) "the episteme of the everyday" is useful in sustaining focus on streets in African townships and cities. It helps us historicise African popular cultures as methodologies and creative strategies that document ordinary people's response to the politics responsible for their social lives (Newell and Okome's 2013: 19). Straata as a methodology is situated within the cultural site of creativity preoccupied with certain positions and intellectual practices about the precarity of Black death and survival that inculcates contingencies premised on the fugitivity of the streets. It is Rangoato Hlasane and Neo Muyanga in conversation with Aïcha Diallo (2019: 136-137) who attest to how, because of the constant interruptions of classes in their school years during the 1980s, at the peak of anti-apartheid political protests and the country's state of emergency, the streets became their school classrooms. There demonstrating in the streets became a site of learning where they were on the run, throwing stones and singing liberation struggle songs which ended up being foundational to their (political) conscientisation.

Similarly, Straata's socio-political, historical and aesthetic sensibilities in Black Atlantic popular parlance can be argued as the equivalence of "the Streets" or "the Hood" in African American communities or "the Ends" for the Black Brits. Straata is connoted to a coded philosophical understanding of kasi spatial politics and aesthetics premised on a historical anti-Black world. Dynamics, sensibilities, or even creative strategies dependent on surviving threats on one's Black life. They are not outwardly spoken about, but rather lived and enacted daily in life ko kasi, often spontaneously. Straata produces a congregational social space where the sociolinguistic grammars of Sepitori, such as the oxymoronic meditation monate mpolaye[27] (which I will unpack in a later chapter) can be read in relation to contexts or codified lifestyles of living ko kasi amidst the (sub)consciousness of nightmares, dreams, stasis, possibilities, imaginations, ambiguities and even death and survival – immaterially besides the theoretical colonial and apartheid denotations of township urban and spatial planning.

Furthermore, bearing Simone (2004: 407) in mind, Straata is an infrastructure that both provides for and produces urbanity. An infrastructure can be thought of as particular practices of awareness and collaboration that are possible through individuals' ability to move across and familiarise themselves with various spatial, residential, economic and transactional arrangements (Simone 2004: 407). Inevitably such an infrastructure is heterogenous, individual actors will do different things with one another depending on the places they find themselves in, but the salient point is as an infrastructure, there is an ecosystem where each actor is able to trace past collaboration and make calculated inferences of a willingness to have relations with one another in ways that encompass a multiplicity of social positions (Simone 2004: 407). Thus, through Straata, one engages practices of listening with a desire to register the multisensorial, multicultural, multidisciplinary and fugitive resonances of di Pina tsa ko kasi. It is from here where I contextualise Focalistic's sonic signature *Ase Trap tse ke Pina tsa ko kasi* through his own conceptualisation of the mantra "beyond a genre; bigger than one genre ... with no boxes" (Kekana and Focalistic, 2021). In other words, against "genre-lisations" by placing it in conversation with other musical sound cultures marked by the mobility of the townships within and out of Pitori. It is Focalistic (2022) – using the iconic marker of mobility in the South

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[27] Even though the phrase "monate mpolaye" is not exclusively a Sepitori phrase, in other words the phrase is legible in all Setswana-Sesotho language groups and with similar meanings, the phrase was popularised by the late Pretoria-based Amapiano artist and businessman, DJ Sumbody (Oupa John Sefoka) on his song of the same name featuring Cassper Nyovest, Thebe & Vettis.

African township: the minibus taxi – who often explains that when you come from the township, it is not unusual to hear and see one taxi passing playing international RnB songs such as Tamia and then another taxi passing by playing DJ Mujava. At various points, these songs amalgamate in the aural landscape ko kasi, their histories are easily enjoyed and recognisable by the people who use this form of public transport. This is a common occurrence. For Focalistic (2022) this became a metaphor for the inspiration for his music. He wanted to make music that represented the various sound cultures one would hear driving through townships in South Africa.

Here do we see the taxi marker of the township edifying its mobility both in and out of the township. Furthermore, the music referenced: the award-winning international RnB singer-songwriter Tamia, represents the mobility of how music travels across time and space, making it a mobile cultural artefact. I explore Focalistic, and in turn Amapiano, within a register of refusal in both its multifaceted influences and its situatedness within a plethora of sound cultures from South Africa's township: di Pina tsa ko kasi that instantiates both the musical practices' status of fugitivity and Focalistic's insistence that his music has plural influences. I also extend the framework of refusal to illustrate how, because Sepitori is an unofficial language, it occupies a fugitive status and refuses to be contained by the orthography of official language status in South Africa.

Motsemme (2011: 143) insists that for us to unpack the nuances of township life in predominantly Black marginalised urban spaces in South Africa, we need to study the aural landscape of everyday township sounds. Whereas historian Jacob Dlamini (2009: 115) elucidates on the multisensorial textures and experiences of the Black township adding that it is unpredictable to know when a township will get on your nerves. It might be in August when seasonal changes are introduced in gusto dusty winds that irritate the eyes and throat or it could be in the knack of Dezemba when the sonic atmosphere is littered with a sea of music playing from boomboxes and gumba gumbas (Dlamini 2009: 115). Or perhaps it could be at the crack of dawn when the neighbour's cock is crowing in competition with the bark of a stray dog and minibus taxis hooting for passengers for early-morning business (Dlamini 2009: 115). In essence, Dlamini (2009: 115) concedes that to like ko kasi is to live in a world of plural senses. These multimodal practices – whether read as intentionally or unintentionally performative in the sociocultural landscapes they are produced in – form the creative and intellectual practices of Black township life and survival. These are what I consider the sonic and musical practices of the townships: di Pina tsa ko Kasi.

In his seminal book *In Township Tonight! South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre* (2007), David B. Coplan notes how there is linguistic limitation, at least in English, when it comes to the nature of Black expression in South Africa with the domain of phrases such as "performing arts" and "performance culture". I agree with Coplan's (2007: 7) assertion that the nature of Black expression in South Africa cannot be stringently divided into Western categories of music, dance or drama or the collapse of these categories in the domains of new electronic media. Thus, the phrase "performing arts" is used cognisant of the failure of recognising the close integration of song, lyric, tone, rhythm, movement, rhetoric, visual and plastic arts and drama in African performance (Coplan 2007: 7). Similarly, "performance culture" represents a crucial conjunction between performance and the cultural production inherent in it such as the social crossroads of performers, participants, styles, categories, materials, and occasions of performance (Coplan 2007: 7). With this in mind, we get a sense of the encounter of the performance in relation to a whole complex of different resources, experiences, motivations, and actions belonging to the full range of people involved in the performance. As such, what if we treated these performance cultures as part of an archive or a site of thinking about a different way of social life? What if we treated the sociocultural creative practices of producing culture, intellectual practice and context orientated modalities[28] outside of the litany of stereotypical descriptors associated to the South African township and its perpetual (under)development? As such, di Pina tsa ko kasi function within these ecosystems of cultural production where the sonic – from Motsemme's insistence of paying attention to the everyday sounds ko kasi, to Dlamini's gumba gumbas alongside taxi bleeps accosting commuters en route to work and school in the city centres – intersects with the musical practices and traditions born in performance cultures of township urban life.

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[28] In their project *Ejaradini* interdisciplinary artist collective MADEYOULOOK explore South Africa's colonial gardening inheritance particularly in how gardening has been reimagined by Black South Africans in townships such as Soweto – as a model of thinking about the country's inheritance of the colonial museums in post-apartheid South Africa. Their practice takes everyday Black practices that have either been historically overlooked or deemed inconsequential as a point of reference to encourage a re-observation of and de-familarisation with the everyday of urban South African life.

1.3. Continuums of di Pina tsa ko kasi: Focalistic's interpolated refusal in Hip Hop Pantsula's Motswako

> Motswako is something different all together. People think it's a subgenre of Hip Hop and it's not. Motswako … if you listen to the word itself is Setswana for "mixture". The art of mixing different genres, different melodies, different sounds and backgrounds to form one sound. People have been doing that for years. You'll have Hip Hop guys using jazz sample and they are just rapping or you'll have Dolly Parton doing a song with Ladysmith Black Mambazo: it's Country [music] but its Isicathamiya and it sounds alternative. People have been doing it but they'll give it all kinds of names, "World Music", "Black Music" or "Afro-whatever". People call it all sorts of stuff and we just saying that is Motswako
>
> Hip Hop Pantsula, 2018

Jabba, also known as Hip Hop Pantusla or its shortened version "HHP" pronounced "double HP", was born Jabulani Tsambo. He was a South African musician who performed in many several languages, most notably Setswana while using iconographies of Hip Hop, such as rap as well as the localised aesthetics and self-fashioning of maPantsula[29], burgeoning a musical practice called Motswako. Even though earlier musicians before him, such as Stoan (from the popular Kwaito group Bongo Maffin) was the first to formulate its coinage and experimented with its possibilities of métissage[30], HHP arguably catapulted its general media presence and attention to another level of popularity. People often understand it as a subgenre of Hip Hop, particularly Hip Hop created by musicians from the North West province of South Africa who are mostly Setswana speakers. However, HHP and people like Stoan saw it more as a method of making music, rather than as a genre per se. The introductory quote to this section of the chapter illustrates this point; much like Focalistic, Motswako functions as a musical practice beyond ideas of genre. Motswako embraces a freedom of cultural borrowing and an open-ended multifacetedness regarding the possibilities of what could continue to shape its sound and subsequent continuums. In fact, Stoan (Mac G, 2021) recounts how the term itself is an idiosyncratic interpolation of their song as Bongo Maffin, from another song. However, that song too that Bongo Maffin was inspired by, was also a rendition of another song. Stoan (Mac G, 2021) explains how the term was sparked by their (Bongo Maffin) 1996 song *Summer Tym* which was a remix of another song called *Summertime* and he wanted to find the word “remix” in Setswana to reference the song but could not, the closest he came to finding such a word in Setswana was “motswako” – “mix” in English. The songs in question are musically cross cultural as they are also from across a spectrum of genres and geographies: classic case studies of interpolation. The original song was *In the Summertime* (1970) by British rock band Mungo Jerry which was first released in 1970. The song reached number one in charts around the world (Billboard, 1970), including South Africa (SA Charts 1969-1989). The song became one of the best-selling singles of all time, selling 30 million copies (Dorset, 2006). In 1995, the Jamaican American reggae musician Shaggy featuring Rayvon made a rendition of the song and released it as the lead single to his third album *Boombastic* (1995) from which Bongo Maffin’s *Summer Tym* (1996) was directly referenced and remixed from.

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[29] Pantsula is one of South Africa's most prominent subcultures emerging directly from the country's townships during apartheid and their lifestyle still forms part of the country's popular zeitgeist. As a subculture, Pantsula emerged as a form of self-expression which includes a performance culture and artistic repertoire that ranges from fashion, dance styles, music and codified socio-linguistic repertoires such as Tsotsitaal: all this coheres a particular lifestyle that can be identified based on some of these markers.

[30] It is important to note that métissage vis-à-vis the hybridity that comes with creative exchange is often permeated alongside political violence such as imperialism or colonialism which also inadvertently influence cultural production. Thus, métissage is premised on power positionalities. Anthropologist Denis-Constant Martin (2006: 168) quoting heritage studies scholar Laurier Turgeon (2003) encourages for a reading of cultural creative exchanges that does not overlook the power relations that such dynamics manifest despite the creativity that come along them, nudging: ''Métissage hybridity and interstices… must be understood as a political phenomenon originating in colonial violence.''

By invoking these stories, I contextualise how di Pina tsa ko Kasi functions as a confluence of musical continuums in their situatedness in South Africa’s urban Black townships. This illustrates that when Focalistic announces his sonic injunction “Ase Trap tse ke Pina tsa ko kasi”, there is already a sonic historical contextual base where his refusal registers. Amapiano, as well as its artists such as Focalistic, implicitly understand the musical practices’ capacious possibilities beyond one genre, making the musical practice fugitive.

Focalistic's sonic signature – "Ase Trap tse ke Pina tsa ko kasi" functions on multiple registers of refusal. The phrase itself in English means: "This (as in the music you are listening to) is not Trap music, it is music from the Townships". The first register of refusal is how the phrase itself employs the Sepitori language that is seeped outside an of an orthographic history as an official South African language, therefore occupying a heretical socio-linguistic life of aurality that is constantly intergenerationally developed albeit keeping its Setswana-Sesotho-Sepedi syntax (I write about Sepitori in more detail later). The second is Focalistic's exclamation that his music *is not* Trap music.

Focalistic broke out in the music scene around 2016 after winning the competition *Artist on the Rise* hosted by Homecoming Events to platform up and coming artists and give them a chance to perform at their events hosted mostly in Pretoria. Around this time, Amapiano was relatively underground, and the name had not yet been popularised. Focalistic too was arguably experimenting with his sound where he would "rap" in Sepitori on what sounds more like a Hip Hop beat than an Amapiano beat and sometimes even on Kwaito-esque beats. However, his earlier mixtapes *28 May* (2017) and *18 Area* (2019) are still illustrative of a kind of refusal of being categorised within the strictly Hip Hop container. From his 2019 album and other single songs released after 2017, he starts to introduce the "Ase Trap tse ke Pina tsa ko kasi" mantra as a kind of trademark to his songs. As an illustration of my hesitation to call what Focalistic does in his music as "rap", the air quotes are indicative of my struggle with language, especially considering my earlier reference to David B. Coplan (2007: 7) on the linguistic limitations of Black expression in South Africa within comparisons of Western categories of music, dance or drama that are so interdisciplinary in many of South Africa's performance art and cultures. The same hesitations expressed by HHP when clarifying how Motswako exists within a flourishing performance culture of musical practices constantly coalescing, capaciously outside of one genre of music. Interestingly, also sharing his own frustration with the preoccupation of categorising his music within the Hip Hop category, after winning the MTV Base Hottest MC of 2020, Focalistic (Kekana and Focalistic, 2021) declared he never claimed to be a Hip Hop artist or lyricist because the music he makes is much bigger than one genre, subsequently announcing his retirement from making Hip Hop. Thus, my use of "rap" to describe the musical act or response to the beats in the music is the closest word that speaks to a particular intention of what the music attempts to do without necessarily following a strict format of rapping as per its African-American innovations.

Focalistic's earlier aforementioned mixtapes encompassed a lot more intonations and catchy hooks made up of popular axioms or references that are familiar and form part of popular culture in South African, some referencing very particular vernaculars to Pitori in Sepitori. In the *18 Area* album this includes titles of the songs such as "Eketle Pele", "Atchu", "Ka Nnete" and "Ohh Hehe". Meanwhile, in *28 May* the interlude *Lo Mfana Interlude* is a tongue-in-cheek choral song attempt that borrows its lyrics from improvisatory catchy word associations that are already in the ether. One is reminded of sonic-music cultural artefacts such as childhood game songs or nursery rhymes as well as protest songs or popular church hymns that find themselves co-opted within Straata. However, Focalistic's song *Lo Mfana Interlude's* lyrical content is lewd, which is in common with many other popular music that intersects with youth culture both broadly in South Africa, such as Kwaito, as is with Hip Hop in America and the rest of the world generally. More so, with these two mixtapes, Focalistic was still distinguished as a "rapper" because as mentioned earlier, he often used beats that resembled Hip Hop features, particularly from Trap music.

Trap music is a subgenre of Hip Hop music that originated in the Southern United States, particularly Atlanta (Pointer, 2021). Trap music is defined by its triplet beat, also known as the "triplet flow" or "Migos flow". Estelle Caswell (2017), informed by Justin Hunte and Martin Connor explains it as what "happens when three notes occur over one beat. In rap they work in a similar way, except the three notes happen to be syllables in a word or phrase". Triplets give Trap music their iconic hypnotic sound characterised by cascading cadences (Caswell, 2017). A key contributor for mainstreaming this flow is rap group Migos in their 2013 hit record *Versace*. This evidently saw Hip Hop artists such as Kendrick Lamar using the iconic flow in his albums such as *DAMN.* (2017) which won the Pulitzer Prize for Music and the Best Rap Album at the 2018 Grammy Awards. The genre gets its name from Atlanta sociolinguistic slangs of a house selling drugs which is known as a "Trap House" (Pointer, 2021). Even though the subgenre started in the 1990s, it really took off into the mainstream in the 2010s becoming one of the most popular forms of American music with songs dominating the Billboard Hot 100 (Pointer, 2021). By 2018 because of Trap's saturation in popular media it contributed to Hip Hop becoming the most popular music genre (Lynch, 2018). Incidentally, the "African Trap Movement (ATM)[31]", a music collective from South Africa, formed around 2015. Its pioneers included Emtee (Mthembeni Ndevu), Saudi (Anele Mbisha) and Sjava (Jabulani Hadebe) to name a few, with Emtee at its helm as the CEO. ATM is a musical practice that can be characterised by the Trap triplet flow fused with South Africa's vernacular languages, often isiZulu. The lyrical content is often characterised by an isiZulu prose-like singing/rapping aesthetic, reminiscent of the storytelling found in genres such as Afro pop, maskandi and mbaqanga. This is the musical practice Focalistic refuses to be defined by despite him, earlier in his up-and-coming musical phase, dabbling with its productions, while simultaneously noticing his local peers' international traction with the sound. In this way, Focalistic refuses the oft reading of contemporary Black African popular culture through an assumed universal assimilatory lens of American popular cultural aesthetics. Focalistic's insistence that his music is not Trap music, but music from the geo-specificity of South African townships, specifically in Pitori, tells us that he foreshadowed his music being categorised in "genres" that subsumes the geographical context because he dabbles stylistically with Hip Hop (Trap music) iconography and visual culture. However, this dabbling encompasses a contextual local socio-linguistic aesthetic that is not necessarily referencing American popular or Hip Hop culture. Furthermore, by refusing Trap music and instead emphasising that he is making "di Pina tsa ko kasi" – kasi becomes an important cultural symbol of creativity and expression. Herein, the township is referred to within the geo-specificity of South African township cultural production and Sepitori becomes a referential aesthetic or ingenuity of such culture emanating from the township, particularly townships in Pitori where Sepitori is innovated. Furthermore, Focalistic's refusal is premised on an insistence that reclaims and acknowledges the township as an intellectual space where culture and knowledge is produced. This insistence subverts the systemic making of townships as small or insignificant. As per Dlamini's (2009: 119) provocation that we shift the gaze of the predominant scholarship on townships' deprivation – and pay attention to township cultural life. How do people live amidst the life denying circumstances that can come with township life? In part, through creating Black expressionisms – art and culture – as part of the many survival strategies of Being ko kasi. This brings me to the notion of refusal within a reading of what I call "township refusals" situated within a South African context informed by Campt (2017: 10) who theorises refusal as a practice and:

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[31] Some members of the ATM collective have enjoyed international recognition, particularly Saudi and Sjava with their respective songs "X" and "Seasons" reaching the Billboard charts after being part of the *Black Panther* (2018) soundtrack curated by Kendrick Lamar.

> …an extension of the range of creative responses black communities have marshaled in the face of radicalized dispossession. In this context, refusal is not a response to a state of exception or extreme violence. I theorize it instead as practices honed in response to sustained, everyday encounters with exigency and duress that rupture a predictable trajectory of flight.

To further understand Focalistic's refusal in relation to Campt's notion of refusal an outline of South Africa's current state of townships is worthwhile.

Following the decades of supposed postcolonialism and post-apartheid South Africa, township landscape infrastructure has largely remained the same, and in some parts of the country, it has further deteriorated. As a result of the Group Areas Act of 1950[32] Black people in urban areas were forcibly removed to townships. Today, these spaces still reflect the same colonial apartheid cartography. Thus, still reflecting marginalisation, exclusion, and exploitation of Black people even with a Black government. Public service delivery protests in these communities are considered every day and common; they have, in some ways, simply shifted from protests against whites and apartheid to protests against fellow Blacks and for economic freedom. However, depicting townships *solely* in the lens of abjection, deprivation and/or poverty is dehumanising. This is especially so in relation to people's popular imaginations and how that subsequently gets stereotypically or one-dimensionally translated into government policy: a reading of township residents "as docile recipients of state largesse … is patronising, for it turns township residents into perpetual victims" (Dlamini 2009: 110). Massa Lemu's (2019: 4-5) concept of "creativity of practice in African townships as a framework for performance art" is useful; Lemu writes about how, despite the degradation of the township landscape, creativity and inventiveness are deployed by township dwellers to overcome daily frustrations. These actions, that I read as registers of township refusals and what Lemu (2019: 4-5) calls "creative practices in African townships" range from illegally tapping water and electricity; to social media memes that mock and find humour in the follies of the elite; to the advance-free frauds of 419 scams and wandering (or what the *Situationist International*[33] called "derive") as a nomadism of escaping township misery. Lemu (2019: 4-5) suggests that these actions, practices and strategies of refusal together, and in tandem with formal activism can counteract oppression. This is not to say that township residents subscribe to grand anti-capitalist ideologies in their everyday acts of refusal (sometimes they too can become collaborators or neutralised by mechanisms of co-option), but this is to emphasise agency as they react to the forces that shape their lives. These minute instances of refusal and strategies of survival – that also register in the sensibilities of the socio-cultural and political practices of Straata – are powerful reminders of the fragility of the hegemonic elite (Dlamini 2009: 106). Their saliency instantiates how power is constantly negotiated by helping us understand that resistance to the ruling elite and why it takes such forms that are not necessarily always full-blown revolt but minor acts of resistance (Dlamini 2009: 106). Nonetheless what this tells us is that the dominance of the ruling elite is precarious (Dlamini 2009: 106). Such acts inform us that resistance to the elite need not only happening through a political format, that it may too be expressed through art, culture and plays on language (Dlamini 2009: 106).

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[32] Group Areas Act was the title of three acts of the Parliament of South Africa enacted under the apartheid government of South Africa where racial groups were assigned by the government to different residential and business sections in urban areas as part of apartheid urban spatial planning. The objectives of the Acts was segregation, excluding Black people from living in the most developed areas, which were restricted to white people. Meanwhile, many Black people were forced to commute long distances from their homes to be able to work in the urban centres. Black people who are the majority of the population were given much smaller areas to live in than the white minority. Pass Laws were implemented which required Black people to carry pass books to enter the "white" areas of the country.

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[33] In her book *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (1992), philosopher and theorist, Sadie Plant unpacks how the Situationist International was an international organisation of social revolutionaries made up of avant-garde artists, intellectuals, and political theorists. It was prominent in Europe from its formation in 1957 to its dissolution in 1972. The intellectual foundations of the Situationist International were derived primarily from libertarian Marxism and the avant-garde art movements of the early 20th century particularly Dada and Surrealism. Overall, situationist theory represented an attempt to synthesize this diverse field of theoretical disciplines into a modern and comprehensive critique of mid-20th century advanced capitalism. Essential to situationist theory was the concept of the spectacle, a unified critique of advanced capitalism of which a primary concern was the progressively increasing tendency towards the expression and mediation of social relations through objects. The Situationists believed that the shift from individual expression through directly lived experiences, or the first-hand fulfilment of authentic desires, to individual expression by proxy through the exchange or consumption of commodities, or passive second-hand alienation, inflicted significant and far-reaching damage to the quality of human life for both individuals and society. Another important concept of situationist theory was the primary means of counteracting the spectacle; the construction of situations, moments of life deliberately constructed for the purpose of reawakening and pursuing authentic desires, experiencing the feeling of life and adventure, and the liberation of everyday life.

As such, Focalistic's musical practice registers within these township refusals, aesthetics and performance cultures. I read his sonic signature "Ase Trap tse ke Pina tsa ko Kasi" through the socio-cultural and linguistic repertoires of Sepitori in Amapiano as a form of refusing taxonomic nomenclatures of contemporary genres such as Hip Hop. His musical practice is centred on a mobile culture of métissage, like Motswako's innovations, where music-making is a multifaceted approach beyond a particular genre. By situating his musical discography within this lineage of Black South African popular music-making of township sensibilities, Focalistic acknowledges the intellectual and cultural currency of kasi infrastructures beyond colonial and apartheid spatial cartography's sole intended uses. Focalistic's sonic and phonic materiality practices refusal. From his insistence to locate his music within di Pina tsa ko Kasi as an obfuscation of genre; to employing the language of Sepitori that is marked by fugitive sociolinguistics and to making the implicit index of the township – kasi – as a place of knowledge generation. The artist raised in Ga-rankuwa Zone 2 "ko di fofoung", sounds a popular cultural sonic phenomenon and ontology that circuits and punctures the fugitivity that comes with a particular Black urban township life(style).

1.4. On Sepitori and its refusal (for containment)

The story of the unofficial South African language Sepitori is a story indexical to the history of the country's urbanisation: one of colonial conquest, global populations, the intermingling of various cultural identities, class, race and the ingenuity of Blackness and Black survival. However, perhaps many may be surprised to know that contrary to Sepitori's recent popularity in public culture and performance, particularly on social media with hashtags such as *#LearnSepitori*, Sepitori is a considerably old language (Ditsele 2014: 220). Preeminent sociolinguistic scholar on Sepitori, Thabo Ditsele, borrowing from earlier research on the language from

Schuring, asserts that Sepitori is as old as the city of Pretoria itself (Ditsele 2014: 220). He argues that even though it is unclear as to when Sepitori emerged as a language variety, it is certainly linked to the age of Pretoria itself (Ditsele 2014: 220). As such, "Sepitori has had many generations of first language (L1[34]) speakers because it developed soon after 1855, the year in which whites – known as the Voortrekkers – established the city of Pretoria" (Ditsele 2014: 220).

Even though Sepitori is considered a mixed language (a mixed language being a salient marker of urbanisation as it relates to migration patterns and multiculturalism) researchers qualify that when it comes to its social and historical linguistic composition, the language represents the once-dominant Sekgatla dialect of Setswana spoken in Hammanskraal, a township north of Pretoria (Álcarez-Mosquera, Bornman and Ditsele 2017: 442). Apart from Setswana, Sepitori also includes additions from mainly Sepedi, some elements of Nguni languages, Afrikaans and English (Ditsele 2014: 220). In their research on language contact in African urban settings using Sepitori as a case study in the City of Tshwane, Thabo Ditsele and Charles Mann (2014: 160) illustrate the multilingual nature of the language using Setswana in bold, Afrikaans underlined, Sepedi in capital letters and English italicised in a sentence written in Sepitori:

Sepitori: Ka mo itse dié man; o rata ho APARA **setlhako** se *one*.
Setswana: Ke a mo **itse** monna yo; o rata go rwala **setlhako** se le sengwe.
Sepedi: Ke a mo tseba monna yo; o rata go APARA seta se le tee.
'I know this man; he likes to wear one shoe.'

However, even though Sepitori is not necessarily a written language, that does not deligitimise its status as a language. In fact, I would argue that Sepitori not having a written orthography is a part of its fugitive ingenuity because of its refusal to be contained and systemistised in the way that a written language demands. This not only makes the language a fluid social praxis of social identity and expression, but also makes the context in which it emerges – Pitori townships – a marker of self-determination and pride, in Sepitori: ke bo dese. In fact, this fugitive ingenuity seeped in Sepitori's aurality has been noted by linguists Álcarez-Mosquera, Bornman and Ditsele (2017: 454) as prestigious both in and out of Pretoria, particularly as a marker of urbanity, class and street savviness. Furthermore, the researchers also found that Sepitori's "cool" and trendiness, not only enables communication but also the formation of intercultural friendships that have social currency (Álcarez-Mosquera, Bornman and Ditsele 2017: 448). In turn, fluency in Sepitori is associated with cultural and social capital in Pretoria, especially when it comes to forging communities.

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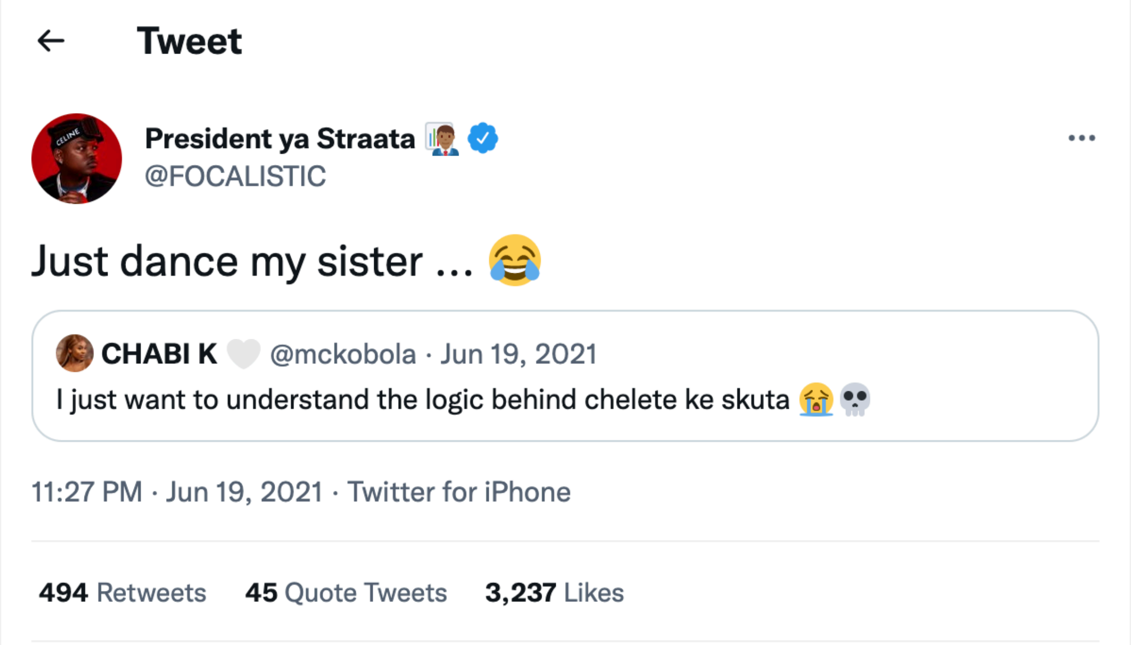
[34] Speakers first language.

Sepitori's refusal for containment is also counter-hegemonic to didactic meaning-making. Its "coolness" or its bo dese is in its abstractness and codification overtime and use. The kind of poetics that come with idioms and the usage of figures of speech. Take for example Focalistic & Mr JazziQ's song *GUPTA* (featuring Lady Du and the Pitori producer duo Mellow and Sleazy), in Focalistic's verse, he sings/raps the lyric "chelete ke Scooter rro e namela namela" and when a supporter of his music on Twitter asked him what that phrase means he dismissed them, saying "just dance my sister'' (FOCALISTIC, 2021).



President ya Straata 👨🏾‍💼
@FOCALISTIC

Just dance my sister ... 😂

CHABI K 🤍 @mckobola · Jun 19, 2021
I just want to understand the logic behind chelete ke skuta 😭💀

11:27 PM · Jun 19, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

494 Retweets **45** Quote Tweets **3,237** Likes

Figure 4:
Twitter interaction between Focalistic and Chabi K who asked the musician what one of his lyrics meant. June 2021. Twitter.

This is a salient refusal in both stringent meaning-making and translation that gets lost in the interpretive-analytical gaze that sounds out the counter-hegemonic possibilities of Sepitori. Furthermore, this dismissal can also be read within the provocation that when one does not rush to translate one's language, often non-English language to English, one subverts the "culture of capitalist frenzy and consumption that demands that all desires must be satisfied immediately, or we may disrupt that cultural imperialism that suggests one is worthy of being heard only if one speaks in standard English" (hooks 2019 [1994] : 63). Testing how diverse language cultures can be assimilated and legitimised by how well they can be translated into English speaks to an ecosystem of homogenising meaning through the prism of the caustic effects of hegemony's preoccupation with translating "the Other" as a global domineering effort. There is humility in not knowing and waiting to be invited into language cultures outside of assumed universal ones. Herein lies Focalistic refusal in translating the Sepitori poetics in his music.

On a radio segment called *Language Corner* on Power FM (2021), Ditsele tells the presenter, Lukhona Mnguni: "The fact that it [Sepitori] is not written is political and not linguistic". For me, the statement is fertile with the paradox of both fugitivity and capture. In other words, Sepitori is not written because of political dynamics that legitimise what is a language and what is not, particularly with languages that are considered "official" to the nation-state and its identity[35]. As such, because Sepitori is intrinsically mixed, it not being officially recognised as a South African language challenges notions of not only the extent of who decides what is and is not a language, but also pokes holes at questions of "pure" languages in a country such as South Africa with an intrinsic socio-political history of multilingualism. At the same time, the language having no official orthography presents an opportunity of opacity from the gaze and the surveillance that comes with standardising official languages. In this way one can also elucidate on Sepitori within the legitimate linguistic registers that mabarebare proposes.

In Sepitori lies the cultivation of language practice that is not "mainstream" in the official sense and as such, enables modalities of language experimentation and knowledge production that is alternative and counter hegemonic. However, if one insists that Sepitori's aurality be similarly adapted into an orthographic practice of writing, the language's fugitivity can be stifled. The translation and transcribing of the language's imbued socio-cultural improvisation of figures of speech and perpetual evolution contextual to specific social cues and geographic dialects risks undermining its subversive power. More so, Sepitori not only has many variations across greater Pretorian regions and townships (Ditsele, 2019). The language's formation and meaning making is also based on very significant generational contexts (Ditsele, 2019). Ditsele (2019: 11) uses several examples, writing one sentence in three versions of Sepitori with the English translation, one example is:

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[35] Interestingly, on social media, many Sepitori speakers, many of them young, often teasingly refer to Pretoria as its own country under the hashtag *#PitorikeCountry* to illustrate its distinguishable cultural character such as language, music, dance and its party life to name a few.

Sepitori: Ba re o setse ka one-bar.
Ba re o lwala thata.
Ba re o hatelletswe
English: They say s/he's critically ill.

The first version would be used by a younger generation Sepitori speaker, considering the context of one-bar denoted often to the depletion of cellphone batteries that became an everyday phrase in South African townships in the 2000s. The second version can be considered an intergenerational, common phrasing of Sepitori. The third version can be considered more of an older and slightly more respectable version of Sepitori. This diversity in speaking one language illustrates how Sepitori as a language variety has socio-cultural elasticity as it is constantly being shaped by different social groups who use the language. Due to Sepitori's association with multicultural identities and intergenerational social groups, the language can also become a site of diverse contestation and symbolic meaning because the language is more than its communicative speech or simple acts of references, but rather the language can also be laden with ideological burdens (Álcarez-Mosquera, Bornman and Ditsele 2017: 440). These subtle signifiers showcase the "symbolic indexical and/or ideological load attached to the use of language varieties by members of different speaking communities in contact" (Álcarez-Mosquera, Bornman and Ditsele 2017: 448). Sepitori as a language variety points to a larger grammar outside of speech. It is culture and politics. Sepitori is emblematic, it is art: it says things about the people who speak and understand the language's many codified forms, even those that are non-verbal. At the same time, Sepitori with its pluralism, carries an ideological burden of South Africa's multilingualism accentuated in its epithet as the "Rainbow Nation". If one considers how Sepitori incorporates an array of languages including Tsotsitaal and Afrikaans, one begins to see how language is produced alongside the socio-political and historical context of South Africa's modernity vis-à-vis mobility. From generations of colonisation to the implications of global populations and their subsequent survivals, these are some of the junctures that contribute to Sepitori's Black urbanisms. Even though Sepitori might mean different things to different people, there is no doubt that the lingua franca of the greater Pretoria region reveals the embedded structures of Black township cultural life and the knowledge production and interaction thereof.

Languages are also like living entities (Álcarez-Mosquera, Bornman and Ditsele 2017: 440) constantly in flux. They are continually changed and shaped by voluntary or involuntary movements of people, displacing so-called pure languages and mother tongues, with stand-ins that engage in fugitive and agentic exclusionary politics of self-determination in urban Black townships and South African cities in general. Urban cities are generally diverse places and thus often depend on various practices of sociocultural survivals to abet the alienation of those who move to them often for better economic opportunities. For example, the mixed language of Fanakalo comes from the multilingual and multinational context of South Africa's urbanization[36]. Languages such as these are not merely simple acts of speech and referential communicative tools, they are steeped in Black refusals and fugitive knowledge productions contextual to brutal enclosures of Black survival too. Perhaps what one can learn from Sepitori as a language is listening, hearing and allowing to be transformed by the intrinsic intimacy of its cultural intermingling and specificity. One can learn from Sepitori's structures of knowledge production and interaction, its historical value and ultimately its poetic multilingualism.

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[36] Fanakalo is sometimes spelt "Fanagalo", however the spelling "Fanakalo" is the language's isiZulu and isiXhosa orthography. It is generally believed that Fanakalo originated in the mines of South Africa during the mineral revolution, however according to Mesthrie (1989: 229) Fanakalo originated because of European-African contact within the historical circumstances of Dutch and British colonisation in 1652 and 1806 respectively. Mesthrie (1989: 229) argues that the language's origins date back to the mid-nineteenth century in Natal when British settlers, Zulu speakers and Afrikaners came into contact. British settlers and Afrikaners are dated to have arrived in Natal during the late 1830s, meanwhile Cape Afrikaners travelled to Natal (and subsequently founded the Boer republic of Natalia (1840-1843) (Mesthrie 1989: 229). To add more to the language's multicultural and multinational linguistic repertoire, Mesthrie (1989: 230-231) also argues that following the arrival of indentured Indian labourers to Natal's sugar plantations in 1860, they helped to stabilize this pidgin. However, the word Fanakalo, meaning "like this" is situated within a pejorative history with appositional power dynamics referencing instructions of master-servant relationship (1989: 220).

1.5. INTERLUDE: Ase Trap tse ke Pina tsa ko Kasi OR Jazz emonate ko Kasi OR osmotic plural township musics mo spaceng[37]

This interlude – *Ase Trap tse ke Pina tsa ko Kasi OR Jazz emonate ko Kasi or osmotic plural township musics mo spaceng* – is a non-exhaustive playlist that functions as a sound marking method of thinking with the framework of Straata as the producer of knowledge argued in this chapter. The playlist is inspired and takes seriously, the Sepitori sonic signature of South African musician Focalistic: "Ase Trap tse ke Pina tsako Kasi". It considers Focalistic's musical practice as a refusal: beyond genre-lisations. Even though the playlist is inspired by Focalistic's invocation, it includes many other songs outside of his discography and beyond Amapiano. The playlist instead situates itself within broader musical practices tsa ko Kasi in and out of Pitori townships. Musically, the playlist sonically charts tangential pathways of refusing genre-lisations instructive from Focalistic's Ase Trap tse ke Pina tsa ko kasi to Motswako, Bacardi, Malombo and even Drill to name a few oscillatory musical practices in the playlist. The multifaceted and often intergenerational refusals of taxonomic categorisations of genres forms part of a long lineage of musical practices in South Africa founded in the sociocultural and political particularities of the South African township. Furthermore, the playlist, with its inspiration in the sociolinguistic characters of Sepitori too, situates both Sepitori and Focalistic as part of the points in a nexus of past-present-future continuums locating Sghubu sa Pitori in relation to South Africa's rich popular cultures that are ever-present in the country's sonic and musical registers as well as the country's Black vernacular urban lexicons such as Tsotsitaal and what Sizwe Satyo (2008) calls "Kwaito-speak". These languages, as they appear in music, are not merely simple acts of speech, they are steeped in Black refusals and fugitive knowledge productions contextual to a culture of aurality and improvisation of township life that finds way in South African public life and performance. They are emblematic in contemporaneous musical practices and sonic repertoires such as Amapiano. Thus, this playlist serves as a kind of musical pluraliversality of some of di Pina tsa ko Kasi. It also encourages the methodology of deep listening as an engagement of the music's knowledge production that preoccupies the theoretical study of the research. Inasmuch as the assessment of my research is predominantly text-based, it is important to signal some of the cultural artefacts that inform the thesis of the research: the music. It is a small disruption of the purely written aspect of the thesis where I invite the reader to think with my deep listening methodology which informs this research. You can listen to the Spotify playlist here[38] and below is the full list of the songs featured:

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[37] This is a very interesting phrase in Sepitori whose word-for-word translation is "in space" but its connotative meaning comes closest to the English phrase "all of a sudden" or "out of the blue". It is usually used in cases of surprise, suddenness or when things happen randomly. I like the idea of space in relation to the plurality and diversity of Blackness and Black music. Space's dictionary meaning is "a continuous area or expanse which is free, available or unoccupied". Another definition of space is in relation to "the physical universe beyond the earth's atmosphere". Both these definitions hold an interesting connection of non-placeness that speaks to an occurrence that appears to come out of nowhere but with a salient ability to create everlasting impact, herein lies the quality of possibilities often out of undesired circumstances – brutal enclosures of Blackness – yet lies expansive potential that reverberates.

HIP HOP PANTSULA, *Built This City* (2005)	(4:18)
B.O.P, *Okae Molao* (2008)	(4:32)
MAJOR LEAGUE DJZ, (feat. FOCALISTIC, CASSPER NYOVEST), *Skhaftin* (2019)	(5:33)
DJ MUJAVA, *Township Funk* (2005, 2008)	(5: 49)
CH'CCO AND MELLOW & SLEAZY, *Nkao Tempela* (2021)	(6:02)
JR (feat. TOWDEE), *Gata Le Nna* (2008)	(3:41)
25K, *Pheli Makaveli (Intro)* (2022)	(3:59)
KHULI CHANA, *Pitori*, (2010)	(5:10)
SELAELO SELOTA, *Tshipi Sepanere* (2008)	(5:16)
KELVIN MOMO (feat. CH'CCO, YUMBS, TASKIPPER & TLHOLO), *Ivy League* (2021)	(16:36)
CULTURE SPEARS, *Nchadinyana* (2008)	(5:11)
VIGRO DEEP, *Bundle of Joy* (2019)	(7:28)
KB, *El Musica,* (2005)	(6:48)
VUSI MAHLASELA, *Melodi ya Mamelodi* (2014)	(2:46)
JUNIOR TAURUS & LADY ZAMAR (feat. Odyssey 012), *Mamelodi* (2015)	(7:54)
JOLLY B & 25K, *Patience (Remix)* (2022)	(2:32)
PHILIP TABANE & MALOMBO, *Uhn!* (1991)	(3:34)
KABZA DE SMALL & MAPHORISA (feat. KINGTHA & BUSISWA),	

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[38] The link of the Spotify playlist written out in full:
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3KxxQyAdepRLGRZYVnTnSb?si=zVQ_LbtmSiyzFuR1ahZAUg&nd=1

Abuyile Amakhosi (7:09)

DBN GOGO, BLAQNICK & MASTERBLAQ (feat. MPURA, AMAAVENGER & M.J), *Khuza Gogo* (2021) (6:21)

MASHBEATZ (feat. THATO SAUL & MAGLERA DOE BOY), *Never Ride* (2022) (2:26)

MASHBEATZ (feat. SJAVA, 25K, LUCASRAPS, WORDZ, THATO SAUL, SAUDI, MAGLERA DOE BOY, BUZZI LEE, ROII, YOUNGSTACPT & ANZO) *Never Ride Remix* (2022) (6:40)

VUSI MA R5 (feat. JELLY BABIE), *Thaba Ke Chechitse* (2022) (4: 21)

BUZZI LEE, *Pheli Via Church* (2022) **(**3:25)

SNOW DEEP (feat. Team Percussion & 25K), *Tamatie* (2018) (5:08)

SNOW DEEP (feat. 25K & DJ THE MXO), *Tamatie 2.0* (2022) (4:32)

KELVIN MOMO & C.A. Souls (feat. Mogomotsi Chosen), *Abantu Bethu* (2019) (8:39)

DJ MUJAVA, *Mugwanti / Sgwejegweje* (c. 2005) (3:58)

THRILLERMASTER, *Banyana Ba Pitori (feat FresheZone) (Prod. by La Moola)* (2014) (4:03)

KABZA DE SMALL (feat. WIZKID, BURNA BOY, CASSPER NYOVEST & MADUMANE), *Seponono* (2020) (6:35)

MASHBEATZ & THATO SAUL, *Sa Tepa* (2021) (2:20)

DALIWONGA (feat. Mellow & Sleazy and MJ), *Abo Mvelo* (2022) (8:00)

SKEEM SA 2015, *Ko Teng 2015 (Prod. by Nceku)* (2018) (3:48)

TUMI MOGOROSI (feat. Andile Yenana & Lesego Rampolokeng), *Where are the Keys?* (2022) (7:10)

PHILIP TABANE & MALOMBO, *Mpedi (A South African Tribe)* (1991) (4:26)

DBN GOGO (feat. , MUSA KEYS, DINHO, OPTIMIST MUSIC ZA, MAKHANJ, LEBZA THEVILLAIN & KOEK SISTA), *Possible* (2020) (6:50)

MZO BULLET, *Casablanca* (2010) (5:27)

KELVIN MOMO & GEORGE LESLEY (feat. DENNY DUGG), *Gumbaya* [Kelvin Momo's Soulful Piano Remix] (2020) (8:01)

BALCONY MIX AFRICA (feat. MAJOR LEAGUE DJZ, FOCALISTIC, LADY DU, AUNTY GELATO AND LUUDADEEJAY), *Government* (2021) (5:31)

SKHANDAWORLD & ROIII, *La Vida Loca* (2021) (2:31)

FOCALISTIC (feat. VIGRO DEEP), *Ke Star* (2020)	(7:13)
FOCALISTIC (feat. DAVIDO & VIGRO DEEP), *Ke Star Remix* (2021)	(5:28)
PABI COOPER (feat. Mellow & Sleazy), *Waga Bietjie* (2022)	(4:51)
VISCA (feat. DJ MAPHORISA, 2WOSHORT, STOMPIIEY, FTEEARS, SHAUNMUSIC, MADUMANE), *Ba Straata* (2022)	(6:33)
LOATINOVER POUNDS (feat. 25K & THAPELO GHUTRA), *Sosh Plata - Remix* (2020)	(3:57)
MAGLERA DOE BOY, *Makazana* (2022)	(4:42)
ICEMANBEATZ (feat. LOATINOVER POUNDS & MOCHEN), *Airforce E Black* (2022)	(3:03)
MAPARA A JAZZ (feat. PUMPKIN), *Wae Roba* (2023)	(4:02)
TYLER ICU (feat. DJ MAPHORISA, NANDIPHA808, CEEKA RSA & TYRONDEE), *Mnike* (2023)	(6:31)
BONGO MAFFIN, *Thathisgubhu* (2008)	(5:21)
DJ SUMBODY (feat. CASSPER NYOVEST, THEBE & VETTIS), *Monate Mpolaye* (2019)	(4:30)
DARLING THE PANDEMIC (feat. Bra Twist), *Dipolelo di ya nthabisa* (2023)	(5:28)

Chapter 2: Phakhati inside Kwaito's post-apartheid (youth) soundtrack

2.1. Sghubu sa Pitori through Kwaito's post-apartheid Black ontologies

Kwaito is often dubbed as the soundtrack of post-apartheid South Africa. One of the first scholars to generate academic scholarship on Kwaito, Bhekizizwe Peterson (2003: 198) wrote about how Kwaito pioneered success of the post-apartheid period through offering directions in popular culture of what a "new" South Africa could be. Similarly, musicologists have studied Kwaito in relation to the political context of its emergence after Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990 (Stephens, 2000, Allen, 2004; Steingo, 2006, 2007, 2008). Furthermore, early Kwaito musicians themselves sometimes define Kwaito as expressive music in celebration of freedom after living through apartheid and seeing its regime come to a demise. In the documentary *After Robot* (2002) Oskido, reflecting on Kwaito's highlights says: "apartheid was over, we just wanted to have fun as there would no longer be any need to protest". However, if musical practices, particularly innovated by young, South Africans, still borrow from the vistas of Kwaito long after Kwaito's emergence post the late 1980s to early 1990s, what does this say about the legacy of both apartheid and Kwaito on the South African landscape three decades post-apartheid? In other words, what is the temporal marker of post-apartheid and the soundtracks that follow it? More specific to this research: what comes after post-apartheid soundtracks especially if musical practices such as Amapiano still finds resonances with Kwaito? This chapter grapples with this question through looking at the musical practices of Bacardi in Sghubu Sa Pitori that a lot of Amapiano from Pitori references. I also unpack what I mean by post-apartheid Black sonic ontologies by looking at a framework provided by Spoek Matambo (Nthato Mokgata) in his three-part travelogue documentary *Future Sounds of Mzansi* (2014) co-directed with Lebogang Rasethaba. Spoek Matambo profiles the electronic music scene of four cities (Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria) in South Africa that emerged some years after Kwaito, particularly after two decades of apartheid's demise, through the lens of electronic music in these cities serving as the soundtracks of "apartheid's after-party". Finally, I look at the practice of Amapiano's musical osmosis as a cultural logic.

2.2. Sghubu sa Pitori (aka diBacardi, aka diRekere, aka diNqware, aka diKatara) and parts of its cultural life

Sgubhu sa Pitori denotes “the drumbeat of Pretoria” — more precisely in relation to the city’s musical character of di pina tsa ko kasi. However, in popular parlance Sghubu sa Pitori is connotative to Bacardi music because it was the name of DJ Mujava’s debut album released in 2006 by Sheer Music. Mujava, himself an important pioneer in popularising this musical practice, is also featured in Matambo’s documentary. It was DJ Mujava’s song *Township Funk* in his 2006 debut album that is often acknowledged as the song that mainstreamed not only electronic dance music from Pretoria, but which is generally acknowledged as the song that catapulted South African dance music’s global reach (Sherburne, 2019). Veteran musician and DJ, Lerato Khathi, also known as Lakuti who was born in Soweto and who is now based in Berlin, told music journalist Philip Sherburne (2019) how “‘Township Funk’ was the big breakthrough record as far as modern South African dance music goes in Europe and the UK.” While Grammy-award winning artist, Black Coffee, tells Mathambo (Mokgata and Rasethaba, 2014, 2015) that he thinks the unfortunate story about *Township Funk* was that it never became as big in South Africa as it was overseas. Furthermore, at the time of the song’s international appeal in 2008, the influential host of BBC Radio 1’s show, Mary Anne Hobbs was quoted as saying “Mujava’s success is an enormous crossover moment” (Orlov, 2019). Mujava himself notes that *Township Funk* triggered his success (Mokgata and Rasethaba, 2015) setting him up to meet very influential people in global electronic music where he would travel all over Europe.

Idiosyncratically, in the contemporary moment, if we circle back to Focalistic’s breakout song, *19 Tobetsa* (2018) featuring Major League DJz, it too was influenced by Pitori’s Bacardi soundscape, particularly as a homage to DJ Mujava and DJ Hu Nose (whom I spoke to about this research) Mujava and Hu Nose were some of the biggest mainstream pioneers of Bacardi at the time of its innovation in the mid 2000s. In the song’s reprise, Focalistic sings:

> Be u nganganane, he re betha sgubhu sa Mujava?
> Shaya ma get-down, khumbuz’ van tuka time
> Kera 19 Tobetsa

The song's reprise is linguistically riddled with nostalgia while the beat borrows from Kwaito's grooves of slow-tempo drum and bass.

Bacardi's history begins towards the end of the of the 2000s: a snare-drums and synthetisers electronic-based House music genre with roots in the township of Atteridgeville. The musical practice is ostensibly based on experimentation, like many underground electronic musical genres. The genre, Bacardi, became popular in Pitori townships mainly as an underground House music sound. Its international crossover was as a result of producers such as Mujava, touring overseas subsequently leading to the genre's local crossover from Pretoria's townships. In other words, Bacardi as a musical practice was heralded mainly overseas before it gained a relatively short-term mainstream appeal locally. Nevertheless, as transient as its mainstream appeal was, it had a long-lasting sonic effect, particularly *Township Funk* (2006) and *Mugwanti/Sgwejegweje*[39] (2010). Many other Bacardi songs were released such as Tobetsa (2010) and *Voroso* (2007, 2010[40]) both by DJ Hu Nose.

The musical practice's name Bacardi comes from the colourful alcoholic cider of that era that was popular in Pitori townships called "Bacardi Beezer". The drink was popular in many South African townships in the mid 2000s, including in Pretorian townships and taverns around the emergence of the musical genre that also has many monikers outside of Bacardi, including Sghubu Sa Pitori, diRekere, diNqware or diKatara. These multiple monikers of naming one musical practice signals the heterogenous varieties of the music and its influences in relation to sounds particular to each kasi in Pitori. It also indicates the existence of cultural production that sits outside of the normative, oft Western and academic knowledge frameworks where only one thing can name and define. Sghubu sa Pitori registers the city's collective sounds and its differentials because this list is also not exhaustive. I use Bacardi because it is the most known regarding Sghubu sa Pitori, for those outside of Pitori's specificities. I also think all these names speak to the linguistic framework of Sepitori and its fugitive Straata sensibilities in lexiconic cultural production. Bearing in mind that these Sepitori monikers, much like many other Sepitori words, do not have written histories per se as etymological history demands, as far as I am concerned, I could also be spelling these musical experiments "wrong", because of the aurality and improvisational quality of how the music innovations are created and them being described by their creators and immediate audience ko kasi. Given my general research's preoccupation with art and cultural production from townships, largely happening on the margins of canons of art, I glean in on the praxes of how this culture is produced. My preoccupation is not translation nor linguistic correctness, the "wrong" spelling is part of thinking with and in the fugitive nature of how culture, including language, is sometimes produced. Therefore, I embrace and lean into the ad-libbing as praxes of Straata – of kasi. Similarly, herein lies the creative confluence and dynamisms of how music travels in Pretorian townships through musical practices – sound experiments – in very unpredictable fugitive ways, largely shaped by the people in those communities. This includes the sonic diversities of the minibus taxis Focalistic said edifies his musical practice.

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[39] There is also something to say about the humour that riddles the names of these songs, as well as the DJ monikers. Names such as 'Mugwanti/Sgwejegweje' (with coded lewd inferences and no easy translations but centre onomatopoeia, repetition and alliteration as a way to emphasis aurality or the words' sonic qualities rather than a fixation on the word or spelling itself) or the name DJ Hu-Nose (pronounced "who knows"). These words and names simultaneously present performative fugitive gestures of concealment in ridicule that disrupt normativity which is a feature of many (youth) subcultures.

[40] The release dates of some of these songs has some inconsistencies mainly because they would get official releases which would include music videos and track listings on compilation albums or the artists' albums after the songs went mainstream in the streets through a more sustained underground method. This is often because the music was not popular at first until Straata said so and there was a demand, thus record labels licensed and distributed songs at moments where the songs had a big reach, aiding the music mainstream saturation into broader public culture.

2.3. Bacardi's collectivist music-making model and distribution methods

When Mathambo visits Pitori in his travelogue documentary, he chats to some of the musicians who pioneered the Bacardi sound including the internationally recognised DJ Mujava and some DJs that are relatively unknown. The posse are all based in Atteridgeville, they include DJ Spoko, DJ Panyaza and MaChapies. In these scenes we learn that Bacardi's underground musical character has also made it hard to acknowledge certain catalysts of the genre even though one knows they are many. The collective nature of how the music is made and shared often obscures single pioneers. In the early 2000s particularly from 2005/6, Bacardi had a congregational and collective sensibility. The music was often created within a posse, as seen in Mathambo's documentary, he interviews these musicians holding their collective relationship in mind as producers who make music together. DJ Spoko acknowledges this even in relation to his influence on DJ Mujava's sound, by saying he is the one that gave Mujava rhythm (Mokgata and Rasethaba, 2015). While Machapies adds: "we release albums every day. Rre spana kao fela, a onna hore rre tswalelana kontle – no no no" (We work together, no one gets left outside) (Mokgata and Rasethaba, 2015). This speaks to an intrinsic collaborative ethos of the music's collective making that often intentionally shrouds the genius artist myth. More so, the way the music was shared often during its nascent stages was either via Bluetooth, CDs distributed at taxi ranks and USBs shared amongst local DJs. Sometimes the songs would be titled arbitrarily, or the original titles of the song would be saved through various palimpsestic renders as it continued to be widely saved and shared. The collective making and sharing created an unspoken communitas that inadvertently brought to the fore questions of authenticity and originality, making it hard to find the source of the song once it permeates outside of the immediate audience ko kasi[41]. Furthermore, Machapies alluding to how they collectively release albums every day is indicative of the technologies that they used and the possibilities of being able to sustain such a practice with a rapid turnaround time. It is also indicative of our contemporary consumption patterns of music, especially since the introduction of DSPs and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Tik Tok which have become both marketing tools for promoting the music as well as interactive platforms through which the music can be consumed. These digital platforms have increasingly globalised the world where independent musicians can reach audiences relatively easily because of the Internet. From vinyl records, to cassettes, to CDs and now digital music accessible through the internet, musical production and dissemination has become less onerous and expensive. At the same time, especially in relation to electronic music that has an ingrained DIY ethos and subversive culture that is intrinsically techno-focused, many producers decry how this democratisation has increased the noise exponentially and so, music seems to become disposable. As electronic musician, Sibot, one of the electronic musicians featured in the *Future Sounds of Mzanzi* (2015), notes, "Making stuff so someone can play it on the internet once or twice and even if they like it, they'll play it to death, and it dies in a month. It's a different era". This impetus and reality of contemporary music informs the sensibilities of Bacardi as per Machappies' admission of the rapid turnaround time of the musical practice.

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[41] This is also reminiscent of Nollywood's early distribution models where everything was independently made, produced and distributed to the point that the films and their cultural productions took on many different iterations as a result of these new distribution practices that came with the development and evolution of technology as seen in the efficacy of the internet.

However, this does not take away from the fact that even DJ Mujava's *Township Funk* managed to crossover internationally because of the internet, particularly YouTube, whose hyperlinks of the songs were then distributed on the music forum *Dissensus*[42] (Sherburne, 2019). The song and music video were not even posted on the music site by DJ Mujava himself; instead, it was posted by one of the forum's members under a thread called "African YouTube" (Sherburne, 2019). Here is where some of the first A&R representatives outside of South Africa picked the song up. This included Luke Williams and Oli Isaacs of indie record label *This Is Music,* who licensed the song for the United Kingdom market and Marcus Scott of Warp Records which licensed the song for distribution in South Africa as well as the rest of the world (Sherburne, 2019).

Whereas, locally, the song *Township Funk* and its musical school of Bacardi had a distribution ecosystem of its own that included a socio-cultural, economic life and practice. Key Bacardi distribution channels included Mandlebe, Motorola V360s, USBs, local shebeens and house parties such as di Social Club as well as di Spini. Around Bacardi's beginnings, the musical practice came with a culture of Mandlebe, which are specific minibus taxis in Pretorian townships known for their pimped-out qualities, especially their explosive sound systems hence their nickname "Mandlebe". The name alludes to literal ears in Sepitori. The etymology of Mandlebe references the plural prefix of the Sesotho-Tswana "-ma" and the noun suffix of the isiZulu word "ndlebe" which means ear. Here the taxis mobility is instructive, not only as a form of transport for Black people commuting in and out of the township, but also as a distribution channel through which to disseminate music. This kind of mobility also illustrates music's distinguishing characteristic of its migratory potential in everyday life. This is especially noteworthy with music subgenres such as Bacardi that did not receive mainstream local radio airplay. However, the music managed to appeal to a niche local audience that drummed up enough of its consumption through the active listening and engagement of the music as served by Pitori's local minibus taxi industry[43] that was plugged into Black youth subcultures. The Road Transportation Act of 1977 defines a minibus taxi as a vehicle that carries more than nine passengers but not more than 16 passengers, which requires a permit. This Pitori local taxi industry of Mandlebe was so popular with young people that they would often memorise these taxis' number plates and even give them nicknames such as "Yogueta", based on the colourful lollipop brand because most of the taxis were just as colourful. The make of the taxis was often Toyata Siyayas also known as Toyata HiAce 3rd generation in the mid to late 2000s. A good example of Mandlebe as the cultural production associated with Bacardi music in Pretoria, can be found in DJ Hu Nose's music video of his classic anthem *Tobetsa (Original Video)* and *Tobetsa (Animated)* which can both be found on YouTube. In the music videos, the iconography of colourful Mandlebe can be seen alongside a background of Straata and people hanging around the taxi's powerful sound system playing the song *Tobetsa.* In the original music video of the song, the video opens with DJ Hu Nose playing music on vinyl decks in front of what looks like a tavern or a shebeen with the red and white "R5.50 each Black (Label Beer) Quarts" poster behind him. Shortly after, we see taxis and cars in a township street somewhere ko Pitori; the passengers are hanging out of the taxi and car windows, swinging their upper bodies, dancing to the song, as the vehicles move. A quick snapshot zooms into a subwoofer speaker and back to Hu Nose's circular tuning of the songs on vinyl. The song's reprise starts with two distinct voices of a man and a woman chanting rhythmically: "Tobetsa mmao a bone, Tobetsa nywe nywe" while we see bodies dancing earnestly, syncopating their movements in a kind of Pantsula dance. Cars are also seen driving recklessly in the dusty arid street, reminiscent of South African Black township's history with streetcar racing known as di spini in Pitori. These scenes in the music video continue while the soundtrack changes to another one of Hu Nose's songs, this time a repetitive instrumental beat with sonic features such as Tjovitjos and bass sounds. Similarly, in the animated video created by Tlatso-Son released seven years later than the original, animated Black people are seen grooving – dancing rhythmically in the colourful multiple taxis making their way slowly into the streets of a neighbourhood. In both music videos, the minibus taxis and the streets become congregational spaces of not just disseminating the music but also consuming it within the social practices of South African groove's conviviality. This makes minibus taxis communal and intrinsically public in their transportation model. This conviviality of Mandlebe, di spini and their intersection with dance-music compounds is key in the practices that come with Barcardi's cultural production. In fact, Panyaza and Machapies tells Mathambo (Mokgata and Rasethaba, 2014, 2015) about di spini's relationship as a social club that has a history with gangsters[44]. However, similarly significant as the performative aesthetics that comes with streetcar racing in South Africa, di spini also functions as saving schemes where members of the social club contribute money to economically uplift each other through collective savings (Mokgata and Rasethaba, 2014, 2015). Similarly, DJ Spoko tells Spoek Mathambo about di spini were key cultural contributors of sustaining Bacardi's music, especially during its nascency because most of this type of music was heard at car spinning events (Mokgata and Rasethaba, 2015).

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[42] *Dissensus* is an online forum co-founded in 2003 by multihyphenated music and cultural scholars Matthew Ingram and the late Mark "k-punk" Fisher.

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[43] South Africa's minibus taxi industry is a thriving and vital sector of the country's economy. As a result of the displacement of Black people in South Africa that came with the apartheid laws in the 1960s, the apartheid government forced Black people to move out of the cities into townships many kilometres away from business districts. To facilitate the movement of people from the cities to work, the minibus taxi industry was born out of a need for public transport, which was not serviced by buses or rail. The government at the time refused to grant road carrier permits, but resilient Black entrepreneurs found a way. According to SA Taxi (n.d) – an independent company that is a financial partner to the taxi industry – large sedans that could transport six adults at a time were used because of how they could look like a family, blending in easily with other cars on the road. While this offered a solution, it could not meet the demand. In 1981, around 60 000 operators and drivers came together as a unified voice and established the first South African Black Taxi Association (SABTA) (SA Taxi, n.d). This Association functioned as a way of regulating the taxi industry, but the apartheid government continued to fine legal and illegal minibus taxi operators (SA Taxi, n.d). Sometimes their vehicles would be confiscated and taxi ranks were policed and regularly closed by traffic authorities (SA Taxi, n.d). A lot of protests ensued as a result, many turning violent (SA Taxi, n.d). In 1987, the government decided the taxi industry should be completely deregulated and by 1989, over 50 000 taxis were operating nationally, gaining the largest share of the commuter market (SA Taxi, n.d). The history of South Africa's minibus taxi industry is also indexical to self-determination and economic empowerment for Black entrepreneurs who had very little economic opportunities. Today the industry has grown in numbers and is now the largest public transport service available in the country (SA Taxi, n.d).

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[44] It is important to note that even though street racing in South African is often associated with gangsters, not all those who participate in the sport have illegally acquired their cars.

These were and are momentous occasions born from the cultural production of Bacardi music, from the aural landscape tsa Straata – di pina tsa ko kasi. The music existed in a schema of cultural events produced in the townships that created the music. In other words, the music had a socio-aesthetic character embedded in its sonic orientation of everyday life that also included moments of economic empowerment.

Mandlebe on the other hand, in tandem with the mode of general transport ko kasi – di taxi – were made increasingly relevant especially hedi kolo di kwala, kadi pens down. On such days, especially in Dezemba, these taxis would be hired out for the day to take various Black high school pupils, mostly coming from Pitori townships to public parks, public swimming pools and even shopping malls including Fountains Valley, Ga-Rankuwa Cassandra Park Zone 2 or Menlyn Shopping Centre. But this phenomenon is not only unique to Pitori townships. In the book *Born To Kwaito* (2018) by Esinako Ndabeni and Sihle Mthembu, Mthembu (2018: 156-7) charts a similar phenomenon in Durban where the city's taxi industry is tied to the sound of Durban Kwaito and subsequently Gqom. Weekend parties such as *iExplosion* would see high schoolers in Matric hire out pimped out taxis with loud sound systems to go to the city's beach and party there. Mthembu (2018:157) writes about how during Durban's school holidays and planned weekend benders – s'lala in Sepitori from the Zulu phrase a silale meaning no sleep – where the pupils and their hired pimped out taxis "would sleep at the beach and in the taxis, and there would be dance competitions and sound-swinging competitions to see who had the best mix of bass and tweeters"[45]. Bacardi's sound practices, together with the young people that created, consumed and disseminated it – much like Mthembu's observations of Gqom's subculture that began in the 2010s – are engaged in the creation of both cultural ownership and a taking up of public space that potentiates to a general transgressive attitude of youth culture. However, this transgressive youth culture, for Black youth and Black people was not readily available a couple of years back before the advent of democracy and subsequently these youthfully initiated music subgenres and cultures. More so, because of the spatial dynamics of townships there are not many art and cultural spaces for young people to engage in extra-mural activities outside of academics in the townships. These musical subgenres and subcultures, with a DIY ethos, provide such necessary cultural production imbued with self-expression, play, pleasure and Black joy. As such, these phenomena can be argued as testing the validity of freedom for the so-called “Born-Free generation”. They speak to and reflect a boisterous post-apartheid youth who are experimenting with the thresholds of self-expression and repertoires of public performance culture. These performance cultures by Black township school kids are full of the energy of agency and social relations. Much like art historian Pfunzo Sidogi (2017: 55) calling S’khothanism “radical and unsettling imaginative practices of freedom”, these performance cultures too signal a need for them to be interpreted with nuance that pays particular attention to performances of Being kokasi. Given the fugitivity of Straata vis-à-vis kasi and its marginal identity in South Africa’s mainstream political conscious, these performance cultures “manifest in a plethora of alternative and radical expressions that continue to be ignored” (Sidogi 2017: 55). These performance cultures, I argue, are indicative of a kind of restlessness that can be surveyed in local sonic phenomena – sonic ontologies – reflected in South African post-apartheid electronic music.

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[45] Small speakers usually additionally mounted inside taxis to amplify the vehicle's sound system. Tweeters emit the upper range of the sound known as the treble.

2.4. Sounding Black sonic ontologies of post-apartheid electronic music through Spoek Mathambo’s notion of “apartheid afterparty”

Spoek Mathambo term “apartheid afterparty” enters popular discourse in 2007 on a collaborative EP project titled *Ebonyivortron* with Markus Wormstrom. The collective – *Sweat. X* – describe their music, “Like a 20ft painting of a black hand holding a white hand against a bed of fur and wires” (Citinite, 2007). Here the innuendos of their subjectivities as a collaboration of a Black and a white man in post-apartheid South Africa can be read. This spurs up the post-apartheid “Rainbow Nation” politic and its ethos of reconciliation considering the country’s history. The images of a bed of fur and wires suggests tension between soft(ware) and hard(ware): tropes in their music that thinks through technological innovation and its influence on their sound. In a stream of consciousness interview by Miles Keylock (2008), Spoek Mathambo tells Keylock that “Sweat X-ism” is “the apartheid after party”, while Wormstrom adds “we’re not trying to prove something. We’re not trying to push boundaries it’s just a natural response. This is club music”. Meanwhile, when VICE magazine asked them the following: “So, as a black guy and a white guy making music in perfect harmony, what are the chances of you two becoming poster boys for the Rainbow Nation?”, Wormstrom responded ‘’Sweet Jesus, that is so lame”. Thus, the duo also expresses a desire for a preoccupation where the politics of apartheid and their subjectivities are not essentialised, but rather that there is more sustained attention paid to the music and its possibilities for transcendence, especially dance music which is notoriously relegated to the margins of party music only. This optimism of “Sweat X-ism” is also accentuated by the possibilities of technology in electronic music and its intersections with the history of South Africa, with descriptors of their music including “Future-primitive” (Bleep, 2007). Meanwhile, elsewhere Mathambo has described his music as “Township Tech” (Macfarlance, 2014) to describe his sound alongside many of his electronic music collaborators within the scope of futurity that comes with technology’s ability of mobility in creating communities of listening especially as it relates to the internet. The moniker is also an ode to Mujava’s *Township Funk* that mainstreamed South Africa’s post-apartheid electronic music scene globally (Macfarlane, 2014). There is also a general borrowing from discourses of Afrofuturism. Afrofuturism explores history and fantasy through the cultural aesthetics of science-fiction and technological advancements to forge solidarities and imagination of Black survival and Black futurity in the African diaspora connecting it with people and histories of the African continent (TATE, n.d).

Nonetheless, it is in 2014 when Mathambo’s coinage “apartheid afterparty” starts to appear more widespread after the release of his co-directed three-part travelogue documentary *Future Sounds of Mzansi*. The opening shot of the documentary is heuristic: it opens with a bird’s-eye view of Metrorail tracks with trains[46], many immobile, one moving and no people visible, while the camera pans the landscape revealing the Nelson Mandela bridge in Johannesburg. These aerial shots litter the documentary, showing the environments of where this post-apartheid electronic music comes from. When the documentary stops in Durban, the first sonic-social marker we see and hear are the street vendors chanting the prices of their fruit and vegetables on sale in a repetitive hook in the city centre while people, cars, taxis and buses manoeuvre. These scenes sound an aural landscape of mobility and confluence while skirting through shots moving into the spatial architecture of the townships where we often see kids playing on the streets or hanging around in the streets. This is where most of the music and the people who innovate it come from. Straata preoccupies the aural landscape of the music in very real everyday ways.

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[46] The iconography of trains in South Africa is an important historical signifier of the country’s industrialisation and its dependence on Black migrant labour that was often exploited. In turn, making trains in the country accrue a Black sonic ontological presence especially after South African musician Hugh Masekela’s iconic song *Stimela* released in 1974. The song is a reminder of how South Africa’s wealth and infrastructure was built on the backs of Black labour from all over Africa. In other words Black labour modernised the country and innovated its technologies. Later recordings of the song begin by sounding out the train through Masekela’s intonations and with inflections of bass rhythms and percussions mimicking the sound of a coal train on its tracks: *Choo-Chooooo*. As the instruments fade into the background Masekela announces how there is a train that is coming from many parts of southern and central Africa with African men “who are conscripted to come and work on contract in the gold and mineral mines of Johannesburg and its surrounding metropolis 16 hours or more a day

Therefore – borrowing from scholar Marcus Boon's (2013) idea of "nationhood under a groove" – what does it mean to understand South Africa's post-apartheid landscape through Black popular music and sonic phenomena? More specific to this research, how do we situate this question within post-apartheid South African electronic music from the townships? This includes the situatedness of di Pina tsa ko kasi that have geo-specific contexts and nuances of South African Black township life while simultaneously having an Afrodiasporic resonance too, that makes the sound cultures intrinsically global. Meanwhile, also considering the socio-sonic life referenced in chapter one that explores the multisensorial sound cultures of Straata: from gumba gumbas to childhood games and protest songs all happening on the streets of South African townships, both during South Africa's colonial and apartheid regimes and even in post-apartheid. Speaking to Matthew Collin (2018) in his book *Rave On: Global Adventures in Electronic Dance Music*, Mathambo is quoted as saying:

> A lot of electronic music [in South Africa] is party music, and for the last 20 years we've had a big reason to celebrate… Being a democracy for a first time, that creates a culture all on its own, people being free to move around where they used to not be able to… A lot of the music culture and party culture comes directly from the fact that it is a freedom party – not just any party, but a freedom party… It's not just the freedom to express oneself

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for almost no pay". Meanwhile, there is also a famous South African Afro-fusion band by the same name *Stimela* founded by the late Ray Phiri.

> but the literal thing of being able to go to different place at different times because there were curfews before that. Because of their race, people wouldn't be allowed into certain establishments. It's a very functional, real freedom, not just freedom of expression. Being able to be in the street, 2 000 of you with a sound system without the army shooting you down – that's what it's about.

In the same breath, I also see this electro apartheid afterparty in relation to a disaffected South African Black youth born amidst the country's continued widening inequalities and failures of democracy's so-called new dawn[47]. The freedom that comes with making such musical innovations is imperative to their survival because there is a trust deficit in the government extending a helping hand in developing the socio-economic status and improving the life of the South African youth.[48] As such, this industry must sustain itself by any means necessary. Therefore, despite this post-apartheid Black youthful musical practices of imaginative, futurist and innovative transcendental qualities that have liberatory ethos inherent in them, the music is still necessitated by the fatigue of perpetual protest that comes with the stymies of (South African) Black life.

Thus, these newer South African electronic music genres still have things in common with Kwaito because Kwaito (as the soundtrack of South Africa's post-apartheid) came with "a promise of freedom" (Steingo 2016). A promise that remains elusive three decades after the demise of apartheid. Kwaito's iterant nature in subsequent musical subgenres and cultures sharing its sensibilities is thus fugitive and its sonic excess (in musical practices elsewhere) can be read as an incomplete form of liberation. The soundtrack of post-apartheid is still ongoing because these sound cultures, as forms of expression, are also still borne from the inequities of apartheid's legacies. These sound cultures are still en route to Mathambo's "apartheid after party"; they have not yet arrived. The journey is non-linear because "the post-apartheid period is best characterised as a time of *radical stasis"* (Steingo 2016: 3).

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[47] In 2018, Cyril Ramaphosa was sworn in as the country's fifth democratically elected president where in his first State of the Nation Address spoke of a "new dawn" in relation to "turning the tide of corruption" that has marked the helm of the African National Congress (ANC) post-apartheid – particularly after Jacob Zuma's presidency.

[48] Youth in South Africa continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market with an unemployment rate higher than the national average. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate was 63,9% for those aged 15-24 and 42,1% for those aged 25-34 years, while the current official national rate stands at 34,5% (StatsSA, 2022).

This stasis though, is not necessarily a foreclosure because such post-apartheid Black sonic ontologies are not necessarily resigned. They continue to work through apartheid's hangover sonically, socio-culturally and otherwise: a fugitive existence that is constantly thinking about escape. More so, I read this fugitive existence, considering its dynamisms, through Campt's "grammar of Black futurity" (2017:11). Here, futurity is questioning of ideas of progress or better tomorrows thus suspicious of notions of "hope", though invested in ideas of aspiration (Campt 2017: 17). In many ways then, it is a futurity that is continuously lived in: "the future real conditional or that which will have **had to** happen" (Campt 2017:17). In other words, this futurity depends on radical imaginations beyond prevailing fact as a way of foreshadowing living in the future right now, in the present (Campt 2017:17). Thus, modes of self-fulfilling prophecies, acts and actions, are engaged in enacting this future present (Campt 2017:17). These futurities, when it comes to social justice for instance, are not only found within political movements and acts of resistance that have produced seismic shifts in relation to marginalised identities (Campt 2017: 17). They can also be found elsewhere, especially in the most unlikely places, particularly in practices of the everyday (Campt 2017: 17). Therefore, when I look at Sghubu sa Pitori in relation to Amapiano and the cultural life that influences its youth-based performance cultures in post-apartheid South Africa, I read these types of interventions within the framework of futurity where imagination through the creative worlds of self-expression become places of political manifestation. This is also what Peterson (2003: 207) framed as the challenges of early Kwaito musicians "existing between entrapment and flight." As long as South Africa is still plagued by the country's colonial and apartheid hangovers where Kwaito's promise is still on the agenda, the musical practices after it continues its plight. Therefore, much like Petersen's (2003: 207) observations that Black youth from the township who are innovating these musical practices, mostly as a source of both creativity and hustling "are doing no more or less than a significant proportion of township dwellers whose survival depends on mastering the intricate machinations of the informal (but highly organised) internal economy that marks township as 'colonies' of a sort within the mainstream economy and society". These are some of the Black sonic ontologies that frequently transgress and create survival strategies that imagine and live-now the political aspirations of post-apartheid South Africa. These Black sonic ontologies think deeply, personally and even in ad-hoc everyday ways about what politics is.

2.5. Citational practices and in praise of copying as a cultural logic

Having established that Amapiano is not necessarily a “new” genre but rather interpolated from many musical practices, including Kwaito’s sensibilities and its own illustrious histories of intertextuality, therein also lies contradictions of distinguishment inherent in the politics of citational practices. So then what are the particularities that clearly identify Amapiano as Amapiano considering the specificities of its various sub-categories or schools of Ampiano as well?
When I speak about Amapiano it is to distinguish its musical impulse as per what it sonically denotes as illustrated in the introductory chapter of this research and the contemporaneity of its emergence. However, contingent to understanding Amapiano’s contemporary temporality requires a reconciliation with the encompassment of citational practice as a cultural logic embedded in the musical practice. In other words, because Amapiano is an inherently osmotic musical practice, it is steeped in what Rangoato Hlasane (personal communication 2023, March 30) calls the South African songbook inferred within the country’s urban music and sonic genealogies that are both citational in their orientation as well as osmotic. From Marabi in the 1930s; to the sonic experiments of Kwela popularised in Sophiatown in the 1960s; to the exilic mobility of the South African jazz tradition in the 1980s; late 1980s Bubblegum music; to Kwaito that simultaneously dabbles both with self-styling sonic styles and fashions unique to South Africa as well as borrowing from Hip Hop stylistas in the global North; to the Afropop era of the 2000s; DJ/producer House Music compilation peak of the 1990s to late 2000s and subsequent subgenres of House musical practices that continue to become South Africa’s popular music. This list is not exhaustive because many urban musical practices simply get overlooked, particularly by the mainstream industries of art and culture visibility.

To think about the citational practices of Amapiano vis-à-vis its osmosis as both “in praise of copying” (Boon, 2010) and as a “cultural logic” (Jaji, 2014: 193-237), is to think about the genre as circuitous to South Africa’s aural landscape of urban musical practices. South African music is often indexical to Black resistance and the apartheid liberation struggle. As South Africa increasingly industrialised since Cape Town’s development as a supply station from 1652 by the Dutch East India

Company, an urban Black performing arts burgeoned in the oldest city in South Africa[49] (Coplan ([1985] 2007: 13). In the subsequent centuries, a plethora of musical influences from different parts of the world continued to develop and intermingle with the country's indigenous musical traditions marking some of the beginning points of South African Black popular music-making in the context of the country urbanising. More so, South Africa's urbanisation intersects with colonialism, the Church and its African mission agenda, proletarian work experience and racial segregationist policies. These developments shaped – and continue to shape – the trajectories of South African Black cultural life.

These instrumental movements of people, cultures and social practices as they intersect with the socio-historical and political context of the making of South Africa as a nation-state, comes with rich tapestries of cultural productions that are dynamic. The shapers of Black urban music in South Africa are part of the sonic genealogies of the South African song book that Hlasane (personal communication 2023, March 30) refers to, where Amapiano cites from. The adage that the past is in the present is also the hauntological embeddedness of South Africa's post-apartheid sonic landscape. Thus, to speak about Amapiano, within its contemporaneous marker as one of the musical practices emerging post-apartheid, is to cite it alongside musical practices that made its emergence possible. Questioned around his nickname as "The Godfather of South African House Music", DJ Christos (Christos Katsaitis) reveals how he introduced Chicago House music to South Africa in the 1980s and how it began to change shape into a localised dance music because of adapting and surviving the constrains of the apartheid regime (House Afrika, 2011). In the late 1980s DJ Christos started doing song covers because he was not able to buy the original songs considering the apartheid cultural boycotts of the time (House Afrika, 2011). Through these interpolated covers, Kwaito also emerges from this necessitated fugitivity. Nonetheless, it is similarly important to state that the influence of South African House music and subsequently Kwaito is manifold – it cannot be simply reduced to “South African House music equals Chicago House’’. The influence of Chicago House on South African House music was certainly significant. However, the emergence of these performance cultures also intersects with localised aesthetics and identities that can get lost in easy reductions of cultural imperial smudging if these simplistic comparisons prevail uncontested. In fact, Chicago House music happened simultaneously to Kwaito’s appearance, before it was even called Kwaito and went by different names that favoured and suggested musical experimentation rather than fixed genres, names such as d’gong or isighubu. Gavin Steingo’s (2008: 87) unpacking of the historiography of Kwaito, references an interview of another pioneer of the genre, Oskido who asserts that he started DJing in 1987, playing House music. Steingo (2008: 87) continues to suggest that much like Oskido, Lebo Mathosa from Boom Shaka also implies a “proto-Kwaito” that was happening as Chicago House was developing in the late 1980s. Mathosa offers how, when she was part of the iconic Kwaito group *Boom Shaka*, Kwaito was first known as “Gong” which, as a taxonomic reference got concealed by the now popular term Kwaito (Steingo 2008: 87).

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[49] This is not to suggest that there was not any musical culture before the despoliation and dispossession of indigenous people in Cape Town pre-1652 and/or South Africa broadly before imperialism. I use this timeline to specifically speak to the intersections of a burgeoning *urban* Black population and factors that resulted in their musical developments.

The politics of naming subversive popular musical innovations is similarly relevant in House music. The word “House” – before it was spontaneously conceptualised as a musical genre – was a descriptor that spoke to an attitude, a kind of lifestyle built on Black and Latinx gender inclusive underground clubs with music never heard on commercial radio stations (Brewster and Broughton [1999] 2000: 317). It is not unusual that House music first created in Chicago would find resonance in South Africa because of the genre’s porosity and the Afro-diasporic mobilities of art and cultural confluence. House music is both historically embedded and dedicated to that fugitivity, in fact Tom Simmert (2015: 87) calls it “a transnational phenomenon” that “demonstrates exceptionally well how music is moved and transformed in times of high mobility’’ while Hillegonda C. Rietveld (2011: 4) calls it “a nomadic archival institution”. One can begin to see the trans-regionality and mobility of the musical genre by looking at how it came to be, particularly if we consider how one of its biggest pioneers, Frankie Knuckles who is considered “The Godfather of House Music” was not himself from Chicago. Knuckles was a New York-born DJ from the

Bronx who started playing at a nightclub called The Ware*house* (emphasis mine). Knuckles' innovation of playing records by twisting and remixing them with edits and loops was not necessarily new in New York[50] but would have been at the time in Chicago. Knuckles learned his DJ skills from his mentor, a fellow New Yorker, Larry Levan whom, the Warehouse DJ residency was offered to first but because Levan was dedicated to pioneering House music in New York he declined and instead recommended Knuckles to take on the opportunity (Brewster and Broughton [1999] 2000: 316). Knuckles gave himself five years to crystalise the dance music scene in Chicago and before those five years passed, Knuckles had already become somewhat of a celebrity (Brewster and Broughton [1999] 2000: 316). His club became instrumental in naming a new genre of music that would change contemporary popular music forever and he would be known as one of its biggest pioneers – this music was House (Brewster and Broughton [1999] 2000: 316). However, at the same time, Levan, Knuckles' mentor was doing the same thing in New York at The Paradise Garage except it was first locally known as "Garage" but after House music transcended Chicago's shores, it was known as "Garage House" (Simmert 2015: 88). Simultaneously, Detroit Techno was in its genesis influenced by House music and electronic music coming from Europe which spawned other subgenre derivatives of House such as UK Garage, Rave, Italo House and Trance amongst other electronic dance music genres (Simmert 2015: 88-89).

House is easily identifiable by its repetitive four-on-the-floor beat with a tempo between 120 to 140 beats per minute (bpm) (Rietveld 1998: 4). It is a musical genre that was ostensibly created for dancing, first innovated in the clubs by DJs "tak[ing] the dancing crowd out of this world'' (Rietveld 1998: 4). More so, the key innovator of House music, Knuckles, often speaks of the genre's ascent as indexical to the commercial peak of Disco around the late 1970s and its demise, particularly post the aftermath of what is known as “Chicago’s Disco Demolition Night”. Thus, in turn House music was born out of Disco but in the underground club away from the nefarious agendas of the market of capitalism-consumerist co-option by music executives. Knuckles cited in Rietveld (2011: 6) in a transcription interview by music journalist Jon Savage asserts “House … it’s not actually disco’s revival, it’s disco’s revenge’’. Although Knuckles began DJing at the Warehouse still playing Disco records at its peak from 1977, when the music genre was declared “dead” he was faced with a dearth of records because producing Disco was no longer deemed profitable (Brewster and Broughton [1999] 2000: 319). That is when he innovated House music by re-introducing Disco through blending it with other music genres, creating a musical osmosis of sort. Using a reel-to-reel tape recorder and with some help from a sound engineering friend – Erasmo Riviera – Knuckles would re-configure songs from disparate musical genres by looping or breaking up the introductions of the songs to add new beats and sounds that would create a guaranteed organic and visceral groove for dancing (Brewster and Broughton [1999] 2000: 319). In this way, Chicago House music is also itself a musical osmosis.

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[50] The Bronx in New York is often cited as the precise "birthplace" of Hip Hop this is after DJ Kool Herc (Clive Campbell) pioneered a technique of isolating the rhythm sections from 1960s/70s' records known as "the break" and looping them on repeat or together to create something new. Kool Herc himself is a Jamaican immigrant born in Kingston and emigrated to The Bronx with his parents when he was 12 years old. His innovation in the creation of Hip Hop is very much influenced by his childhood experiences of hearing the sound systems of dance halls in his neighbourhood of Kingston where speech acts would accompany the DJing, known as toasting in Jamaica. Thus reifying Hip Hop's innovation as borrowing too, from elsewhere and challenging its creation as completely new.

This interpolation shaped the genre tremendously, armed with some production and consumption technologies, DJs created a new musical genre that was based on borrowing from existing records. House was a conceptualisation of dance music by aspiring DJs-cum-amateur-musicians with Disco music as the source material. Chicago – its cultural, historical and socio-political environment – innovated the genre of House music, alongside its pioneers, it cultivated a dance music scene that has influenced the trajectories of popular music globally. This illustrates its indomitable abilities of cross pollination. Much like the genre itself is steeped in the sonic culture of sampling, it too is constantly reappropriated, and its characteristics localised in various contexts forming “a wider international flow of musical communication (and communities)” (Rietveld 1998: 16).

As was noted in the beginning of this chapter, in South Africa, House music innovations post-1994 coincided with quests of freedom and accessibility to software as well as cultural and musical production. More so, the global triumph of neoliberalism created an access point for *all* South Africans to participate in a global network of cultural ties with Afro-diasporic aesthetics and the antiphonal reverb of

Blackness globally. It is herein where we see the phenomenon of copying or palimpsestic layers of borrowing and re-fashioning sounds in new innovative ways. From South Africa's local musical innovations to those of elsewhere culturally in movement with one another – often in serendipitous ways, led by experimentation and what is at one's disposal or influence. This is nothing particularly new in a lot of popular musical practices including Hip Hop and R&B. As popular culture theorist, Karin Barber (2022: xx) notes, "… who determines what counts as plagiarism (as distinct from intertextuality, allusion or homage)?" More so, when we look at the illustrious sonic genealogies of the South African song book, it often obfuscates authorship because of its inherent collectivist social practice[51] embedded in its performance cultures. When MCs and Hype men at groove yell over mics "give the people what they want" to the DJs playing at Amapiano (and broadly South African House Music star-studded) gigs, therein lies the musical practices' call-and-response character, asking the DJs to play music that the audience will particularly enjoy in salient political innuendos South Africans are typically familiar with. This is because of broader conspicuous recognitions of South Africa's sonic preoccupations of a four-to-the-floor[52] sensibility, quotidian in ever-present social gatherings beyond the music as an event. This includes, but is not limited to political occasions, ancestral and cultural rituals, funerals, and weddings. More so, many Amapiano artists often sloganeer the phrase "Amapiano is bigger than us" to illustrate a symbiotic and active participatory relationship with the people who consume the musical practice in other meaningful ways. This advances and produces tangential cultures and practices outside of the music-making process especially in relation to the democratisation of cultural production on the internet where this music is mostly consumed. On platforms such as YouTube, Tik Tok, Instagram and Twitter, the musical practice is consumed to also carve out something else from its sonic registers in such a way that it becomes a socio-cultural phenomenon or artefact, especially in the age of social media content creation, often also annotated as "Amapiano is a lifestyle". From dance challenges, to skits, memes, fashion, language and unauthorised remixes, the musical practice of Amapiano encapsulates a kind of radical sharing that is intrinsic to the music's impulse as much as it also speaks to consumptive patterns of popular music in the contemporary. It is the same way that Focalistic declares "ase Trap tse ke pina tsa ko Kasi" as a recognition of the scope of collective music-making and cultural production in the township as an incredible democratic resource beyond a genre of music (i.e., Trap music) but is rather saturated in the breathing and living of culture and intellectual practice ko kasi. Furthermore, his use of the phrase "…ke pina tsa ko kasi" (loosely translated as songs of the township) speaks broadly to an interventionist approach that subverts notions of music as private property and instead espouses di pina tsa ko kasi within preoccupations of everyday socio-cultural musical praxes in the township. If we think about this declaration as a praxis, it thwarts claims of authenticity and the cult of personality we often see given to singular artist geniuses. It demands that we think about this music differently in relation to the South African songbook and African creative practice broadly. This illustrates a fundamental routine of sonic-musical practice ko kasi where music-making is embedded in everyday life thus democratising the role of the artist-musician-creative practitioner. In fact, Makhubu (2013: 300) writes about how placing value on art based on the idea of a single artist is inadequate when it comes to explaining experimental, interactive, collective and ephemeral artistic interventions. She asks (Makhubu 2013: 300) "if contemporary performative and interactive, art depends on people's spontaneous reactions in order for that art to come to life, be perceivable and have ontological status, then does it belong to one artist or is it "a people's art?" If we consider this question in relation to Amapiano, particularly Amapiano from Pretoria, a fairly recent phenomenon as a case study comes to mind: the renaissance of Bacardi music of the early 2000s making its way into contemporary Amapiano. Take the Amapiano song *Tobetsa Remake* (2022) which directly references DJ Hu Nose's Bacardi song *Tobetsa* (2006). In fact, Focalistic's verse on *Tobetsa Remake* (2022) speaks to a nostalgic longing, reminisces on the Mandlebe era where he would listen to DJ Mujava. As such, this constant remodeling and sampling of music-making kokasi in turn gets complicated when incorporated into the market economy of music business in a neoliberalist capitalist society where the single genius artist is exalted. In *In Praise of Copying* (2010), Marcus Boon (2010: 6) explores how the entanglements of humans copying each other is inevitable. He affirms the importance of copying rather than essentialising questions of ethics (Boon 2010: 6). Meanwhile, Tsitsi Ella Jaji (2014: 193) thinks about the potentialities of copying and more specifically the cultural logic of piracy. Writing that pirating, in its essence, is a practice of unlicensed copying and nonconformist distribution channels that excel in informal economies and as a result become illegible, disruptive and unpredictable to hegemonic centralised systems (Jaji 2014: 193). Granted that contemporary life is marked by neoliberal capitalism where collusion between governments and multinational corporations happens, piracy becomes an interventionist tool where art practitioners can use it as a method of criticising the commodification of artistic production, especially in music where it can be a beacon of revolution through redistributive politics prioritising proletariats or unemployed people (Jaji 2014: 193).

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[51] This is not to say *all* Black musical practices in South Africa need to always be read in relation to a collectivist impulse.

[52] Four-on-the-floor (or four-to-the-floor) is a rhythm pattern used primarily in dance genres such as disco and electronic dance music. It is a steady, uniformly accented beat in ^{4}. $_4$. time in which the bass drum is hit on every beat (1, 2, 3, 4). Its roots can be traced to rock 'n roll in the 1960s invented by African Americans.

Thinking within the continuums of Black music in and out of the African diaspora as well as beyond and bringing it to the contemporaneous citational practices of Amapiano evidences its osmotic nature, praising copying as a cultural logic. This reveals flows of mobility where various popular cultures can be reinterpreted, challenging the individual artist myth through complicating questions of ownership. This is also evident in Amapiano especially because most of its injunctions borrow from Black sonic ontologies of Straata where collectivist sound practices are itinerant, circulating in public culture in interesting non-linear ways.

Kwaito’s innovation from the 1980s into its crescendo in the early 1990s sounded out emblematic sonic ontologies of South Africa’s post-apartheid desires: freedom – not only for the newly democratic country but also for its Black youth. Kwaito came with sonic, visual, socio-economic and political cultures that produced ways of being for especially Black township youth that continue to resonate in contemporary South Africa decades after the musical practices’ innovation. What does that reveal about Kwaito’s relationship with its proximity to notions of over-coming apartheid as it is often dubbed the soundtrack of “post-apartheid South Africa”? Has South Africa, particularly, its majority Black youth materially overcome the socio-economic and political strife that was wrought by apartheid three decades ago? In this chapter I unpacks how Amapiano, by virtue of being a musical osmosis that is born from Kwaito’s edifices of the desire of freedom, is instructive of the sonic excess of Kwaito’s promise. This is because Kwaito’s iterant nature in subsequent musical subgenres and cultures that share its sensibilities is fugitive – as is the advent of the post-apartheid epoch that followed it, marked by an incomplete form of liberation. Thus, the soundtrack of post-apartheid is still ongoing because electronic sound cultures such as Amapiano, as forms of expression, are also still borne from the inequities of apartheid's legacies. This chapter illustrates how Amapiano, through musical practices such as Bacardi from Pitori, are still preoccupied with the stymies of Black life given the circumstances and material realties of how these musical practices are innovated in contemporary South Africa. Similarly, Amapiano's inherent citational practice (given its musical osmosis) employs strategies of copying as a cultural logic that thinks about musical practice in a sustained way. In other words, to be able to identify Amapiano's circularity in the broader trajectories of South Africa's Black urban aural landscapes that index the genre with the country's history of Black resistance in its musical practices, especially during the apartheid liberation struggle. Through Campt's (2017: 17) "grammar of Black futurity", this chapter carefully considers ideas of progress, edified in lexiconic and temporal markers of epochs such as "post-apartheid" and where they intersect with cultural innovations such as Kwaito that sounds out desires of better tomorrows. By employing Campt's (2017: 17) concept of futurity, I look at Sghubu sa Pitori in relation to Amapiano and the cultural life that influences its youth-based performance cultures where radical imagination through forms of self-expression, manifest political orientations of survival. They are sonic ontologies of surviving the disaffection by post-apartheid South Africa 30 years after democracy.

Chapter 3: Bana ba Sekolo

3.1. Epistemic justice: Thinking with Amapiano as a speculative model of pedagogy for post-apartheid youth cultural politics

Advancements in technology such as the internet have not only opened the doors of mass communication in an affordable way, but they have also created a porosity of access to knowledge generation and production. This unsettles the propriety of power dynamics embedded in ethics and questions of who gets to produce knowledge. The internet, democratising cultural and knowledge production, has in many ways unsettled gatekeeping mechanisms that entrench asymmetrical power dynamics. As mentioned, throughout this research the internet has been an enabler to Amapiano, right from how the music is produced (on electronic software that can be (il)legally downloaded) to how it is widely shared on social media networking sites which instigates multiple engagements in how the public consumes the music beyond just passive listening. This context is not to necessarily position Amapiano as the first and last musical or cultural practice to depend on the ecosystems of the web, but it is rather to illustrate the point of how people are already empowered knowledge producers, and it takes certain shifts in society and culture for those knowledges to be seen and subsequently legitimised. In this chapter I explore Amapiano's pedagogical logics within a situated context of reading the post-apartheid milieu of South Africa's Black youth who are both the largest consumer and producers of the music[53]. I look at Amapiano through an epistemic justice lens represented by the genre's orders of naming its subgenres, such as "Private School Amapiano" made popular by the producer Kelvin Momo. I also argue that Amapiano's production, dissemination and public consumption are embedded in infrastructures of curatorial logic(s). This includes radical sharing, working within contingencies (particularly in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic) and its effects on the musical practice. I also look at the musical practice in relation to hustling and pleasure as ontological registers of Black being that constitute pedagogies of Straata edified in axioms such as being “street smart” or kleva in Sepitori.

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[53] Most of the Amapiano producers are Black youth born in the early 1990s or late 1980s. The genre's peak was arguably in 2020 which was proliferated by the social media app TikTok known for its Gen Z demographics, also known as "ma2000" in South Africa. Statista – a statistics platform specialising in market and consumer data – revealed that a 2021 survey conducted in South Africa found that the country's TikTok users were predominantly between the age group of 15-24 years old (Cowling, 2023).

3.2. Amapiano and epistemic justice

It is with one of my research interlocutors, Rangoato Hlasane, who incited a reading of Amapiano as following a lineage of Black popular music cultures that engage in praxes of epistemic justice. This is after I asked him about what he thought of the different schools of Amapiano[54], he (Hlasane personal communication 2023, March 30) answered:

> I think it is interesting that you are calling it a school because a school proposes something formal in terms of the etymology of the term. As such, in a sense it makes me think about how one of the most prominent [record] labels in post-apartheid South Africa – Kalawa Jazmee – has sort of alluded to the notion of the *University of Kalawa* which was used as a title for Professor’s album… If one goes back to the notion of the term school, it becomes important on various levels of epistemic justice. If you consider that the South African curriculum in both basic education and higher education continuously neglect the African or the South African songbook as the basis for knowledge production in this space of young people and particularly in these genres created by young Black people who fill that space. So, they are seriously doing the work of epistemic justice.

Hlasane’s proposal of looking at Amapiano in relation to the broader frameworks of music-making in South Africa (especially in the country’s popular music archive) is important for noticing patterns that are indicative of much broader socio-political and economic contexts in which the musical practices of Amapiano exists in. This includes the history of the country’s inequities and inequalities that affect the Black majority of the population, subsequently significantly affecting the country's Black youth majority.

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[54] I deliberately use the phrase “schools of Amapiano” to show that the musical practice is heterogeneous. There are different sonic sensibilities within the musical practicesof Amapiano. The use of the word “schools” seeks to indicate the collective genre of Amapiano while still pointing towards difference within the collective, especially sonically. Nonetheless, this terminology also poses a contradictory tension because the research argues that Amapiano’s practices of refusal go against orders of mainstream legitimisation, i.e. schools. However, the genre is not necessarily ignorant to this granted that the terminology is inspired by Kelvin Momo’s “Private School Piano”. What the term indexes is contradictory ambivalences that recognise established norms (that are often exclusionary) but still chooses to opt in-and-out of them as per the need arises. A fugitive relationship signalling the tensions of knowledge production as per schools and how especially those marginalised by them choose to work around them. This is also evident in this research that inserts knowledges that have been marginalised by academia, and/or knowledges that sometimes refuse academia’s legibility because of its historical treatment of Black cultural production. That treatment includes but is not limited to exploitation and/or othering as per disciplines such as ethnomusicology.

The National Development Youth Agency (NYDA) Status of Youth Report (2022: 13) reveals that in South Africa Black African[55] youth accounted for the majority of the youth population (84,4%) in 2021, followed by Coloured youth (8,3%), White (5,1%) and Indian/Asian (2,2%). Irrespective of Black young people in South Africa being the biggest youth demographic, they continue to be the most marginalised when it comes to economic opportunities and/or education and training for youth development. Even though there are improved enrolment rates in South Africa's basic and higher education, the numbers are considered low in comparison to international standards (NYDA Status of Youth Report 2022: 14). Additionally, dropout rates in Grade 10 and 12 in high school are also high (NYDA Status of Youth Report 2022: 14). Furthermore, because educational achievements are still marked by historical and socioeconomic factors such as geographic location, class, gender and race, this leads to low levels of educational achievement among Black African and Coloured youth compared to Indian/Asian and white youth (NYDA Status of Youth Report 2022: 15). Both Black African (55,6%) and Coloured (48,0%) populations had the highest proportions of youth that have less than matric as their highest level of education (NYDA Status of Youth Report 2022: 14). Indian/Asian were the highest demographic of young people with matric and other tertiary qualifications, while white (17,9%) youth were the highest proportion of graduates (NYDA Status of Youth Report 2022: 14). Meanwhile, when it comes to the country's youth unemployment, it is often described as a crisis in South Africa. The youth unemployment rate is higher than the national average (Stats SA, 2022). In the first quarter of 2022, the country's unemployment rate was 63,9% for the age group 15-24 and 42,1% for the age group 25-34 while the current national rate is 34,5% (Stats SA 2022). With over 10 million young people between the age of 15-24 years, out of these, 2,5 million of them are in the labour force (Stats SA, 2022). The 7,7 million or 75,1% of this group of youth are unemployed (Stats SA, 2022). Meanwhile, 37,0% of this group are disengaged from South Africa's labour market (Stats SA, 2022). In other words, these young people are not employed and are without education and training (Stats SA, 2022). Even though the South African National Budget allocated R5,2 billion in 2022 towards tax relief to assist in supporting the country's economic recovery which includes youth employment incentives – youth unemployment remains a national crisis (Stats SA, 2022). This asymmetrical distribution of South Africa's population towards this age group "means that, as the country's economic woes deepen, the disproportionate brunt thereof is endured by the youth" (Youth Progress Index 2021: 5). These socio-economic and political indicators also intersect with questions of knowledge production and who is a knower.

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[55] The term 'Black African' is used in the statistical documents I cite and is not necessarily of my usage as I have been referring to Black Consciousness ideological frameworks of race in relation to Steve Biko's Black.

Epistemic injustice speaks to a hierarchy of who gets to produce knowledge. It is an injustice where one's capacity as a knower is delegitimised based on prejudices about the subject that is speaking. These prejudices include but are not limited to race, gender, class, ethnicity, social background, sexuality and even a person's accent. Even though the term epistemic (in)justice has been popularised through Mirander Fricker's book *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (2007), philosopher Gaile Pohlhaus Jr. (2012) illustrates how Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak's essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) foreshadows the latter book. In Spivak's essay she describes what she calls "epistemic violence" occurring when subaltern persons are prevented from speaking for themselves about their own interests because of others claiming to know what those interests are. Meanwhile, Vivian May (2014) has also argued that civil rights activist Anna Julia Cooper also showed awareness to the term's polemics in the 1890s, in her articulation of how Black women are denied full and equal recognition as knowers. Meanwhile, epistemic (in)justice in relation to Africa and specifically South Africa has generated a considerable amount of literature (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, Kwoba, Chantiluke and Nkopo, 2018, Boonzaier and van Niekerk, 2019, Fomunyam, 2019, Mpofu and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020, Gwaravanda and Ndofirepi, 2020, Morreira, Luckett, Kumalo and Ramgotra 2021, Bock and Stroud, 2021 as well as Pande, Chaturvedi and Daya, 2023) in recent years, especially after the #Fallist movement that called for radical change in institutions of higher education in South Africa.

In his book *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization* (2018) Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018: 1) establishes that the broader struggles for epistemic freedom in Africa is intrinsically linked to "the long-term consequences of modernity, enslavement and colonialism [where] African people have been reproduced as agents in a Eurocentric history". Thus, even within a post-apartheid logic in South Africa, it is disingenuous to divorce the state of the country's education – episteme – from the effects of colonialism and apartheid despite their official conclusions. This is not to postulate Africa as having had no record of its own systems of learning and education pre-colonisation. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018: 161) offers insights into how pre-colonial African civilisations established universities which were principally founded on indigenous cultural production as well as the social, political and economic landscapes of their times. Granted that these African knowledge systems did not essentialise hegemonic world ordering of an imperial character, they were treated with contempt, overlooked and overtaken by the modernity project modelled by the Western university (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 161). Similarly, from enslavement of African people to the Americas, to Europe's insatiable colonial plunder of the African continent – these have had consequences on pre-colonial institutions of learning and teaching in Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 162).

The more contemporary discourse on epistemic justice in South Africa was crystalised by the Fallist movement. It began with the #RhodesMustFall protest when, on 9 March 2015, human faeces were thrown on the University of Cape Town's statue of the imperialist Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902). Rhodes' statue symbolised the omnipresent spectres of imperialism, colonialism and on-going apartheid even in a post-apartheid South Africa. The statue (and many other such statues in the country of imperial, colonial and apartheid figures[56]) have a direct relationship with the stubborn inequalities of the country that persist today. By mid-October of that year, the protest snowballed into nationwide protests at other universities that lasted until 2016 and occasionally still occur in some universities. The protests included Fees Must Fall, Open Stellenbosch, Transform Wits, Outsourcing Must Fall, RU RefencelistList, Afrikaans Must Fall, Shackville amongst others. While the statue was removed on 9 April 2015, the Rhodes Must Fall movement alongside other Fallist protests, were necessitated by a wider impulse that called and demanded for institutional change in the cultural environment of the university and the various curricula, premised on the discourse of decolonisation. *The Daily Vox*[57] journalist Ra'eesa Pather (2015) spoke to three students who were involved with the Rhodes Must Fall protest movement from the beginning who contextualised the movement within broader frameworks that recognised their agency as knowers too, challenging the university's economic monopoly of knowledge production, Kealeboga Ramaru said:

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[56] This includes the Louis Botha statue in Cape Town; Paul Kruger statue in Pretoria; Horse Memorial in Gqeberha amongst many others. There is also the Rhodes Memorial – a monument in Cape Town dedicated to the imperialist.

> Symbolically, what we've done is powerful … sitting at the big conference table. We've brought this space where decisions are made without our consent and said, "Look, this is our space too, and we deserve to be here".

Meanwhile, Ru Slayen told Pather (2015) about the movement's need to address the cultural alienation of the historically predominately white institution that is UCT:

> In our first meeting we started with speaking about how we were going to address the pain in the room before we started addressing our pain to the world. That was about trying to forge this space where everyone could be welcome.

Masixola Mlandu on the other hand shared with Pather (2015) how the campaign around the statue falling and its subsequent removal was a means to an end:

> This is not about the statue, it's about us. It's us finding community within UCT that represents us in a manner that we want. Hence, we are always critical about who speaks about our movement the white liberals and all those people [who don't understand].

The same can be said about the Fees Must Fall protests which were arguably the most pervasive of the Fallist movements as per the protest's resonance with most higher institutions of learning in South Africa. Fees Must Fall began in mid-October 2015 with the goal to halt student fee increments and compel government to increase spending for public universities and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. The core demand was, and remains, that Black students want free education to be provided for them by the state, citing that not only is it a constitutional obligation of the state[58] but also as one of the basic tenets of decolonial education: to make it accessible to all. The rallying cry for the movement was “free decolonised quality higher education”. The protests escalated after President Jacob Zuma declared that they would be no fee increments for 2016 to broader societal questions about access to higher education for poorer students against the backdrop of high-income University managers, decline in government funding for higher education, lack of social transformation in these institutions as well as the socio-economic and racial inequities that still persist not just at South African universities but broadly too in the country. By surfacing ideas of decolonisation, students of the Rhodes Must Fall movement agitated a nonchalant national government and society that had become consumed by neoliberal agendas (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 222). As a movement that arose just after two decades of post-apartheid South Africa, its mass demonstrations exposed the lingering remnants of apartheid and colonialism in institutions of the formerly white University of Cape Town (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 222). The movement drew attention to alienating cultures and offensive iconographies of colonialism and apartheid histories, subsequently igniting broader contestations about the country’s inequities with ensuing movements such as Fees Must Fall focusing on Black students’ socio-economic realities of tertiary education (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 222).

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[57] Daily Vox was one of the major news platforms documenting the Fallism movement. They were established in 2014 and championed themselves as providing a platform for voices and perspectives that are often not included in established media.

[58] Section 29(1)(a) of the Bill of Rights in South Africa's Constitution (1996: 12) establishes the right to basic education, for both adults and children, as an immediate right of the state's obligation. Government is required to take active steps to ensure that every child has access to educational facilities and enjoys the right to education. This means that government and its agencies (such as public schools) should not impede children's access to education. In addition, section 29(1)(b) establishes the right to further education, which the State must "through reasonable measures" make "progressively available and accessible" (South Africa's Constitution 1996: 12).

Bearing such political and socio-economic contexts that mark discussions of epistemic justice in South African contemporary discourse, I explore Amapiano through pedagogical frameworks marked by these inequities that are contingent to South African post-apartheid Black life. Even though this research’s scope is on Amapiano with a Pretoria sonic sensibility, I recognise the broader context of the music’s social life beyond region. Here I explore my pedagogical provocation of Amapiano in relation to Hlasane’s epistemic justice response by looking at the genre’s organizational and inferred intergenerational networks. The first being how Amapiano is often differentiated between the mainstay categories of “Private School Piano” versus the more commercial Amapiano, which the sub-genre of Bacardi from Pretoria typically falls under.

The Soweto-born producer, Kelvin Momo (Thato Kelvin Ledwaba) is the pioneer of the Private School Piano sound in Amapiano. Momo’s debut album was titled *Momo’s Private School* (2020) while his second album was titled *Ivy League* (2021).

Private School Piano is not necessarily new sonically. It comes from a linage of the deep House and mid-tempo House music tradition. Deep House and mid-tempo House have more of an esoteric following in most South African townships, including Pitori. There is a certain level of niche in which the music penetrates, often negating the mainstream market that Bacardi is known for. Deep House and mid-tempo House are often socially associated with bo Grootman even though it is typically music for young people by young people. Private School Amapiano has the same sensibility but has managed to crossover into the mainstream market because of the Amapiano genre it references. Momo's Amapiano sonic signature references jazz and the latter deep/mid-tempo soulful House music. It often features minimal to no vocals on songs yet retaining a lot of musicality by collaborating with artists who play live musical instruments. Musical practices such as jazz and soulful have, over the years, been associated with sophistication and maturity especially in Black townships: as per this research's introductory quote from Zakes Mda's *Black Diamond* (2009: 33-34) of the "advanced … fine art of jazz appreciation" in Pretoria and Soweto. So even though Amapiano broadly references jazz through the index of the genre's name and its osmotic nature, many Private School Amapiano artists also cite jazz as a predominant influence. Kelvin Momo revealed that part of his music-making process includes listening to jazz, finding inspiration in musicians such as Jonathan Butler (Kaya 959, 2021). He also disclosed that the name "Private School Amapiano" in fact came up on a whim and was coined by a fellow music producer, Masterpiece YVK, on a visit to Kabza De Small's studio, the record label owner who licensed his first album under his company "Piano Hub" (Kaya 959, 2021). An illustration of the collaborative approach the artists constantly work in.

It is important to foreground that all these musical practices are often innovated by Black youth in the townships of South Africa. This makes the music, whether Bacardi or Private School Piano, quite mainstream, especially at local parties and places of socialising in and out of the township (if one considers the township to be an incessantly mobile place in South African public culture). However, the widespread attention House music has received on both South African mainstream media and international platforms such as radio and television, all of that is fairly recent. Before Amapiano (and broadly the lineage of House music traditions, including deep House, mid-tempo House and Bacardi) became as mainstream as it is in this current epoch, it was peripheralised. One reason for this was because some of the music was hardly ever mastered to a particular standard of radio airplay production given that the music was not necessarily made with radio playlisting in mind or there was a knowledge gap in getting the music to such mainstream platforms. Another reason is that some of the music, especially in Bacardi, had a vulgar sensibility that discomforted the respectability of South African broadcasters. Thirdly, particularly with Private School Amapiano and the linage of deep House and mid-tempo House music, these genres were often considered to be "monotonous" because the songs are generally very long, especially if there are no vocals. Amapiano and the broader electronic House music scene in South Africa, much like Kwaito's story, saw broadcasters and major record labels belatedly taking the musical practices seriously once the demand from the streets was too loud to ignore. The internet, and particularly platforms such as TikTok also created a lot of visibility for these musical practices that were pushed to the margins, something I will discuss later in the chapter.

To think about the tacit intergenerational networks inherent in Amapiano's osmotic musical practices, I want to go back to my collective phrase "the schools of Amapiano" guided by Momo's "Private School Amapiano" coinage. This is to think tangentially about his and many other Black cultural producers' insistences that in a structurally organised sense, their music is pedagogical. Professor's *University of Kalawa* (2011) being another example as provided by Hlasane (personal communication 2023, March 30). Here it becomes interesting to think about this vis-à-vis the notion of "schooling". To "school", mabarebare teaches, relates to humbling someone's ignorance through giving them an implied lesson. Such an education is complex and layered, often casual and depends on intimate knowledges, sometimes even rumors. It often shows tacit affinity between the knower who is doing the schooling and the one receiving the lesson. Marked by curiosity and often asymmetrical power dynamics amongst intergenerational communities, "getting schooled" is a coming-of-age privilege in practices of community intelligence. A good example of this knowledge economy is best represented in Jacob Dlamini's (2009: 140-142) close reading of the Kwaito song, *Waar Was Jy?* released in 1996 by the group Skeem. He (2009: 140-141) offers an invitation of listening deeply to the range of knowledge production that indexes aural intergenerational knowledge dissemination:

> *Waar was jy?* was not so much a hit as a history lesson, a paean to some of the best music to come out of black South Africa in the 1980s. Skeem were not simply reminding us of the rich artistic work that came out even in the darkest days of apartheid. They were also locating themselves in this rich musical tradition. What's more, they were doing so in a language that was supposedly that of the oppressor… 'Waar was jy?' was also the question on the lips of adults, my uncles and older cousins especially as they closed their eyes and tapped their feet to John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie or Basil Manenberg Coetzee, Dollar Brand, Winston Mankunku Ngozi and Kippie Moeketsi. 'Waar was jy?' they would ask each other: The question was rhetorical. Turning to us young 'uns, they would sometimes mutter: 'Sonny, jy ken niks' (Boy, you know nothing). It was true: we were too young to know anything about *A Love Supreme* and *A Kind of Blue*. We knew nothing of the music that was admired in silence and praised in Afrikaans.

Meanwhile, to understand the aspirational adherent in the phrase "Private School Amapiano" as a popular parlance of Amapiano's zeitgeist, a look at the South African Schools Act (1996) is necessary. The Act recognises that education (much like many social services in the country) is divided between both the public and private sectors. The difference between the quality of these services is stark. Within South Africa's education system, there is three different school models: public/government; "Model C"[59] (semi-private); and independent/private (Hofmeyr and Mccay n.d, 51).

Public schools are solely dependent on the government for their day-to-day running and resources with each province allotted a particular budget to run the respective schools and pay teachers. Typically, pupils pay little to no school fees to attend public schools. The standards and facilities of these schools are often contingent on how government budgets and resources are effectively managed. However, the quality of education in these schools is generally considered poor. Public schools' low-quality education is a challenge for both its pupils and educators. The issues range from little or no government participation at all, to the need for qualified educators and even to a lack of school resources: from school materials down to the infrastructure of schools. These under resourced public schools are also a direct result of apartheid in its deprivation of providing good quality education for the Black learner. As such, this creates a gap in the provision of good quality education for South Africa's youth. "Model C" schools and private schools offer quality schooling at varying standards; however, this comes at a significant cost with little to no government support (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9).

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[59] The term "Model C" is used attributively to refer to non-racialised state schools that became a significant marker for desegregating schools during the tail-end years of apartheid (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9). The term comes from restructuring schools and their general admission requirements as regulated by the state. Under Model A, the school would become fully private; under Model B it would remain a state school; and under Model C the school would become state-aided (or semi-private), with its management council responsible for the running of the school, appointment of staff, determination of fees and maintenance of facilities (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9). "Model C" schools also receive state subsidies for covering staff salaries appointed within state prescribed norms (usually amounting to about 80% of the operating expenses of schools) and the management council would be responsible for raising the remaining funds (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9).

Even though "Model C" schools typically receive government funding, it is partial. These schools are administered and largely funded by the parent body. The school fees generally vary, and parents also typically fundraise money to sustain the school's operational costs (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9). Some of the country's best schools are placed within the "Model C" category as a result of the additional budget outside of government's partial funding (Christie and McKinney 2017: 11). The origins of the term "Model C" enters public discourse towards the end of the apartheid education system when it was undergoing restructuring in preparation of a post-apartheid South Africa (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9). In 1990 the apartheid government made a set of governance options available for the white-only school governing bodies to use its own discretion when it came to pupil admissions, including the option to accept learners from all ethnic groups albeit under strict conditions (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9). The establishment of these "Model C" schools were also steps for the apartheid government, under the politically dominant National Party, to protect the white-only schools – which were the best resourced within the government system – from the impending transformation of ending white privilege (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9). Known as the "Clase Models", named after the then Minister of Education and Culture, Piet Clase (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9), these schools have largely retained their popularity in South Africa. Social justice experts in education in South Africa consider the ongoing use of the term "Model C", even in post-apartheid South Africa as a significant detail of "understanding how the hegemony of white control was maintained during the transition and extended under the new government of national unity after 1994" (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9). They (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9) also maintain that ““Model C” schools play an important hegemonic role in a narrative process [where such schools] are accorded the status of being the “ideal type” of post-apartheid school, with the assumption that schools of this type are available for all in some unspecified future, as long as principals, teachers, student and parents work hard enough”. In these schools, preference was given to white pupils from their feeder areas and the schools would need to retain a white majority of 50% + 1 (Christie and McKinney 2017: 9). However, in 1992 all white-only state schools became desegregated and classified as “Model C” but their governing bodies remained white with significant power over the schools’ budgets, admissions and property[60] (Christie and McKinney 2017: 10).

Private schools are completely independent from the government. They are usually owned and operated by a trust, church, community or by a for-profit-company (SchoolGuide, n.d.). Private schools are typically associated with exorbitant school fees although there are different tiers to their price points depending on their prestige, cultural heritage, and their reputation, especially when it comes to school excellence across academics and extramural activities. This subsequently makes pupils attending private schools – as well as their parents – associative with socioeconomic class indicators of privilege. There is a particular exclusivity and elitism that comes with many of South Africa’s top private schools. This is also coupled with the sociopolitical history of the country where these schools (including the “Model C”) were also predominantly white schools during apartheid. Thus, the quality of education received in some of the country’s best private schools far outweighs the quality of education in public schools that is still reeling from a history of Bantu Education[61].

Meanwhile, Private schools typically offer smaller classes, therefore catering to the needs of individual students in substantially intimate ways with highly skilled educators and more resources, funding and infrastructure compared with their public school counterparts. This makes the difference between the two significant. In a series of five reports, the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE)[62] revealed that South Africa's basic education schooling system is one of the worst-performing education systems in the world (Schirmer and Visser 2023: 1-4). The reports illustrate "…that countries that are poorer and spend far less than we do on a per learner basis, such as Kenya and Vietnam, achieve much better results" (Schirmer and Visser 2023: 1). This is even though "our spending commitments are equivalent (proportionately) to some high performing Scandinavian countries, such as Finland, but our learning outcomes are worse than neighbouring Eswatini" (Schirmer and Visser 2023: 1). In the same breath, an international study – the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) – of 2021's results showed that 81% of Grade 4 pupils in South Africa cannot read for meaning in any language (Mullis et al. 2023: 23).

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[60] The buildings and grounds of these “Model C” schools was legally transferred to the management council of the school free of charge, with a reversionary clause should the schools’ operations stop (Christie 1995, 49).

[61] The Bantu Education Act 1953 (Act No. 47 of 1953; later renamed the Black Education Act, 1953) was a South African segregation law that legislated for several aspects of the apartheid system, particularly the discriminatory and unequal educational practices targeting Black South African learners that were uniformly implemented. This was often fiercely challenged, including the catalytic events of 16 June 1976 known as “The June 16 Soweto Youth Uprising”.

This is how systemic historical inequalities between the disparities of the aforementioned schools will always be salient components in discussions of epistemic justice in South Africa. This is the very brief context of South Africa's public discourse on basic education that Amapiano finds itself referencing, illustrative through dubbing one of its sub-genres "Private School Piano". With these school dynamics, the implications of what "Private School Piano" edifies in South Africa is evident. "Private School Piano" sounds out a socio-economic class and cultural aspiration, especially considering the demographic in which it comes from: Black working and precarious middle class young people. The nomenclature is a sense-making device that narrativises a desire for social upward mobility through an upper-class referential marker of a highly contested education in a country marked by widening inequities. It sounds out a desire to escape, albeit in neoliberalist capitalism's logics that trap such demographics in the first place. This draws our awareness to the fugitive dissonance within the musical practice and the material realities of its innovation. This is a legitimate desire because as Esinako Ndabeni (2018: 9) reflects while writing about Kwaito vis-à-vis its social upward mobility status: “I certainly would not like to claim that success exists only in the ways that capitalism has shaped, but I would like to think that blackness need not always be defined by poverty. We have to get out.” Therefore, even though there is no direct relationship between Amapiano and South Africa’s basic education system, the associations in the difference between public/government schools (and social services in general) and private/independent schools connotes binaries of inferiority and superiority. This is implicated in the difference between broader Amapiano musical practices versus “Private School Piano”.

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[62] CDE is an independent policy research and advocacy organisation based in South Africa. It focuses on critical development issues and their relationship to economic growth and democratic consolidation. Through examining South African realities and international experience, coupled with high-level forums, workshops and roundtables, CDE aims to formulate practical policy proposals outlining ways in which South Africa can tackle major social and economic challenges.

3.3. Vuk’uzenzele[63] as an intellectual tradition

Rangoato Hlasane and Bhekizizwe Peterson (2022: 358) insist that Kwaito (and by extension Amapiano as a tradition of Kwaito) “is an important archive and practice that you can live, play and think with … an indelible part of the Black Public Humanities in South Africa”. In other words: there is an intellectual tradition in South African youths’ socio-sonic, cultural, and political histories of Black popular music-making from ko kasi with rich intertextual histories. One such intellectual tradition is vuk’uzenzele. In South African popular music and culture – Straata – vuk’uzenzele as an etymology becomes popularised by pop Kwaito group Aba Shante in 1999 with their song and album named *Vuk’uzenzele*. The song’s hook is sung by Abel “Aba” Golele in a raggamuffin-inspired toasting sonic register, repeatedly chanting: “one for the money, two for the show, everybody wake up and work up”. Later in the song adding the question: ha o robetse o tla tsoswa ke mang (when you are asleep who will wake you up?” Vuk’uzenzele is a practice of self-determination indexical to a country wrought with inequality and a loss of trust in its ruling post-apartheid government. Vuk’uzenzele means to hustle.

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[63] *Vuk’uzenzele* is a South African government newspaper published every month. It includes news and advice on socio-economic opportunities created by government, and how to access these opportunities. The word itself is a Zulu street colloquial meaning “do it yourself”. An ethos that has become increasingly championed by young South Africans who believe the government has generally failed them as youth unemployment continues to soar with rampant corruption and empty government promises.

Kwaito and how its traditions infiltrate its subgenres such as Amapiano, has been a site where the creative strategy of vuk'uzenzele is advocated because of the music's independent innovation ko kasi prior to mainstream attention. Take for instance how Kwaito came with business models that *let the subaltern speak*[64] (which Amapiano has also modelled) by establishing independent record labels. Hlasane's (personal communication 2023, March 30) invocation of *University of Kalawa,* foregrounds the importance of the record label Kalawa Jazmee to the extent that Professor recognises it as a university. His own nickname – Professor – implicates him as a knowledge maker too. Kalawa Jazmee is a legendary record label – an institution in its own right – co-founded by Oskido, DJ Christos and Don Laka, the latter who studied music at the Royal Academy of Music in London in the 1960s. The business was one of the first successful Black-owned record companies in South Africa, established post-apartheid. Laka (The Hustlers Corner, 2022) expresses how Kalawa started with no distribution or insider knowledge of the industry. They were making music on an 8-track recorder when people at the time had upgraded to recording on a 24-track recorder (The Hustlers Corner, 2021). Instead of waiting for radios to playlist their music, their went out into the streets to create a demand for their music by selling it independently and setting up a colleague at Carlton Centre (a shopping centre located in central Johannesburg) with a ghetto blaster to play their music, when at the time, no one was doing that: vuk'uzenzele (The Hustlers Corner, 2021). They would also sell music from the boot of a car. Eventually these efforts led to a demand for their music, including radio playlisting, making Kalawa Jazmee a success story (The Hustlers Corner, 2021).

This is the hotbed that Kwaito is often associated with: seen as the post-apartheid soundtrack of not just the country's young people, but also South Africa's newly founded democracy. The taking up of public space, whether bodily, sonically or otherwise, by Black people was no longer off limits. Not only did the music's preoccupation and impulse change, what also changed is the way people engaged with the music too. Black South Africans took complete ownership of this music beyond merely listening to it. They made it a cultural aesthetic that is imbued in many popular Black South African musical practices today. The way in which people bought, consumed, and played the music changed as well. By merely employing a DIY sensibility to its distribution, Kwaito became a cultural ecosystem that reshaped the South African music. These new Black musicians became, and continue to be, some of the country's successful businesspeople. In a documentary on club culture in Johannesburg, Oskido (2018) explains how the major recording companies rejected him and his business partners (Tisani, 2018). However, that rejection did not deter them; instead, it pushed them to independently distribute their music that was already considered so transgressive anyway by the mainstream, as Oskido puts it: "myself, Don and Christos we decided that we are going to press 500 cassettes then we started distributing it ourselves. We will go to the Indian shops, the guys there will say: "leave ten and when it sells you can come pick up your money"' (Tisani, 2018). This is Kwaito's long lasting sonic and music business aptitude of hustling – vuk'uzenzele – that paved the way for a blueprint for how to be a successful independent Black South African musician. Art and culture journalist, Charl Blignaut observes: "thanks to the House Music scene, that became the Kwaito scene, that became the (South African) Black House scene – we have one of the only truly transformed business sectors in South Africa, where Black-owned independents own the local music scene, making the most money from it" (Tisani, 2018). Here we see how everyday practices of refusal[65] – Black people refusing the denouncement of their capabilities and limited conceptions of who they are – are engaged as per Hlasane's provocation of epistemic justice. Even though, on a pedagogical level in South Africa's basic and higher education curriculums, Black musical practices are rarely engaged as registers of intellectual practice. They are often generally read within the realms of entertainment or ethnomusicology, a tendency that this research aims to undermine. However, the trajectory of Black popular music's expansiveness demands attention and vocabularies that encompasses their phonic materiality as pedagogical. In a country marked by socio-economic and political inequalities and inequities, the cultural production of vuk'enzenzele in Black popular music is intellectual.

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[64] I am referencing the popular essay by literary feminist scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1988) where she highlights issues of representation in relation to power dynamics of autonomy and empowerment when it comes the representation of the oppressed vis-à-vis the oppressor, especially further complicated by intersections of nationality, gender, class, race and caste. This is where her most popular coinage, "epistemic violence", comes from.

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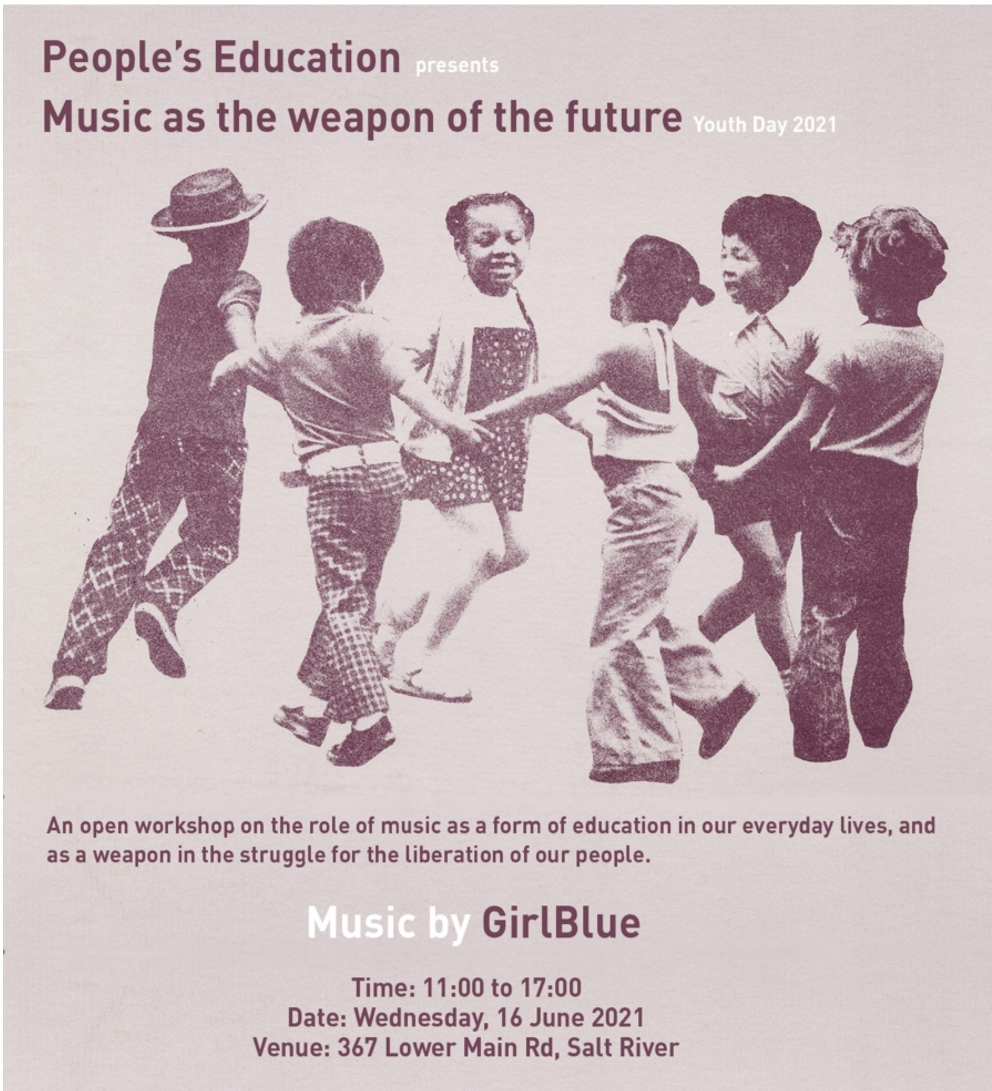
[65] The refusal comes from a place of necessity not choice since it is a refusal contingent to its environment and broader socio-economic contexts specific to South African history. However, this fact does not undermine Kwaito's innovative DIY proclivities.

Furthermore, as a praxis of Straata, vuk'uzenzele aligns with *Chimurenga*'s notion of *The Shebeen as College of Music*. *Chimurenga* is a pan African platform of writing, art and politics based in Cape Town founded by Ntone Edjabe in 2002. The platform also founded the *Pan African Space Station (PASS)* with musician and composer Neo Muyanga in 2008, described as a "a periodic, pop-up live radio studio; a performance and exhibition space; a research platform and living archive, as well as an ongoing, internet-based radio station (Pan African Space Station, n.d.)." On 6 June 2010, *PASS* hosted a *Chimurenga* session titled *The Shebeen as College of Music* to launch their publication *Chimurenga 15 – The Curriculum Is Everything* (2010) where they probe: "What could the curriculum be – if it was designed by the people who dropped out of school so that they could breathe?" (Chimurenga, 2010). The publication provides alternatives to the existing educational pedagogy through fiction, essays, interviews, poetry, photography and art where contributors investigate and redefine rigid ideas of what is considered essential knowledge (Chimurenga, 2010). Even though the publication is presented in the form of a textbook, mimicking its structure, it also rejects it by reorganising all entries under subjects such as: body parts, language, grace, worship and news (from the other side), numbers, parents, police and many more (Chimurenga, 2010). The publication's content is organised in both a linear and thematic way to encourage "multiple entry points into a curriculum that focuses on the un-teachable and values un-learning as much as it's opposite" (Chimurenga, 2010). Such praxes come from a desire for epistemic justice spearheaded by discussions outside of the academy about alternative education in (South) Africa and its different access points. This also includes initiatives such as *People's Education* founded by Evan Abrahamse and Goitsione Mokou in 2014. *People's Education* is an association of activists, educators, community workers and artists based in Cape Town who are concerned about the state of education within a contemporary Africa (People's Education, 2021). Their educational projects and programmes include but are not limited to sex education, weekly study circles in barbershops and hair salons in Cape Town and music education. The music education programme is a response to the neglect of the (South) African songbook in basic and higher educational institutions that Hlasane (personal communication 2023, March 30) refers to. In response to this lack of study and practice of African music given our musical legacy and the role it plays in the everyday lives of African people (People's Education Music education, 2016) the programme reflects on popular music investigating the Black African sonic as a language of its own that instantiates knowledge about freedom. On 16 June 2021 (a significant calendar date in South Africa that commemorates the June 16 Soweto Youth Uprising[66]) *People's Education* hosted a series of open and participatory family-friendly workshops in Salt River. They explored the role of music amongst the youth in the quest for liberation particularly when it comes to music as an everyday educational tool (People's Education, 2021).


People's Education presents
Music as the weapon of the future Youth Day 2021

An open workshop on the role of music as a form of education in our everyday lives, and as a weapon in the struggle for the liberation of our people.

Music by GirlBlue

Time: 11:00 to 17:00
Date: Wednesday, 16 June 2021
Venue: 367 Lower Main Rd, Salt River

Figure 5:
Poster advertising *People's Education*'s workshop series' exploring the notion of *Music as the weapon of the future*. Poster by *People's Education*. 2021.

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[66] On 16 June 1976 a series of demonstrations and protests were led by Black school children against apartheid's Bantu Education and particularly the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools in Soweto. Today the day is commemorated as a national holiday.

Such a dedication to the importance of Black music as a pedagogical framework of innovation besides its entertainment status provides for valuable discourse about Black people as knowers. Music across many of its historical innovations in its multifaceted practices and genres, has been spearheaded by Black technological innovation (Chude-Sokei 2016: 5). In music, Black ingenuity "has rarely or successfully been questioned" says Louis Chude-Sokei (2016: 5), cautioning that we do the practice a disservice if we largely define it primarily as performative, expressive, rhythmic, lyrical or just musical (Chude-Sokei 2016: 5). That is why through Black musical innovation and its disparate practices, it becomes important to rethink how we listen, not necessarily with intentions of deducing meaning from the aural production, but as a way of exploring how Black people directly engage with information through sound (Chude-Sokei 2016: 5).

Similarly, art historian and writer, Percy Mabandu (personal communication 2023, March 28) notes how Antonio Gramsci has already given us a framework for diversifying knowledge production, especially when it comes to peripheralised knowledges as they intersect with politics via his concept of "the organic intellectual" in his *Prison Notebooks* (1989) series. Mabandu (personal communication 2023, March 28) elucidates on how South African born and US-based scholar Grant Farred's coinage "vernacular intellectuals" is much more instructive and relevant here. Farred, in his book, *What's My Name? Black Vernacular Intellectuals* (2003) introduces the term "vernacular intellectuals" as an expansion of Gramsci concept of traditional and organic intellectuals. Gramsci (1989: 116) differentiates traditional intellectuals as bound by the regard of knowledge production as per medieval preoccupations such as "the man of letters, the philosopher, the artist", whereas the organic intellectual goes beyond the rhetoric of feelings and passions but is rather actively participating in the practicalities of everyday life.

Meanwhile, Farred's idea of the vernacular intellectual demands that we begin to rethink the notion of the intellectual in the first place (Farred 2003: 2). Farred (2003: 5) states that the framework of what constitutes intellectuals is much more diverse than its typical relegation amongst the educated elite (particularly within a discourse of Enlightenment) or an overt political conscious group such as within the scope of political mobilisations in party politics or trade unions. Farred (2003: 5) instead argues that by tending towards disciplines such as cultural studies and postcolonial theory, one can link, particularly the Global South's, political independent journeys to cultural campaigns for self-determination for both Black people and people of colour. Maintaining that because cultural studies disapprove hierarchies between high and low art, and takes seriously the knowledge production of popular culture, the discipline acknowledges the plurality of intellectual processes (Farred 2003: 5).

Such a framework demands that we think about the sociocultural ecosystems of South Africa's electronic music catalysts as public intellectuals in any reading of the country's socio-political contexts including when it comes to epistemic justice. Beyond that, it also elucidates serious thinking about the infrastructures of Black South African sonic and musical innovation. From technological ingenuities, to praxes of sharing and dissemination as a way of cultivating various communities of deep listening, as well as the epicurean excess and uniqueness of South Africa's groove culture as social practices of communal self-organising.

3.4. Amapiano's curatorial logics and infrastructures

The motivation of thinking about Amapiano (first within Pitori's township cultural aesthetics and secondly within broader South African popular music trajectories) through a visual culture lens, is to recognise its embedded curatorial practice. Its curatorial practice circulates public performance life and culture without the pronounced mediation of saying what it is doing through "the curator" or "a curator". The way the musical practice is created, circulated, and enters the popular cultural zeitgeist beyond its materiality as *just* music, presents us with its own curatorial logics. Here, the curatorial in Amapiano's musical archive functions as a "discursive situation" (Richter and Drabble 2015: 2). The curatorial is not necessarily *only* synonymous with displaying or caring for works of art and objects in art and cultural institutions such as museums and galleries. The curatorial is a method. It is a process of engaging investigatory, societal and cultural impulses related to frameworks of knowledge production, politics, cultural circulations and/or translations, that start to inform various engagements of artistic production, and broadly, other forms by which arts can engage (Rogoff 2006: 1). As part of the chapter's broader preoccupation with pedagogical sensibilities, I propose what I believe are some of Amapiano's curatorial logics and infrastructures to contextualise them as inherent methods of both praxis and being. These are namely: (resource) sharing; mobility and epicurean discourses framed around pleasure-seeking through partying, or what is known as "groove", in South African popular culture.

In an interview conducted by Oskido and his longtime collaborator and friend, DJ Mgiftana, the undisputed self-proclaimed "King of Amapiano" – Kabza De Small – generously shares Amapiano's mabarebare. The interview begins with an introductory quote accredited to Oskido that reads: "Success is not determined by how much money you have at the bank, but how many lives you [have] changed" (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). It is in this video where one of the genre's biggest names contextualises Amapiano as a communal music-making practice of radical sharing, both in its production and its dissemination. The fact that it is osmotic in its influences already presents itself as an interpolated archive of musical traditions that follow an intrinsic ethos of palimpsestic borrowing and resource sharing of know-how. This is an anti-capitalist logic which destabilises ideas of originality or authenticity and decenters the individual. The first thing Oskido does in the video is instructive in setting the premise of sharing as a curatorial logic of Amapiano and broadly, electronic dance music as a whole. He introduces us to how he gave Kabza a song, *Bank Banky* (2021) featuring Ninola, that he had already produced and released as an original and was then, after the fact, asking Kabza to remix it with his own Amapiano sonic flair. This is an emblematic showcasing that is on par with a normalised culture of electronic dance music remixing original songs. This is often encouraged in order to appeal to broad spectrums of musical taste, wider audiences and sustain the relevance of the original song which is the source: a kind of rallied citational practice. Musicians and producers are often elated to know that their music can penetrate unexpected musical tastes that may veer very far from the original song's genre. The history and culture of remixing is especially embedded in a lot of Black musical practices – from Dub/Roots/Reggae to Disco/House and Hip Hop – which have become cornerstones of global popular music.

Furthermore, when Oskido (Oskidoibelieve, 2021) quizzes Kabza about how Amapiano started, Kabza explains that it all started with local South African DJs from townships in Gauteng who would slow down popular House music songs to BPMs of 125 to BPMs of 115. One of the songs that found itself being remixed in this way, becoming an early Amapiano staple is Mobi Dixion featuring Mque's song *City Rains* (2014) (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). These remixed song iterations then ended up being shared as mixtapes, marked by their slow tempos where they would acquire their nickname iNumber[67] (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). By reducing the tempo of a song and slowing it down, the bass becomes more pronounced. This in turn started a kind of DJing revolution with producers attempting this mixing of slow tempo House music (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). As the remixes and mixtapes proceeded, an instrumental DJ to the music production of Amapiano came along and changed the sound forever by introducing the log-drum: MDU TRP (Keith Mduduzi Mangena) (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). Kabza, even as he proclaims himself as the 'King of Amapiano', says the ingenuity of the log drum innovation does not belong to him (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). He just took the innovation and ran with it – illustrating the communal aspect of how the music is created and what influences its form (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). Even though Amapiano has always been there in variations of deep House or soulful House music, the log-drum is its most iconic identifier, characterised by a cacophony of layering sounds typically made on FL Studios. These include plugins of the log percussion, a kick drum, 808 and synth bass.

After Kabza's explanation, to Oskido's delight, he reveals how this is also somewhat similar to how Kwaito music started: by slowing down the tempo of international House records that they would get from America in the late 1980s, 1990s and 2000s that would define South African popular electronic music forever (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). This sharing economy has defined electronic music for some time, particularly for musical practices "underground" or those that are not mainstream. However, the internet has increasingly proliferated this democratic sharing to an unprecedented scope and immediacy. The music was constantly created and shared on online

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[67] iNumber is slang for a hit song. In the townships of Johannesburg, before this kind of slow down tempo music with a deep house sensibility was called Amapiano, it was often referred to as iNumber or Kota and other street vernacular urbanisms connected to music (iNgoma, Sghubu etc). This was during the music's experimental phase when it was released on mixtapes that circulated amongst a network of DJs and social media sites where you could download them for free. Meanwhile, in Pretoria (around the time period of *City Rains'* peak as per Kabza's timeframe) there were popular mixtape releases by various DJs mostly from Mamelodi, called *Boroko Keng*. In Sepitori, these mixtapes are also known as mapanta – meaning literal belts – to signify their continuation as songs were harmoniously mixed into each other as perennial mixtapes that would play for hours.

sharing platforms such as WhatsApp and free-download websites such as Datafilehost or Waptrick and later Fakaza, before DSPs such as Spotify, Apple Music, Deezer and the like became popular. This democratic sharing became an embedded practice within the genre's ecosystem of dissemination until it broke into mainstream South African media, particularly on radio. The first South African radio station to ever play it was on YFM[68] on Kutloano "Da Kruk" Nhlapo's weekly show, *#ThePlayersClub*, who introduced an Amapiano Hour segment on his radio show. Da Kruk (Moloto, 2019) explains:

> I think my interaction with Amapiano music was through mixtapes and through guys just sending me WhatsApp mixes or WhatsApp songs. They were not nicely mixed down or nicely mastered, they were very terrible but the basslines and the progressive keys were like crazy. Amapiano is one of the only genres where a guy that is big on YouTube, big on WhatsApp and big on Datafilehost mixtapes is actually getting shows and gigging. You haven't seen that a lot in Hip Hop, you haven't seen that a lot in Afro House, you haven't seen that a lot in many other genres [in South Africa]. There is always a 'businessperson' that is trying to dictate where the artist can go and dictating how much money the artist should be making. These guys have literally painted their own canvas.

This kind of sharing developed an alternative type of musical dissemination economy that is not necessarily market driven. In the early days of Amapiano's open-source sharing, this practice espoused symbolic values of social capital, exposure and self-determined autonomy of the DIY DJ/Producer from ekasi. Kabza also explains how the crucial sharing of resources has been foundational to the genre's financial success and global recognition today (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). Throughout the entire interview we see Kabza's home studio being filled with many other producers who rotate turns in the producer's chair working on the remix Oskido introduced us to in the beginning of the interview including the vocalist Young Stunna who often accredits his musical success to Kabza (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). Using an allegory of a cake, Kabza insists that it must be shared amongst others in order to make space to attract more cakes (Oskidoibelieve, 2021).

The general framework of many Amapiano songs centre collaborative music-making even beyond sharing it after the music has been released. The credits of many songs can typically include five people – that is not unusual in the practice of Amapiano music-making. When Oskido is often interviewed about the sustainability of the Kalawa Jazmee staple, he always speaks about how he gives young musicians and producers “a roadmap” to establish their own independent record labels after working with him (Oskidoibelieve, 2021). He has subsequently mentored people like DJ Tira who signed a record deal with Kalawa Jazmee in 2005 and in 2007 went to establish his own record label, Afrotainment. DJ Tira has since been at the forefront of KwaZulu-Natal’s popular music growth: from Durban Kwaito in the mid 2000s to Gqom in the present moment and continues to be a major key player in South Africa’s entertainment industry with his event *Fact! Durban Rocks* being a key calendar event for South Africa’s music industry. Oskido has also contributed to the independent success of DJ Maphorisa who worked with Kalawa Jazmee as part of the South African music collective *Uhuru* and later branched out to establish his own label BlaqBoy Music. DJ Maphorisa has subsequently given that “roadmap” to his frequent collaborator Kabza De Small who has established his own independent record label, Piano Hub, where he works with up-and-coming musicians, producers, and vocalists in the same empowerment networks. This kind of practice of creating infrastructures and institutions of supporting independent Black artists is to ensure that there is transparency and less exploitative practices in the industry helmed especially by Black businesspeople who have seen other musicians being exploited by major record companies. They share industry know-how on ownership, licensing and royalties of their musical innovations and assist in pointing people in the right direction where distribution and other services related to the industry is concerned so these artists – many of them self-taught and young – can make informed decisions about their career from an empowered place where they are able to negotiate and own most of their art. This is not to say that there is no exploitation at all or allegations of artists stealing each other’s work during the collaborations where contributions need to be allotted in particular capitalist logics. However, it is to recognise the general environment of transparent collaborative and sharing practices where communal engagement is cherished and embedded in the method of these practices.

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[68] This is idiosyncratically noteworthy because YFM was the first radio to ever broadcast Kwaito on radio in 1997, soon after that all other major radio stations in South Africa followed. It is serendipitous that Amapiano's mainstream approval in South Africa was aided by YFM much like what it did for Kwaito.

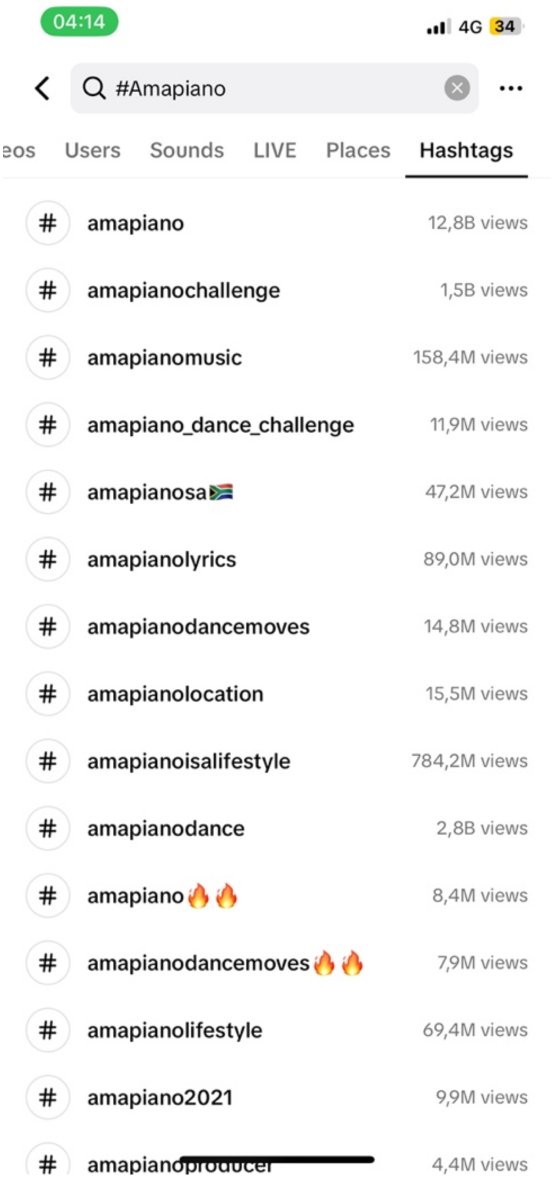
3.5. How Amapiano accelerated its mobility during Covid-19

Many Amapiano DJs and producers often accredit Covid-19 and its various hard lockdowns in the world as the prime years of the music's ascent outside of South Africa's Gauteng townships, from the fringes into the mainstream and international electronic dance music market. This is the year where the music started going viral on social media and people from all over the world, affected by the same hard lockdowns were home, alleviating their boredom by being plugged into the internet for entertainment. Social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram (even though their innovation as social media apps preceed Covid-19) gained notoriety in 2020 for being important platforms to disseminate music at a time when it could not be performed live all over the world. 2020 is the year in which Amapiano outfits such as Major League DJz pioneered ways of consuming and disseminating Amapiano by starting their *Amapiano Balcony Mixes*. They would play Amapiano DJ sets, often inviting influential DJs to play alongside them and filming it for their YouTube channel with 803 000 subscribers and counting. These DJ sets have had between thousands and millions of views on YouTube and became so influential during lockdown that many other DJs and producers all over the world replicated this formula of DJ mixes on YouTube and other social media platforms.

In 2020, Amapiano dominated TikTok trends. The social media app's content operations manager for the Africa region, Boniswa Sidwaba, announced how, by July of that year *#Amapiano* reached over 73 million views on TikTok (TheJournalist DJ, 2020). In response to this growth, Sidwaba announced that as part of the company acknowledging the musical practices' impact, TikTok has incorporated an in-app Amapiano playlist populated by Amapiano songs (TheJournalist DJ, 2020). Additionally, Sidwaba announced the launch of TikTok Amapiano on the platform's discover tab, featuring popular Amapiano songs, artists and in-app games that challenges TikTok creators to guess the name of Amapiano songs (TheJournalist DJ, 2020).

Far more unprecedented than traditional marketing avenues for promoting music, Sidwaba also explained that part of the company's local strategy is to work directly with Amapiano artists and local record labels to help promote their music on the platform (TheJournalist DJ, 2020). By 2021, Tik Tok announced a multi-year licensing agreement with the Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO) and Composers Authors and Publishers Association (CAPASSO, 2021). The association, covering 58 territories in the African continent, announced how the deal ensures talented songwriters, composers and music publishers represented by the organisation receive royalties when their music is used on the TikTok platform (CAPASSO, 2021). These are incredible strides in the embrace of a relatively nascent genre of music in such a short amount of time: that is quite unprecedented for South Africa. Besides Amapiano's ingenuity and global resonance, its timing coincides with music bodies becoming increasingly democratic and less gatekept when it comes to resource sharing with artists. This ensures that not only do independent artists thrive, but they are also confident in their agency through the transparency of these conversations when it comes to how to accrue both social and financial capital in the new industries and opportunities digital media presents. This is particularly empowering because how people consume music in the contemporary has changed so significantly. The introduction of DSPs and how music can be interpolated and consumed more reactively (i.e., dance challenges, background music usage to social media content outside the original artists) by anyone on social media has multiplied the music's consumption and commoditisation. A song's ability to trend on social media by any artist – independent or not – often translates to revenue and social recognition for the artist without an exorbitant marketing budget.

By the first week of November 2023, when I typed the #Amapiano onto the TikTok app on my phone it had swelled up to 12.8 billion views, illustrating the music's exponential growth and borderless mobility outside of South Africa.



# amapiano	12,8B views
# amapianochallenge	1,5B views
# amapianomusic	158,4M views
# amapiano_dance_challenge	11,9M views
# amapianosa🇿🇦	47,2M views
# amapianolyrics	89,0M views
# amapianodancemoves	14,8M views
# amapianolocation	15,5M views
# amapianoisalifestyle	784,2M views
# amapianodance	2,8B views
# amapiano🔥🔥	8,4M views
# amapianodancemoves🔥🔥	7,9M views
# amapianolifestyle	69,4M views
# amapiano2021	9,9M views
# amapianoproducer	4,4M views

Figure 6:
Some of the hashtags on Tik Tok related to Amapiano showing their views with the billion and million view status. November 2023. Screenshot from author's Tik Tok account.

Such musical developments intersect with a global revolution in digital technologies and their influences on our lives. Muddled by the involuntary tectonic impositions in the form of a global health crisis à la Covid-19, they have changed how we consume and produce culture. Even though during the early innovations of Amapiano, the internet played a crucial role when it came to public dissemination, this morphed when social media apps such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter introduced us to globalised digital publics. Amapiano is in the knack of the digital space's dynamic potential where curatorial infrastructures are enveloped in thinking about public space and participation. These digital platforms occupy spatial settings where

Amapiano music foregrounds a community of global listenership. Pointing toward a culture of open source sharing where the market's capitalist logics react to it in ways that can be both contradictory (by capturing it and commercialising aspects of it) and revolutionary (in its unpredictable democratic reach and scope).

3.6. Amapiano's curriculum of collective organising

One of my research interlocutors, Setumo-Thebe Mohlomi, has been at the forefront of writing about Amapiano in popular press. He is also a Spotify Playlist Editor[69]. Mohlomi (personal communication 2023, March 29) reveals how prominent Amapiano pioneers, very early on, negated the mainstream not because they saw it as an enemy, but because they felt they did not want to fashion themselves through mainstream economic structures of music industry success and appeal. They understood that the music they wanted to produce had to have been piloted by them with a "for us by us" methodology (Mohlomi personal communication 2023, March 29). He (personal communication 2023, March 29) shares how the musicians realised how radical collaboration would benefit them more than exclusivity, more than an "I only work with the best" mentality.

This deliberate self-organising has an embedded curatorial logic and practice that is linked to some socio-political and economic questions that Amapiano musicians must consider. These include considerations such as: what resources are available and accessible to them? Which conscious, unconscious and even subconscious rules are they being led by? Who gets to choose the music they hear? Where are they distributing it to and where are they listening to it? As well as how are they make these decisions, based on whom or what? These malleable considerations yield undetermined answers that requires flexibility because of the infrastructures in which Amapiano dwells in, infrastructures that are unpredictable because they negate the traditional formulaic music industry model in many ways. The answers are also undetermined because Amapiano operates in a contemporary global music scene that is generally undergoing a series of major shifts. Apart from social media public consumption and its influence, such shifts also include the streaming revolution (of which we are only at the beginning of) as well as the big move from album releases to single's releases where artists are now preferring to invest in releasing songs intermittently here and there, then conceptualising and compiling full length albums.

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[69] Spotify Playlist Editors curate the editorial playlists on the streaming services app. You are able to tell whether a Spotify playlist is curated by one of their editors when the Spotify logo appears on the playlists' cover image. The DSP defines their editors as genre, lifestyle, and culture specialists with diverse backgrounds. Many Spotify playlists have several editors in different locations to find music from all around the world.

Throughout my research, I observed how the market and audience of Amapiano superstars changed alongside the growth of the musicians international fame and success. It is interesting to note that the music's early infrastructures of radical sharing, through their self-organising framework in their immediate kasi in Gauteng, are still considered important co-signs in evaluating the success of the music even as it reaches global heights of success.

On 6 July 2023, the influential global contemporary popular musician Drake, announced on his social media that Kabza De Small was one out of three producers for the American and Canadian-based tour, *It's All a Blur* (2023) that he is co-headlining with American rapper 21 Savage for their collaborative album *Her Loss* (2022). In the same breath, Kabza circulates the South African local club scene and local gigs frequently across various locations and townships in the country even though he is on Spotify billboards in Manhattan, New York. The same with the gig guides of other Amapiano superstars such as Kelvin Momo, DBN Gogo, Pabi Cooper, Uncle Waffles, Focalistic and many more. They have managed to retain relevance in their local scenes while mainstreaming the genre into the global electronic dance music scene. Playing and performing at significant international festivals like Coachella, Afro Nation or at sold out event venues as big as The O2 Arena in London, named "Venue of The Decade" by *Billboard* magazine in 2020 (The O2, n.d.). Mohlomi (personal communication 2023, March 29) points out that such an insistence on the genre's local relevance despite its international crossover is tantamount to its sustainability, uniqueness and pop cultural relevance:

More so, often you will hear the big catalysts of Amapiano being interviewed overseas, people like the Major League DJz or DJ Maphorisa, attesting to the fact that Amapiano is bigger than them as individuals and often calling the musical practice a collective movement, a culture and lifestyle (BBC News Africa, 2022). This elucidates on the township's situated context as an incredible resource of what informs the ingenuity of this musical practice. Emphasising the criticality – the intellectual praxes and networks – embedded in its South African township cultural production that they do not take for granted. Mohlomi (personal communication 2023, March 29) puts it like this:

> If you are not in touch with the innovative pulse of Amapiano in South African townships, with young people who are not subject to mainstream sensibilities of the Amapiano movement, you will lose out on the next wave, on the next style of Amapiano that comes about. So, I think it's much more important for those artists who have gotten a much more higher standing in the mainstream to really double down and get involved in what is happening on the innovative grounds of Amapiano because their ability to sustain their careers relies on that.

Meanwhile, Hlasane (personal communication 2023, March 30) who reads Amapiano in relation to Kwaito's longevity thinks about this insistence to the specificities of the local scene, as a commitment to the underground. This ensures that the musical practice will never "die" as many popular genres are often declared when new ones arise because Amapiano vis-à-vis Kwaito is operational on a grassroots level in the underground (Hlasane personal communication 2023, March 30). The musical practice stubbornly refuses capture through a fugitive presence sustained by specific networks beyond hypervisibility and global consumerist capitalist consumption. In other words, Amapiano is Kwaito's continued commitment to a fundamental experimentation that sustains the genre's infrastructures and salient aliveness in South African Black township popular cultural production. Similarly, in a Bubblegum Club[70] and Spotify documentary collaboration titled *Freedom Sounds: From Kwaito to AmaPiano* (2022), Amapiano artists such as Uncle Waffles, DJ Stokie, Young Stunna and Pabi Cooper are interviewed individually through a narrative thread that coalesces intergenerational interviews with key Kwaito artists such as Thandiswa Mazwai, TKZee and Oskido, about the interconnectedness between Kwaito and Amapiano. Mazwai remarks (Spotify, 2022):

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[70] Bubblegum Club is a cultural organisation based in Johannesburg with a multi-faceted approach of working across platforms and mediums. They use artistic and conceptual practices, and the understanding of popular culture, to create content which dynamically and strategically communicates with a youth audience, including a broader international network of collaborators. Their name is a homage to the rich legacy of 80s Bubblegum music, which combined cutting edge technology with local and international influences to make electronic music that was both wildly successful and playfully avant garde.

> These kids that we are looking at now, today, are going to grow up and they'll be something special – something really important in the trajectory, in the story of South African music and South African expression. Kwaito is the Great Dane of that or the mother of that. It's one big family.

To which Oskido completes: "Kwaito becomes the father and then the father gets married and then they are kids who are born. It's interconnected just like that" (Spotify, 2022). The malleability and cyclical circularities of sound, culture and democratic participation within Amapiano invites considerations about migratory mobile popular cultures. You can be anywhere in the world and have access to this music in much more voluminous, accessible and immediate ways than you would have ten years ago. This has significantly changed the socio-cultural relations of countries where a diverse aural musical landscape is possible, igniting processes of sharing and multifaceted musical osmosis. As such, because of Amapiano's sheer output and public dissemination across borders and everyday public performance life and culture – from taxis, to TikToks, to political rallies, Beyoncé concerts and global adverts – its cultural production can inspire both celebration and cultural theft, appropriation and exploitation. These are very fine lines in artistic production that is quite plausible given the history of Africa's cultural artefacts (material or ephemeral) and how the rest of the world has engaged with them. At the same time, the democracy of the internet and its networks reveal various cultural outputs by Amapiano's independent cultural producers who self-fashion and narrate the situatedness of their artistic and cultural work. These includes the documentaries I have been referencing that have been incredible sources of knowledge within my literature review. They serve as markers of cataloguing and archiving through a form of cultural ownership in recognising the provenance of particular movements in music's dynamism and continued evolution with its vanguards recognising and embodying its undergrounds.

It is here where I am reminded of Irit Rogoff (2006:1) seminal text on curatorial practice as an embodied criticality through the concept of "smuggling" as an operative allegory of thinking about praxes in the interstices of globalisation and its political positionalities. Rogoff (2006: 5) writes about "smuggling" as a methodology that encourages us to rethink relations that are in plain sight, partial sight and/or invisible. By using the notion of smuggling, Rogoff (2006: 5) illustrate how ideas of origin become obfuscated along the way (Rogoff 2006: 5). She also brings forth the logic of the street market vis-à-vis smuggling where all of the objects found there become entangled with each other's myriad geographies and contexts (Rogoff 2006: 5). Adding "what came in the back of a Lorrie from Afghanistan and at the bottom of a suitcase from Bangladesh and in the intestines of a human mule from Colombia, the pirated tapes and disks of western entertainment industries, all begin to develop another relationality to one another that could never be accommodated through nationally located cultures or conventional commodity circulations" (Rogoff 2006: 5).

However, even though Rogoff's proposition of interculturality as a framework of amalgamating difference is worthwhile, specifics are also necessary guardrails to ensure that the music (in this case) operates within signs that are against the erasure of its contexts. For instance, there is already a premature subgenre dubbing the confluence of Amapiano in relation to Western African artists and the diaspora dubbed "AfroPiano" – which South African Amapiano artists generally bemoan. Mabandu (personal communication 2020, August 11) sees these confluences spreading between two evolutionary terrains that are more interested in acknowledging important dynamic cultural specificities to prevent the danger of monoliths. He resolves that within such dynamics we are playing with two things: identity as process versus identity as origins (Mabandu personal communication 2020, August 11). Therefore, making it possible to have this conversation about the identity of music as shaped by process and this is where the acquisitive nature of the genre begins to take from everywhere else to inform itself into whatever ultimate expression comes. This is the kind of identity as process approach where you acknowledge the interculturality in that thing and that is fine. However, there is also the idea that you can make about identity as origin, where you look for the source code (Mabandu personal communication 2020, August 11).

The multiplicity and contemporary musical osmosis in Amapiano are important junctures in continuing South African Black popular music's practise of remixing and redefining various sonic traditions. Such constant experimentation and evolution point out to new possibilities inherent to Black electronic popular music and the dynamism of Black being. Even though Amapiano's open mindfulness resumes the production and consumption of Black cultural modernity and its various interconnected networks, there is still value in cataloguing its specificities and claiming cultural ownership to avoid erasure. A curriculum of collectively organised intra-narratives.

3.7. Monate mpolaye: a theory of epicurean excess in search of Pitori's grammars of groove

Having read Amapiano through the longue durée of popular electronic music cultures that preceded it (such as Kwaito; subgenres like Bacardi and transnational musical practices such as House) the genre reveals relationships with local and global orientations. Amapiano, like many of the Black musical practices it is inspired by, is often helmed by a youthful exuberance disaffected by past-present harsh socio-economic realities looking to navigate aspirational futures of less precarity. This is one of the contexts in which to read Amapiano's sonic landscape. The music, its people and infrastructures offer possible insights into serious questions about Black being in South Africa while in a state of epicurean excess and enjoyment within the grammars of its groove cultures. Raucous dance music-making is a completely appropriate response to the contemporary moment. Locally: this moment includes a series of post-apartheid ruptures. In 2022, the World Economic Forum warned that South Africa risked state collapse; prolonged economic stagnation; employment and livelihood crises; failure of public infrastructure and the proliferation of illicit economic activity because of high crime rates; unsustainable state expenditure and mismanaged corrupt institutions (World Economic Forum 2022: 106). Meanwhile, if Collins Dictionary Word of 2022 – "permacrisis" – is anything to go by, it is an eerily anxiety-inducing indication of the general current state of the world. A portmanteau of the words "permanent" and "crisis". This permanent crisis includes Covid-19's continued aftermath; ecological precarity; the polarisations between democracy and authoritarianism; Brexit; new and renewed interstate wars and/or transnational terrorisms; humanitarian crises; mass migration; economic and political instability; global insecurity – a sense of "are we living in the apocalypse?" Permacrisis is defined as "an extended period of instability and insecurity". Collins Dictionary (Word of the Year, 2022) proffers that the word "perfectly embodies the dizzying sense of lurching from one precedented event to another, as we wonder bleakly what new horrors might be around the corner".

It is from this context that I want to explore the aesthetics of groove culture within Amapiano through the omnipresent uncertainty that can be found in both the music's local interiority and the world's exteriority at large. Within this exploration in this chapter, the framework is tentative and speculative (as suggested in its subheading, I am "in search"). This is because the writing practice and sense-making I am nestled in also includes sociolinguistic grammatical tensions of reconciling with practices of informal yet organised fugitive ways of being ko kasi and the legibility of assertive knowledge that orders academia. In my interviews with Percy Mabandu (personal communication 2023, March 27) we discussed what the register of Tjovitjo is, as it sits at various junctures and multiple entendres where its meaning is informed by context. Furthermore, who benefits from its translation? Therefore, developing this research's paradigm on Amapiano, informed by Sepitori, also recognises the significance of understanding some of its language cultures. This is in an attempt to write about it from a particular proximity of everyday sociolinguistics with the understanding of how they inform certain activities within and beyond its musical practice. This methodology understands that I am working in an existing power dynamic within academia that has a history of colonising knowledge, and, in some parts, this research is a reaction to such a power structure. Alas, as the Sepitori axiom goes, bo dese ko zama.

In thinking about Amapiano from Pitori and the music's relationship to the epicurean and pleasure-seeking in its intersection with death, one Pitori Amapiano song comes to mind: *Monate Mpolaye* (2018) by the late DJ Sumbody featuring Cassper Nyovest, Thebe & Vettis. Monate mpolaye is an expression – an injunction – spoken in the Sepitori language but is not necessarily limited to it. It literally means "joy/nice times kill me!". As a catchphrase, monate mpolaye has been made iconic through the aforementioned Amapiano song that is sitting on more than 6.5 million views on YouTube. It is not lost on me that this epicurean wanting in deathly pleasure has the real potential to coincide with material realities of untimely Black death in South Africa. This is after South Africans were mourning in devastating shock three performing artists and musicians who were brutally murdered in a short amount of time successively. Two of which were part of the Amapiano movement in Pretoria. In the early hours of Sunday morning, 20 November 2022, DJ Sumbody was brutally murdered in a hail of bullets on the way to a gig in a nightclub in Pretoria. Again, in the early hours of Monday morning, 30 January 2023, Vusi Ma R5 (Itumeleng Mosoeu) meets his untimely death after being shot and killed in Soshanguve. Furthermore, arguably the death that received the most widespread attention in the country and all over the world, AKA (Kiernan Forbes) was brutally murdered shortly after having dinner at a restaurant in Durban on Friday evening 10 February 2023. These deaths and their hypervisibility with people expressing utter disbelief in their brutality should be contextualised not only from the interstices of history's precarious relationship with Black death and survival[71], but similarly in relation to South African government's fundamental decline in governance, subsequently leading to rampant lawlessness. In the wake of live security footage of AKA's brutal death circulating online, the Minster of Police Bheki Cele, presented the third quarter statistics for the period October-December 2022 revealing that 7 555 people were murdered between the three months (SAPS Third Quarter 2022/2023 Crime Stats Presentation, 2023). On average this equates to 82 murders per day. Even though these statistics can be considered part of the minister's public responsibility on reporting on the state of the country's crime rates and law enforcement, public policing in the country has not improved if anything it is getting worse.[72] It is here – with these incessant reports on brutal deaths while simultaneously reeling and reconciling with the unprecedented deaths of the Covid-19 pandemic – that I unpack the polemics of monate mpolaye in conversation with Pitori's grammars of groove or party culture through Amapiano's registers of the epicurean and pleasure.

The song – *Monate Mpolaye* (2018) – forms part of the school of Amapiano and its premise sounds out allegorical wanting of a transcendence in death that comes with loosing yourself in groove – monate – in partying. Here, partying functions as an indetermined freedom that comes with the sublime invocation of the dehiscence of Black death. Untimely or avoidable death becomes a precarious danger-zone for Black life in South Africa, especially in townships where “it [is] a miracle for anyone to live up to adulthood” (Biko 1987: 75). Monate mpolaye! Nice time, kill me! It sounds crude in English – monate mpolaye – its sardonic coded poetic registers sounded out by didactics. The phrase incants the desire of the complete freedom that comes with letting the body go and, most importantly, the material realities that inhabit such a (Black) body to be in service of getting completely immersed in the practice of groove. The injunction occupies the thresholds of epicurean excess, pleasure and danger. The possibilities of nice times *indeed* killing you are not necessarily far-fetched in the context of partying culture in South African townships, where the yearning to escape (even in death) the labyrinth of Black life is intertwined with a socio-historical ontological yearning of freedom. Thandiswa Mazwai (Spotify, 2022) explains this kind of transcendence like this:

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[71] Ideas of Black death and survival are invoked here in relation to sociologist Orlando Patterson's idea of 'social death'.

[72] South African Police Service Third Quarter 2022/2023 Crime Stats Presentation. 2023. [Online data file]. Available: https://www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php [2023, February 21]. Furthermore, South African journalists reinterpreted these statistics, concluding that "nearly as the same of people were murdered in 1994, at the height of the low-intensity civil war in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, though the homicide rate now is still lower than that period because the population has grown from 40 to 60 million". Damons, M and Geffen, N. 2023. How bad is South Africa's murder rate?. *GroundUp*. Available: https://groundup.org.za/article/how-bad-murder-in-south-africa/ [2023, May 18].

> The stage becomes the proxy for the freedom, for the healing and I refuse for anyone to control that space. This particular moment, you are free. It [Kwaito] opened up a portal to discover ourselves, to reinvent ourselves and that was the beauty. It is that moment of how radical Black joy can be, just the happiness of a Black child can really destabilise the system. As Lebo Mathosa said: “we wanna be free from the chains that are binding me”.

In Mazwai’s offering of Black joy as radical, I am also interested in thinking about how Amapiano’s peak was during the hard lockdowns of Covid-19 where, in South Africa, alcohol was banned and so were social and cultural gatherings of certain capacities. However, in many townships, business was pretty much as usual. People found illegal pockets where parties were clandestinely hosted, and alcohol sold. Some of these parties went viral on social media, sparking moral outrage from both citizens and the country’s government. These parties put the phenomena of the relationship between levity and crisis on sharp display. Where these parties happened in Pitori, they edified the city’s nickname: Pitori Mahlanyeng.

On the 20 December 2020, multiple videos surface on social media under the hashtag #DihnoConvoy showing dozens of cars parked alongside the R80 Mabopane Highway in Pretoria. The motorists are seen socialising, no Covid-19 protocols observed, music playing from the revellers’ car causing some traffic disruptions and spectacle. The convoy started from Mamelodi enroute to pass more townships in Pretoria including Soshanguve and Atteridgeville to promote an annual event that is hosted in Mamelodi at Moretele Park on the 26 December called Dihno Café. The organiser of both the convoy and party is DJ Dinho (Tiego Motau). He is also an Amapiano DJ and producer, one of the most instrumental in Pretorian townships, especially in Mamelodi where he is from. This convoy came to multiple halts with the one causing the most outrage being at the Daspoort Tunnel where some motorists were blocked freeway of the tunnel, hanging around in their cars drinking alcohol and dancing with music from minibus taxis and cars, chanting in unison “Dinho we wanna party!”. The Gauteng government slammed the behaviour, premier of the province, Panyaza Lesufi strongly condemning the convoy as irresponsible (Pijoos, 2020). Unfortunately, one of the minibus taxis involved in the convoy led to a fatal accident: monate mpolaye. On the 22 December 2020, Minister of Transport, Fikile Mabalula, held a press briefing to release the 2020 preliminary festive season road statistics where he noted (Ngqakamba, 2020) “these dastardly acts invariably end in tragedy as was the case with the Mabopane incident”. Parties, outside of their important conviviality, still manage to surge scorn where respectability politics is concerned. They veer towards general disobedience and sometimes dangerously play with epicurean excessiveness of collective pleasure-seeking that can come with literal death: monate mpolaye. From the social motivations of yearning to gather; to the call-and-response of the DJ’s or selector’s music; to the performance cultures and transcendence that comes with furious dancing – partying and parties challenge propriety. Partying asks that we suspend the binaries of what we consider proper and improper conduct. They instead encourage self-expression where you are held and hold space(s), collectively with others. Parties are sites of love, solidarity, decadence, and dissidence. The party’s potential is to “rework the bonds of social subjection to perceive a given order as mutable. The party, in other words, can be seen as a worlding endeavour” (Aguado et al. 2021: 12).

Furthermore, there is something to be said about the relationship of some South(ern) African Black music genres being connected to dance cultures or party music while their names edify markers of both epicurean and sonic excess. For instance, South Africa’s Bubblegum musical era in the 1980s can be associated with a transient epicurean quality and a momentary pleasure that is easily disposable much like how one disposes bubble gum after the sugar rush is chewed out. Similarly, Skokiaan, the Shona word for an illicit home-brewed alcoholic beer came to be synonymous with Southern African jazz music. This also shares similarities with Bacardi music's name that was influenced by an alcoholic beverage where epicurean inferences are explicitly relational to the cultural life of the music and the drink of choice. Reflecting on these popular musical practices reveals epicurean fashions in alcohol and gum that brings a kind of consumerist disposability and detachment to the importance of intentional naming practices. Instead, the names offered to these musical practices are off-hands of the zeitgeist and fleeting fashions of the time. Does this speak to a kind of imbrication of Black life and its suspiciousness with permanence because of its ontological history? Thus, making the musical practices fugitive in how these sonic ontologies appear elsewhere within different moments and generations: hauntological. At the same time, this restlessness of the relationship with excess speaks to tensions with an incomplete form of liberation that the socio-sonics of Black life is able to capture somehow in past-present-future temporalities.

In South African townships, the criminalised histories of shebeens and taverns, often associated with alcoholism and the society's outcasts, were also sites of pleasure-seeking and partying with noteworthy gender and labour relations too. These illegal drinking and party spots were owned by enterprising women – shebeen queens – who empowered themselves through selling alcohol and brewing liquor when employment opportunities in the urban centres where scant (Nieftagodien, 2012). As shebeens and taverns expanded during apartheid, the government introduced legal beer halls to clamp down on the shebeens and taverns in townships, while benefiting from the alcohol profits Black people generated in the beer halls (Blignaut and Sithole, 2014). However, the beer halls did not have the socio-cultural texture of the shebeens with workers referring to the experience of frequenting them as equivalent to "drinking in a cage" (Blignaut and Sithole, 2014). Furthermore, in the wine farms of the Western Cape, a culture of earning through alcohol consumption was cultivated. What would be known as the "dop system" where workers were partially paid in alcohol to cunningly introduce dependency and alcoholism in the farms (Blignaut and Sithole, 2014). The same also for migrants in the mines who were given liquor as a form of reward (Blignaut and Sithole, 2014). This sparked fierce Black resistance with the first beer hall protest erupting in the Natal colony in the late 1920s (Blignaut and Sithole, 2014). Women were at the forefront of this resistance who were tired of men working in the city but bringing meagre contributions home and spending the bulk on it at the beer halls (Blignaut and Sithole, 2014). ANC President AB Xuma published a fiercely critical pamphlet, *Kaffir Beer* (Blignaut and Sithole, 2014) denouncing the phenomenon. Meanwhile, Chief Albert Luthuli observed "the beer has become the symbol of legal robbery by the whites" (Blignaut and Sithole, 2014).

Thus, socio-culturally and politically, places where Black people sought pleasure away from labour exploitation and racism, are textured with histories of struggle, resistance and contradiction. Historically, Black South Africans have cultivated modalities of escaping, even temporarily, exploitative realities that too inadvertently consumed them in other exploitative ways. In this way, spaces of partying in South Africa surface in my research within these dialogical, and in previous parts of this chapter, pedagogic frameworks of collective organising. While I understand that the context of space and time within the musical practice of Amapiano's pleasure-seeking may appear different from apartheid-era shebeens, taverns and drinking halls, their relational framing here is constant when it comes to rebellion and a yearning for these spaces to, in their break, destabilise the status quo. Mabandu (personal communication 2023, March 27) remarks about how South Africa has a cultural archive and heritage of defiance where citizens know how to defy the state. In our conversation, Mabandu (personal communication 2023, March 30) tells me about how when he was in Mohlakeng (a township west of Johannesburg) during the Covid-19 lockdown, he saw people going about their lives like it was a normal day with young people playing Amapiano music in the streets and smoking Hubbly Bubbly, recalling how "this isn't unlike what our parents did in the 70s and the 80s dealing with contraband and smuggling things". Meanwhile, Hlasane (personal communication 2023, March 30) concedes: "that is just youth culture. The connection of partying and crisis is a phenomenon that can be discussed across eras, and it will always attract moral panic."

Therefore, in my attempt at finding vocabularies of Amapiano's pleasure-seeking in its grammars of groove I hold the possibilities that partying is imbued with a serious practice concerned with being in this world. It is not just fun. It has implications that come with risks, granted, but it is also a model of embodied critical engagement where pleasure. Historian Athambile Masola (xhantilam, 2020), unpacks questions of South Africa's groove generation in the Covid-19 context of 2021, asking a series of questions about who benefits from Black people's impoverishment as a result of alcohol after the Beer Association of South Africa made a statement opposing South African government's decision to ban alcohol during the Covid-19's hard lockdowns. Masola asks:

> What would it mean to rebuild an economy which did not rely on industries which were complicit in people's demise? … Whatever the choices available, it seems to me igroove is a way of being in the world. It is a lifestyle. A religion. It is a cultivated condition. A practice. A set of choices. It is a series of images and videos of young people living their best lives in a country that has let young people down.

That is where the grammar of groove possibly lies: in the ruptures, failures, gaps, inconsistencies, and dissent. Groove is an "embodied criticality" that is embedded in curatorial (Rogoff 2006: 2) thinking. This criticality in Amapiano's groove brings together experience and embodied knowledge (some of which is generational and traumatic) in ways that clash with heightened awareness but "the point of criticality is not to find an answer but rather to access a different mode of inhibition" (Rogoff 2006: 2). Thus, one sees Amapiano's grammars of groove in participatory methodologies with a collectivist learning by doing approach. In the epicurean excess of South Africa's contemporaneous groove cultures, time and space is not only shaped by furious dancing and hypnotic log drums of the club or streets and pimped out taxis. They are also shaped by sin taxes, (class) mobilities, elections, governments, ideologies and even the plausibility of untimely death. A delirious dangerous contact-zone of pleasure-seeking as an omnipresent ontological preoccupation.

The aesthetics that come with the performative subcultures of Amapiano's grammars of groove requires that we take its sociolinguistic life seriously. By reading some of these grammars in relation to South Africa's present post-apartheid realities where the epicurean and pleasure meet, we are provided with access to Black ontological ways of being that the genre (in)directly practices and espouses. The innovation of Amapiano (mainly created by Black township youth who take both cultural ownership of the musical practice and the aesthetics of its performativity in public culture) sounds out transgressive socio-political attitudes that indict the material realties of post-apartheid South Africa. Hence this transgressive youth culture must be contextualised within the history of South Africa where for Black youth and Black people, this kind of occupying of public space was not readily available three decades ago before the advent of democracy. These musical subgenres and subcultures provide necessary cultural artefacts imbued with self-expression, play, pleasure and Black jouissance. These performance cultures by Black township youth are full of agency and social relations that has been birthed through radical and unsettling imaginative practices of freedom – death being one of them. This logic opens up the potentialities of nuanced interpretations of performances of being in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa where Black cultural production manifests in a plethora of alternative and radical expressions. However, where they signify untimely death – this chapter beginning with the context of Black South African performing artists dying – the implications towards the instruments of safety meant to prevent such deaths, are damning. They point towards insatiable spectral structural forces that impedes Black existence – Black ontologies – revealing who gets to live full human lives as South Africa descends into rampant lawlessness.

Conclusion: For nou, ke feditse

Throughout this research I have deliberately obfuscated the question, “where does Amapiano come from?”. By investigating Amapiano by musicians from Pitori through the sociolinguistics of Sepitori and the city’s township life, I am not necessarily suggesting that Amapiano began in Pretoria. However, I am interested in the specificities that can come with reading the musical practice from a particular locale that was highly influential in its trajectory as a musical practice. Beyond its osmotic sonic and intertextual musical references to other genres of music, Amapiano’s origin story is contentious. Many catalytic producers find it hard to trace it to one place of origin and instead prefer to say it comes from Gauteng, specifically mentioning Pretoria and Johannesburg as the catalytic cities (Moloto, 2019). Eminent Amapiano producers prefer to read the musical practice according to predominant characteristics of its subgenres – “schools of Amapiano” – in association with different townships that localise the music’s multiple sonic registers. Sometimes this means a particular producer’s sound from a specific township can influence the Amapiano that grows to be popular in that neighbourhood and then becomes representative of a particular school or scholarship of Amapiano.

House and EDM broadly, are very popular in South Africa. The praxes that inform South Africa’s electronic dance music canon is largely orientated around its registers of a long deep listening and ferocious dancing socio-cultural life(style): what Rangoato Hlasane (personal communication 2023, March 30) calls the South African songbook. Such registers can be found at socio-spatial and political junctures of the country that I capture in the theorisation of Straata that illustrates sites of sociality imbued with both politics and sociocultural performative life ko kasi. This is because this music and its conviviality also comes with particularities of experiential orientation – a kind of “you just have to be there” embodiment, making language often insufficient in capturing the nuances of the music’s cultural life beyond the contents of the music itself. This is in part precisely because Amapiano is an itinerant and dynamic sound culture of contemporary urban popular music. It is intrinsically mobile because the people that make it (with the geo-specificity that informs the music coming from particular South African township experiences) are also intrinsically mobile modern people in how they navigate and negotiate space, both in

South Africa and the rest of the world. Thus, in both the music – Amapiano – and the people who innovate it, their fugitive sensibilities and their socio-sonic influences can be traced in the real everyday spatial dynamics (such as the township where most of the music is innovated). These sensibilities are also captured intangibly in digital forms where the music traverses through its production, dissemination and more recently, its curation, that depends on social media algorithms. All of this impacts the social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics of the sound in a non-essentialist and non-linear way that obfuscates questions of origins.

The research also looked at Amapiano as musical practice vis-à-vis genre, to point out its committed experimentation with the underground in avoiding mainstream capture. Such a commitment, to such a practice within the underground, becomes the music's sonic orientation and audience because of a nonconformist proclivity. There is a "for us, by us" mentality that has sustained the musical practice's relevance even as it has penetrated the global EDM market.

In looking at the curatorial logic embedded in Amapiano's infrastructures and institutions of mobility, the dissertation reveals the ambivalent narrations of ownership/authorship. This is especially complicated by some of its ethos of sharing resources and know-how that negates the cult of the individual artist personality that is anti-capitalist. Yet it operates within the models – such as the music industry – that rewards individual ingenuity generously. Furthermore, traditional infrastructures have been severely compromised and challenged. Through a myriad of ecosystems and possibilities of music production, distribution, and presentation, mediators such as record label executives, are often bypassed and/ or simply not needed for the production of the music.

Future research

As my sub-heading for my conclusion reads "for nou ke feditise", I leave room for more scholarship to be developed around Amapiano's musical practice. The research is not exhaustive as it is such a dynamic form of music that intrinsic to its make-up, is its ever-changing nature and evolution.

Noteworthy research interests that can further be explored in Amapiano is its gender dynamics because women and the LGBTQI+ community in South Africa that have been catalytic to the musical practices' development. Electronic dance music has always had skewed gendered dynamics, but a new generation of women DJs, vocalists, dancers are also occupying the industry. Women DJs like DBN Gogo and Uncle Waffles are some of the biggest DJs circuiting Amapiano international House music festivals and gigs. Meanwhile, vocalists such as Pabi Cooper, who went from being an internet dance sensation to a BET Award nominated musician, is illustrative of the genre's possibilities and successful entry points. Other women musicians who have been in the industry much longer than the nascent genre have experimented with its sound, making the musical practice very lateral in testing how far it can grow. This includes artists such as Msaki, Moonchild Sanelly, Busiswa, Thandiswa Mazwai to name a few.

Another thing that can be signalled for future research is the music in relation to the dance practices embedded in Amapiano. Dancers have been a particularly significant oiling machine for Amapiano and its relevance in public life. A popular genre of this on social media includes South African school pupils dancing in school uniforms both on and off school premises. These videos get thousands and millions of views, likes and reshares on social media platforms. Is there something more that can be read into these artefacts beyond fleeting spectacle, curiosity or entertainment? Uncle Waffles' life changed forever (by her admission through some of her Instagram lives and social media accounts for those who follow her and are privy to her success story) after just one video of a few seconds went viral while she was DJing and dancing as a relatively unknown DJ at the time. She is now one of the biggest Amapiano DJs in the world, having captured curious local and international attention about her DJing practice that often combines dance choreography in aesthetically capturing ways.

Similarly, there has also been a lot more cross pollination of Amapiano in relation to the spiritual realm. Some of the songs' sonic registers pay particular attention to ancestral cosmologies and transcendental incantations to higher powers. Here lies a nexus of reading Black musical and sonic practices that may appear simply as sites of entertainment, but which also have further intersections and manifestations in Black cultural and spiritual life. Thus, we can think about these musical practices in their contemporaneity as robust incubators of radical discourse concerning questions of the Human, where a reading of sound, performance and collective organising are grammars of certain philosophical positions of being.

Furthermore, there is also more research that can be done on Amapiano in relation to its African diasporic communities. The internet has been instrumental in how other African countries and diaspora communities have been experimenting and evolving Amapiano's sound with pan-Africanist[73] agendas. Amapiano, as an internationally recognised genre is generally seen as generative for the broader cultural production of Amapiano. With hashtags and slogans such as "Amapiano to the World" gaining popularity on social media, linked to inextricable porous connections. There is already premature Amapiano subgenres that have confluences of West African and diasporic sonic sensibilities, including AfroBeats and RnB, often stigmatised with accusations of the diaspora hijacking the sound from South Africans. The multiplicity and contemporary musical osmosis in Amapiano are important junctures in continuing South African Black popular music's practise of remixing various sonic and cultural qualities to point out new possibilities and hybridised textures interested in the dynamism of Black being. This malleability in 'Piano offers multiple access points of legitimate cultural production that has often had to play second fiddle to either the market's taste or its ideological frameworks. However, even though Amapiano's perpetual open mindfulness resumes the production and consumption of Black cultural modernity and its various interconnected networks, there is still value in specifically cataloguing intra narratives and proclaiming cultural ownership so the possibilities of erasure do not take place. Similarly, to look forward to are the music’s (inevitable) possibilities of its interpolative potentials in the future.

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[73] I use the term "pan-African" from a Tsitsi Ella Jaji (2014: 3) via George Shepperson perspective distinguishing the small "p" and capital "P" in p/Pan-Africanisms. Small "p" pan-Africanism designates an eclectic set of ephemeral cultural movements and currents throughout the twentieth century ranging from popular to elite forms in contradistinction to the more formal organisations comprising capital "P" Pan-Africanism such as the series of global gatherings from London conference of 1900 organised by H. Sylvester Williams, to the five congresses between 1918 and 1945 in Europe (in which W.E.B. Du Bois played prominent roles), as well as subsequent gatherings on the African continent in Tanzania, Ghana, and beyond (Jaji 2014: 3). However, similarly, Jaji (2014: 3) concedes that "the distinction between these two forms was never absolute … [because] the informal and formal registers of transnational black solidarity have variously reinforced, cross-fertilized, and interfered with each other".

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