

The Inaudible Nation: Music and Sensory Perception in Postapartheid South Africa

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# THE INAUDIBLE NATION

MUSIC AND SENSORY PERCEPTION IN POSTAPARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Gavin Steingo

In both the social sciences and humanities, it is something of a truism that nations are not only audible but downright loquacious. From a basic phenomenological perspective, this position seems accurate: from the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games to State of the Nation addresses and seasonal national music festivals held in many countries around the world, the ubiquity of national or nationalist sound is a contemporary commonplace, or even a cliché. In addition to the proclamation *that* nations resound, a number of detailed studies in history, anthropology, sociology, and ethnomusicology have traced the mechanisms by which states employ sonic and musical material. At the risk of oversimplification, the most common theorization holds that states create national unity (and by extension, repress difference) by reifying specific “folk” traditions. It is precisely because particular cultural practices are reified in and by the modern state that they are referred to as “invented” (see Hobsbawm and Ranger).

In this article I suggest that the dominant position on the audibility of nations outlined above does not adequately explain late twentieth-century liberal-democratic nation-states. Based on my experience both as a white South African who lived through the democratic transition and as an ethnomusicologist who has conducted “formal” ethnographic research in that country, this paper seeks to complicate the orthodox view of nationalism, music, and sensory perception by pointing to the rupture between sonic matter and national belonging in late twentieth-century national and nationalist politics. Going against the grain of orthodox theorization, I suggest that postapartheid, liberal-democratic South Africa was made possible only by neutralizing sensory perception and thus, in a sense, becoming inaudible.

Of course, this neutralization was never, can never be, total. In the face of “inaudibility,” particular racial, ethnic, and class interests continue to exert pressure and in certain cases attempt to claim sensory dominance. My aim in this paper is to examine the *antagonism* between particular social groups, on the one hand, and the neutralization of their particular interests, on the other. But I will insist throughout that this antagonism is crucial for our understanding of South African nationalism and that, moreover, an exclusively empirical analysis of music and sound is not adequate. As John Mowitt has recently argued, despite the recent boom in sound studies, “It seems many scholars are making noise about sound but often in ways that feel resolutely empirical” (2011, 168). By theorizing South African nationalism through inaudibility (and not merely through various audibles), I hope to move the discourse beyond empiricism and toward a deeper reflection on the contemporary politics of music and sound.

Consider the following example: when the African National Congress (ANC) attained political power in 1994 it sought to foster national unity not by instrumentalizing specific traditions but by advocating nonracialism and reconciliation. President Nelson Mandela, along with Bishop Desmond Tutu, promoted the vision of a “Rainbow Nation” to which South Africans of all cultural backgrounds could belong. The section on national identity in the ANC’s “Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa” opens:

It shall be state policy to promote the growth of a single national identity and loyalty binding on all South Africans. At the same time, the state shall recognize linguistic and cultural diversity of the people and provide facilities for free linguistic and cultural development. (Qtd. in Frederikse, 254)

How is unity attained at the same time as diversity? The answer can be formulated in this way: in a set whose members are completely different, the only thing that unifies the members of the set is that they are in the set.<sup>1</sup> South African nationalism is thus strictly *tautological*: South Africans are South African as long as they are South African. Black or white, Christian or Muslim, gay or straight,<sup>2</sup> rich or poor: if someone is South African, then he or she is South African. Although South Africa has probably assumed this form of nationalism more forcefully than other nations, I show later in this paper that “tautological nationalism” is the liberal ideal of the nation-state.

The South African nation, then, is constituted less through empirical attributes than through the tautological sense of being precisely what it is. The main aim of this article is to show how it is possible (or impossible) that one might hear such a nation. As I have already suggested, a citizen cannot hear the nation directly through any *particular* sound, since the emphasis on diversity precludes this. Nonetheless, I show in what follows that this scenario does not dissolve the nation *qua* audible community as much as it lays the foundation for a complex system that regulates the highly ambiguous relationship between national being and affective belonging.

I proceed in two parts. In the following section, I present a theoretical elaboration of “tautological” nationalism. Using South African historian Ivor Chipkin’s work as a point of departure, I illustrate why and how South Africa’s rejection of specific reified traditions does not, in fact, render South African nationalism impotent. This section is the least sensory oriented and begins by considering nationalism on a purely formal plane. I then turn to particular cases of musical performance in order to examine how South African nationalism is registered on a sonic and affective level. Based on fieldwork in the greater Johannesburg metropolitan area, I show that no single music genre can represent South Africa, but I also explain why and how individual genres affirm the existence of this nation that can never be represented. For reasons that will become evident, I focus my attention on one genre in particular: kwaito, a form of electronic music that emerged in the early 1990s.<sup>3</sup> I illustrate the various ways that kwaito alludes to the existence of the nation *through* sound, but only by neutralizing or short-circuiting the relationship between nation and sound.

## ON NATIONAL BEING

Ivor Chipkin’s *Do South Africans Exist?* is perhaps the most comprehensive and theoretically robust account of South African nationalism to appear in recent years. This text is particularly helpful as a point of departure because it poses the problem of South African nationalism very precisely; I will therefore follow its argument closely. But I will also suggest that although Chipkin goes a long way toward exposing

the aporia of South African nationalism, he misunderstands aporia as a disabling—and not an enabling—force.

After reviewing a large body of relevant literature on African nationalism, postcolonial theory, and South African historiography, Chipkin presents a highly condensed formal definition of the “national principle”:

A is the same as B in respect to X (175).

By this he means that citizens A and B belong to a particular nation if they share a particular X, where X “refers to some or other feature of population (language, religion, culture, race, and so on).” Following this logic, Chipkin suggests an additional, extended formulation:

A and B are admissible to C to the extent that they share X (175).

In this formulation, C designates a political or national community. A and B are citizens of this community to the extent that they share some feature, X. In order to sharpen and emphasize the logic of “sharing,” Chipkin contrasts national communities with dynastic or feudal societies, which can be summarized by a different formula:

A and B are admissible to C when subjects of Y (175).

Here, A and B are members of a political community, C, when they are *subjects* of the sovereign, Y. Unlike nationalism, which is predicated on A and B sharing some feature, X, in dynasties

what matters is that the territory in which A and B reside falls (through war or treaty) into the domain of the sovereign, and that its residents are subject to him/her. In this way, the domain of the prince could be, and usually was, composed of peoples speaking diverse languages and of different cultures. (176)

Thus, according to Chipkin, dynastic communities are constituted by subjection rather than identity. National communities, by contrast, are based on the identification of citizens through the sharing of linguistic, religious, cultural, or racial features. To understand South African nationalism, then, two questions need to be answered: “Why should the [South African] nation be composed of these people and not others? And: What is the common factor, the X, on which to base a South African identity?” (178).

But things become more complicated at this point, because these questions lead to an aporia. By carefully analyzing Bishop Desmond Tutu's account of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC),<sup>4</sup> Chipkin observes that the common factor (the X) of South African identity is radically void. Or to state things another way, citizens of the "new" postapartheid South Africa do not necessarily share any common features, which means that Tutu was forced to resort to humanity itself as the only possible commonality. In Tutu's own words:

Ours is a remarkable country. Let us celebrate diversity, our differences. God wants us as we are. South Africa wants and needs the Afrikaner, the English, the coloured, the Indian, the black. We are sisters and brothers in one family—God's family, the human family. (TRC, section 1; qtd. in Chipkin, 185)

Chipkin argues that Tutu's declaration does not elucidate the common features of South Africans as much as it illustrates precisely that South African identity is impossible. "By finding the quality of identity in a divine spark," writes Chipkin, "the TRC did not generate the South African people *per se*: it produced a world people. South Africans are merely instances of humanity, indistinguishable from anyone else" (85). In brief, Chipkin's argument is that South Africans share nothing other than humanity, and humanity is of course not limited to South Africans. Thus, in his view—and to answer the question posed by the title of his book—South Africans do not really exist in any meaningful sense.

But there is another way to interpret this "X," this "common feature" of South Africans outside of Bishop Tutu's obvious theological bent. My argument is that what South Africans share is South African-ness itself—that is to say, what they share is not some empirical quality but rather the very fact of being South African.

To more fully elucidate this argument, I turn to Slavoj Žižek's discussion of nationalism in his seminal work, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Although one may argue that Žižek's theorization is "Eurocentric" and thereby inappropriate for a discussion of South African nationalism, I will attempt to show how and why his work astutely captures the "formal" properties of South Africa at a fundamental level. Žižek's position is particularly helpful because it is "antidescriptivist" and thereby usefully moves away from thinking about nationalism in terms

of shared empirical qualities (language, culture, race, etc.). Furthermore, just as certain colonial-era European laws or policies were fully realized only in the colonies—for example, indemnity “only existed *in concreto*” in England’s colonies and not in England itself (Sitze, 8, see also chapter 2)—I contend that the tautological, antidescriptivist nation-state has been hypostasized most concretely in postcolonies such as South Africa.

Žižek begins by rehearsing a familiar Lacanian argument: the “subject is always fastened, pinned, to a signifier who represents him for the other and through his pinning he is loaded with a symbolic mandate, he is given his place in the intersubjective network of symbolic relations” (1989, 113). The big Other (e.g., South Africa) addresses the subject as itself, as who he or she already is. Moreover, the big Other addresses the subject as if it knows why it is what it is, although any attempt to answer the question, “Why am I what I am supposed to be (e.g., South African, Chinese, white, black), why have I this mandate?” is by definition hysterical, since it makes no sense to raise the question at all.<sup>5</sup> In short, the mandate ushered by the symbolic order is *arbitrary* and “cannot be accounted for by reference to the ‘real’ properties and capacities of the subject” (113).

In charting an intellectual history of his ideas, Žižek turns to several late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century philosophers. He focuses on Schelling, who observed that “there is, in every man, a feeling that from all eternity, he has been what he is, i.e., that he did not become it in the course of time” (qtd. in Žižek, 168).<sup>6</sup> For Schelling, a person’s basic character is the result of an original, eternal, and transcendental choice, an almost preoriginal choice that had always been made, outside the temporal reality of life. Thus, although an individual does not choose her country during the time—the temporal reality—of her life, she is treated as if she had already done so. It is as if the individual, in an atemporal, eternally past act, chose what was from the outset chosen for—or imposed on—her or him: “allegiance to his country.”<sup>7</sup> If this is so, then being a citizen of a particular nation does not require particular behaviors or actions. Indeed, from the particular position I am now advancing, quotidian actions have very little to do with national belonging.

Although Žižek does not historicize his theorization of the national subject in much detail, it is not coincidental that Schelling—who lived

between 1775 and 1854—figures prominently in his discussion.<sup>8</sup> Žižek's theorization of the atemporal constitution of the subject parallels what Foucault calls the "withdrawal of knowledge outside the space of representation" (242) in the late eighteenth century. In contrast to the classical episteme of representation, since the late eighteenth century the subject has been constituted through a transcendental "act" that is devoid of representational content.

But as Foucault points out, the modern subject is in fact both "transcendental" and "empirical," resulting in what he famously termed the "empirico-transcendental doublet." This means that a comprehensive analysis must account both for the transcendental constitution of national subjects and the ambiguous relationship to empirical attributes such as sound and images. For all nations do indeed produce sound, but the question is how that sensory material relates to the ontological status of national subjects and nationhood. As I observed in the introduction to this paper, scholars have tended to equate the particular sounds of a musical traditional with a particular nation. This, after all, is what "representation" means: to present again. For many scholars nations are simply presented again (and again) through sound or through music. But if the argument I have presented holds any water, then a more accurate assessment would be that national being precedes empirical content.

Bernhard Giesen's discussion of nineteenth-century German nationalism, while certainly not the only interpretation possible, serves as a useful example. According to him, German nationalism was predicated on a "transcendental code" under which what "is at stake is incomprehensible, unspeakable, impossible to represent" (88). The "transcendent identity of the nation," writes Giesen, is characterized by what is beyond characterization—the "infinite and the sublime" (91). The "nation," ultimately, became a "permeable concept, which could be filled with contradictory and manifold contents" (91). Nonetheless, the German nation—as described by philosophers such as Fichte and Novalis—was constructed by reducing this permeable concept to particular historical examples: a mythologized reification of the Middle Ages, of the Teutons, of Greece. This, then, is the "problem" with German nationalism in certain guises: the empty, unrepresentable center of the nation was equated and conflated with specific empirical content. Or, stated another way, reducing German nationalism to

specific historical examples results in an erasure of the transcendental side of the empirico-transcendental doublet. As such, the antagonism between a particular social group's interests and the neutralization of those interests in the name of an unrepresentable nation was, in the case of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Germany, tilted toward the former. While admittedly thinly treated, this example begins to show why and how certain identities (particularly Jewish and Roma) agitated and even short-circuited two very different anthropological projects in the wake of German critical philosophy: Immanuel Kant's (see Ronell, 295–96) and Johann Gottfried Herder's (see Arendt).

In the case of postapartheid South Africa, it is the interstice *between* the two sides of the bifurcated modern subject that makes nationalism possible. Contemporary South Africa has affirmed the wedge separating the empirical from the transcendental and is thus a formal democracy in the sense that its center is empty. The political community is thereby forced to accept its unrepresentable core. South African nationalism thus rejects the possibility of reifying any particular tradition and affirms, in all its ambiguity, the aporia that ultimately makes national representation impossible. Note that although national *representation* is impossible, this does not imply—as someone like Chipkin suggests—that nationalism is itself impossible. Instead, the impossibility of national representation is a condition of possibility for South African nationalism.

Emptied of contents, the *essence* of being South African is nothing but the Real itself, designated by the empty signifier "South African." This tautology—this coincidence between signifier and signified—adds nothing to the category "South Africa" and thus allows the center to remain void. Thus, Chipkin is correct that one cannot point to any feature that all South Africans share. In the formulation "A and B are admissible to C to the extent that they share X," there is a sense in which A and B cannot meaningfully be admissible to C because they do not share any X outside of humanity *de natura*. However, it seems to me that the formula "A and B are admissible to C to the extent that they share X" is in fact viable if we allow for the counter-intuitive possibility that C is equivalent to X. Hence, South African nationalism can be summarized by the following formal definition:

A and B are admissible to C to the extent that they share C.

In other words, A and B are citizens of South Africa to the extent that they share South African citizenship.

With this sleight of hand, South African nationalism is not disabled (*vis-à-vis* Chipkin) but is oddly made possible. It is an “impossible machine” in the sense developed by Adam Sitze in his analysis of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission: “a miracle-making machine designed ‘to miraculate’—to create effects and events that should not be possible” (19).<sup>9</sup> Following Sitze further, I would add that South Africa is an impossible machine in two senses: first, in the sense already mentioned (that is, as a machine that miraculously performs the possible), but also, second, in the sense in which its impossibility leads to “disbelief and skepticism” (19). In the context of this paper, this disbelief and skepticism is rooted in the fact that in the above formula the first C is never completely identical with the second C, because the form of tautological nationalism I have been describing is always haunted by the possibility that one national characteristic or another will become hegemonic. Multiple ethnic, racial, and class-based “communities” constantly clamor for audibility in an increasingly saturated national soundscape. Thus, the formula “A and B are admissible to C to the extent that they share C” should be viewed as a political horizon that is never fully realized. It is always possible that the second C in the formula will take the form of a clearly defined and exclusionary X.

To sharpen this point, I consider Richard Wilson’s argument regarding postapartheid nationalism. In terms that should by now be familiar, Wilson begins by observing that in South Africa “overarching moral unity cannot be achieved through cultural symbols since there is no ‘ethnic core’ . . . around which an overarching ethno-nationalism could be built” (2). As a way to avoid establishing nationhood on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, or religion, South Africa followed a common post-Cold War-era path by instead defining itself in terms of individual human rights. As Wilson states, the dominant position among political theorists seems to be that “instead of creating unity and identity out of cultural nationalism, the state should create a culture of rights based upon an inclusive and democratic notion of citizenship” (2). On this view, “National identity unfolds not through

ancient symbols but through the practice of claiming basic rights" (3). But as Wilson goes on to argue, this prescriptive line of argumentation is marked by a definite "sociological blindness," since in practice human rights is never entirely separated from "communitarian forms of nation-building" (3).

Like Wilson, my aim here is to understand how the neutralization of cultural nationalism unfolds in an ambiguous relationship with communitarian forms. To fully understand South African nationalism, it is not enough to simply vanquish culture in the name of individual human rights, because even the most cursory "on the ground" glimpse proves that culture and tradition continue to exert pressure on and within the nation-state. But an exclusive emphasis on the way that particular cultural forms vie for national dominance is also not adequate (see, e.g., Askew), precisely because of the state's attempt to neutralize conflicts through recourse to the unrepresentable (or what I have also termed the "transcendental").

The preceding discussion raises a further important question that I have not sufficiently addressed: the question of history and of apartheid history in particular. Would it not be possible to argue that post-apartheid nationalism is not tautological at all but rather that it is forged through a relationship to (and negation of) its own past? Wilson argues that postapartheid South Africa is clearly relational (that is, nontautological) but that somewhat uniquely its "most significant site of otherness . . . has not been other nations, it has been itself" (16). While it is impossible to deny the veracity of this claim, to say that postapartheid nationalism is generated through a negation of its own past does not yet tell us exactly what form this negation takes. Or, to state things another way, negation is underdetermined: for example, an apartheid South Africa ruled by a white minority may easily have been negated through the establishment of a majoritarian nativist ideology under which white people are no longer considered South African citizens. Alternatively, "ethnic" violence (such as that which occurred between the Inkatha Freedom Party and supporters of the ANC in the early 1990s) may conceivably have derailed the establishment of a liberal-democratic nation-state. But what happened, in fact, was the neutralization (albeit, not complete) of these conflicts. Thus, to say that tautology characterizes the postapartheid scenario does not rule out the simultaneous importance of historical negation.

We are now ready to rearticulate the main questions animating this study: How does this tautological form of nationalism relate to empirical features such as language, culture, and race? And how does the empty C in the above formulation relate to the production of sound and music? Or, to state these questions another way: if South African-ness is formally tautological, then how do citizens hear it? What would it mean to experience a nation that is empty of all social content? In the following sections I provide two possible answers to these questions.

### HEARING THE INAUDIBLE NATION: NEGATIVE REPRESENTATION

As a point of departure, consider J. M. Coetzee's analysis of the 1995 Rugby World Cup—a monumental competition in South African history in which Mandela celebrated the largely Afrikaans South African team's victory in the stadium.<sup>10</sup> According to Coetzee, the “master metaphor” behind the opening and closing ceremonies was Desmond Tutu's “Rainbow Nation.” The “Rainbow Nation,” he suggests, “predicated the nation as a mental construct and nationhood as a collective state of mind. If a group of people can be encouraged to believe they are a nation and to act together as a nation, even if only in play, then they are a nation” (352). Coetzee's main point is that if the nation and national consciousness are taken as equivalent, then “sounds and images, if numerous and powerful enough, can create a nation” (353).

But were sounds and images necessary to create the South African nation? We have already seen that the idea of a Rainbow Nation means precisely that anyone who is South African is South African. Whether you are black, white, or “coloured,”<sup>11</sup> you are South African—if you are South African. But if this is so, then South African-ness is emptied of all empirical qualities—emptied, too, of sounds and images—and is defined through tautology. Seen this way, the vast array of quite different images and sounds at the 1995 Rugby World Cup illustrated precisely that there is no one way of being South African and, indeed, that *everyone* is South African, provided that they are South African. The fact that a Sotho speaker knows she is South African when seeing Zulu ostrich feathers on display, and a Xhosa speaker feels South

African when seeing Sotho blankets, gives one the impression that there is no need to be “represented.”

In a paradoxical way, then, multiple and differing sounds and images prove that no sound or image can create, or represent, the South African nation. To invert Prévost’s famous maxim, it is not that no sound is innocent, but rather that *every* sound is innocent. But paradoxically, again, it is the very fact that sounds and images do not create the nation that makes sounds and images powerful. The deployment of specific sounds and images reminds South Africans that no sound or image can possibly create or represent them.

To sharpen this point, I turn to a genre known as kwaito. Kwaito is a genre of electronic music that emerged alongside the democratization of South Africa in the early 1990s and came to be understood as the voice of the black youth in the postapartheid period. Because kwaito’s musical processes and characteristics resemble those of African diasporic genres such as dancehall, house, and hip-hop, kwaito appears to be easily circumscribed within a politics of transnational blackness, the parameters of which extend from Africa through to Europe and the Americas. And because music is a prominent, if not the most prominent, force in this highly racialized complex, scholars have often been tempted to draw kwaito, hip-hop, dancehall and other black musics of late modernity into a singular topography of representational politics (see Perry; Stanley-Niaah).

Although such interpretations run the risk of downplaying geographic and generic specificities, it would be a mistake to underestimate the extent to which kwaito has indeed functioned as an affirmation of black identity in the postapartheid period. Indeed, the genre has been heard as “an eloquent testimony of the agency of young blacks” (Peterson, 197) and also, perhaps because of this, as “directed, bounded, and potentially exclusionary” (Allen, 104). Issues relevant to a large swath of contemporary popular musics from Africa and the African diaspora dominate the scholarly literature on kwaito: authenticity (or “keeping it real”) (Peterson), negotiating the local/global nexus (Allen; Coplan), and reclaiming urban space (Stanley-Niaah).

But the emphasis on transnational blackness is easily complicated when one considers the unique position South Africa holds in the global imaginary of race and politics. In South Africa, an entire political system was dismantled and reconstituted under the sign of race while

simultaneously attempting to dissolve it in the name of nonracial democracy. In the postapartheid period, kwaito emerged as an articulation of the previously silenced black majority—but only in order to renounce any claim to national totalization and thus, in a sense, to disappear. In other words, despite kwaito's obvious sonic markers of blackness, the genre's success on the *national* level was contained in its very inability to represent South Africa. This does not mean, however, that kwaito was irrelevant to the nation-building project of the postapartheid period. On the contrary, it has been crucial in the construction of postapartheid nationalism, but only by virtue of *negative* representation. I borrow the term "negative representation" from Jean-François Lyotard, who uses it to explain art. He argues that although art cannot represent the unrepresentable, it can represent that there is something unrepresentable. In a similar fashion, although kwaito is unable to represent the nation, it nonetheless represents that there is an unrepresentable nation. Kwaito, then, functions dialectically as affirmation and negation: it at once affirms the nation and lays bare its inability to represent that nation.

The kwaito musician Mandoza is often credited as the first successful crossover musician in postapartheid South Africa. His song "Nkalakatha" gained much popularity with the overwhelming white supporters of the South African cricket team (see Boloka). Mandoza never intended to become a crossover musician. And yet, as he told me, even though "white people in South Africa don't know what I'm saying in my songs, they're getting down on the song."<sup>12</sup> The point is thus not that white South Africans identified with Mandoza's music. On the contrary, the message of the music was this: "This music is yours—even though it is not"; or: "Even though kwaito is not your music, it is still your music because you are South African." In brief, national identification was only possible because of nonidentification on the "cultural" level.

As a second example, consider the music of Arthur Mafokate, the so-called King of Kwaito. Arthur self-released his first song, "Vuvuzela," on the eve of South Africa's first democratic election in 1994. As he recalls:

They thought there was gonna be war and [whatnot]. And I thought, but what if this music can bring unity? Because if they all dance to the same tune they might as well be under one leader. . . . And when they were

celebrating, which song was playing? My only song. So I was lucky. I took the risk and I'm still proud of that. (qtd. in Allen, 85)

According to Arthur, then, at a particularly critical juncture in South African history the choice was either music or war. Although not necessarily falling under the logic of negative representation, his music served precisely to neutralize conflict. Fifteen years later, I attended a performance by Arthur following Gauteng premier Paul Mashatile's "State of the Province" address at Miriam Makeba Square in downtown Johannesburg. At that event, too, music neutralized conflict, as I show through the following ethnographic vignette.

Following Mashatile's rather lifeless speech, during which audience members gazed around and fidgeted in apparent boredom, Arthur entered the stage and performed his immensely popular song, "Sika Lekhekhe." The crowd went wild and rushed to the foot of the stage, gazing up at the charismatic figure. Arthur gave away free CD's, and the female vocalist Chomee delighted the audience with a surprise guest appearance. Arthur also had three backup singers with him, who wore tight cheerleading-type outfits designed in ANC colors. Arthur, too, was wearing an ANC shirt.

When Arthur sang his famous song "Kaffir" [i.e., a derogatory word for a black person] people stared at me—one of the only white people there—with a mixture of glibness and embarrassment. I tried singing along, but ended up only mumbling a few words under my breath: "Nee baas, don't call me 'kaffir'!" [No boss, don't call me "kaffir"!] I felt ridiculous but tried not to let it deter me.

During Arthur's performance, my South African-ness was assumed, although I was treated differently as a white man. In my interactions with others, racial and ethnic divisions were less important than the sense of a more general form of national belonging. Mashatile, after all, was addressing all of us, and in doing so he was hailing us, interpellating us, as well. But Mashatile's speech was largely ineffective on the affective level. It was only at certain musical moments that national belonging became tangible, or sensate, and it was in those very same moments that the strange calculus of negative representation was most keenly felt. During Arthur's performance, I was invited—as a South African—to sing along. However, to sing along in

that context meant assuming the subject position of a disenfranchised black South African shouting at her white boss, a kind of identification that my subject position would never allow. Of course, I did not—and could not—identify with a black worker shouting at her boss. The people in the crowd knew this. But the crucial point is that my nonidentification with the protagonist of Arthur's song did not disqualify me from South African-ness. I presented myself as a South African *negatively*, through a kind of productive failure: I was accepted as South African even though (or perhaps, because) I was unable to identify with Arthur's song. Thus, even in the absence of racial identification, I was interpellated as a national subject. I do not mean to privilege my own subject position, nor do I mean to suggest that negative representation is limited to (middle-class) white subjectivities. I present my own experiences here as simply one example.

Furthermore, my vignette illustrates just how fragile the South African nation is. Indeed, the productive failure to which I referred above can quite easily morph into a flat out rejection of certain bodies and subject positions from the polity. Although rarely, I have in fact been told at national festivals and events to "go back to Europe." Nativism, in other words, is always on the horizon. As Achille Mbembe warns, "The 'transformation' project can easily turn into a social quackery—blacks coming to wreak havoc in the former master's house after the latter has relinquished political power. This is indeed what has been observed in countless African postcolonial societies under the rubric of 'indigenization'" (15–16).

Postapartheid South Africa has, however, largely warded off reactionary movements of indigenization. And music, it seems to me, has played a significant role in this "warding off." I have found in my research that kwaito is not a nationalist spectacle because it creates national myths, represents a tradition, or says something for a particular community—"indigenous" or otherwise. Instead, if kwaito is a nationalist spectacle this is only because it shows that there is a nation that cannot be seen or heard. Kwaito forces us to hear that the nation is ultimately without content; it forces us to hear that the nation is inaudible.

Negative representation is of course not limited to kwaito or even to music generally (I return to this issue briefly later). Consider this quote from a woman from Khayelitsha township (outside Cape Town):

"I love this country. This is my country and I am proud of it in spite of all the child rape incidents that are taking place" (qtd. in Steingo 2005, 203). This woman loves South Africa *in spite* of its empirical attributes because it is "hers." Or consider another example that I wrote about some years ago, of a white South African man posting a message on [homecomingrevolution.org](http://homecomingrevolution.org), a website designed to encourage ex-South Africans to return home (see Steingo 2005, 203–4). The man writes that his decision to leave South Africa was based on the fact that he believes that future prospects for his two toddlers would be better in the UK. He states baldly that he loves living in the UK and that the only thing he misses about South Africa is his family. After emphasizing his disdain for South Africa, the man nevertheless declares: "One must remain fiercely proud to be SA (that can never change!)." This man believes that his children will have a better life in the UK, and his only regret about leaving has nothing whatsoever to do with South Africa as a country. Yet he maintains, despite everything, that he is proud—and *fiercely* proud, no less—to be South African.

Such assertions of national pride are common among nations around the world and are often articulated platitudinously by politicians and journalists. For example, former president Thabo Mbeki had this to say after the Zulu choral music group Ladysmith Black Mambazo won a Grammy Award for their 2004 album *Raise Your Spirit Higher*: "The Grammy Award that has been so spectacularly won by the isicathamiya group, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, makes us all proud to be South Africans. . . . The people and government of South Africa salute this remarkable group on their achievement and wish them continuing success in their future."<sup>13</sup> Although the group sings in two of South Africa's eleven official languages and expresses an explicitly Christian sentiment, Mbeki invites all South Africans (irrespective of linguistic or religious association) to feel proud. A plethora of similar prideful assertions can be found under the Twitter hashtag #ProudlySouthAfrican, through which South Africans of many cultural backgrounds have celebrated sporting events, performing artists, natural landmarks (such as Table Mountain), and the recent victory of Miss South Africa (Rolene Strauss) at the 2014 Miss World beauty pageant.

In all of these cases, cultural and social differences are suspended in the name of an overarching and unrepresentable South African

nationalism. The interesting aspect is the extent to which this unrepresentable core of South Africa is performed through the almost obsessive iteration of music and images. Each South African sound fails to represent South Africa and, precisely by doing so, represents the unrepresentable nation beyond the threshold of the audible.

### HEARING THE INAUDIBLE NATION: SOUND, FORCE, EFFECT

As a form of negative representation, kwaito is in some ways no different from any other music genre. Indeed, my analysis above bears this out. Like Zulu choral music, “traditional” Sotho music or “Shangaan electro,” kwaito points obliquely to the South African nation without, however, ever representing it. But there are two ways that kwaito is, in fact, somewhat set apart from other genres. First, unlike the practitioners of relatively marginal genres, kwaito musicians *could* have attempted to “nationalize” their music—that is to say, because of their celebrity status and influence over political matters, kwaito musicians may have attempted to “fill in” the radical void of South African nationalism by speaking for and on behalf of it. Indeed, it would not have been impossible for kwaito musicians to harness the rhetoric of identity politics and assert a particular form of blackness (or Zulu-ness or Sotho-ness) as the hegemonic form of South African subjectivity. That this never happened only attests to the political “maturity” of kwaito musicians and the robustness of South African democracy.

But there is also a second reason why kwaito is different. Although kwaito musicians often “represent” black youth on the cultural level and “negatively represent” other social groups on the *national* level, there are certain instances in which kwaito musicians radically reject representation *de natura*. In such cases, kwaito sonically realizes the constitutive “void” of South African nationalism by coming into direct contact with the Real.

How is this possible? In short, my argument is that kwaito “meets” tautological nationalism directly when it is experienced as a *material force*. Consider the kwaito celebrity Mzekezeke, a national icon and “mascot” for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. Mzekezeke

always wears a mask and his true identity is intended to remain unknown. Kwaito aficionados actually know that it is Sibusiso Leope (a well-known DJ) under the mask, but Mzekezeke's "true identity" remains the faceless man, the unknown man.<sup>14</sup> It is not that he has no identity, but rather that he is identified with anonymity, with eyes and a mouth that are eyes and a mouth only. Mzekezeke is the visible invisible, the embodiment of invisibility. As such, he represents nothing; or, to state things another way, he represents the unrepresentable itself.

Significantly, it was at a Mzekezeke performance that former president Thabo Mbeki finally embraced kwaito. Before April 2003, Mbeki had warned the youth about kwaito and had dismissed it as a "distraction" (see Jubasi). However, fear of alienating himself from the South African youth forced Mbeki to change his views. In April 2003, Mbeki jumped on stage after Mzekezeke's performance of the hit song "Sguqa Ngama Dola" at the Africa Day Celebrations and requested that Mzekezeke sing the song again. It is no coincidence that Mbeki latched onto this particular musician since supporting Mzekezeke—at least in principle—is completely nonpartisan. As an anonymous figure, Mzekezeke does not "stand for" anything and cannot exclude anyone.

Of course, it is not quite true that Mzekezeke lacks all representational content. To mention only two obvious facts: he speaks particular languages (mostly Zulu, *tsotsitaal*,<sup>15</sup> and English) and is generally interpreted as male. Thus, in the strictest terms, "he" cannot be said to be pure sonic effect. Nonetheless, Mzekezeke does gesture toward the possibility of a pure sonic force since he has no individual identity and has very little social identity (even if he does retain a certain amount of gendered and cultural identity). It is worth noting, moreover, that even his assumed male identity is subject to doubt, as is evidenced by the music video for his song "Ubani Mzekezeke?" ("Who Is Mzekezeke?"). The video begins with two teenage girls—one white and one black—speculating on Mzekezeke's true identity. One of them asks: "Have you checked out the newspapers today? Apparently they know who the real Mzekzeke is." To which the other responds: "Ja, whatever! That story is so played out." The first girl is not yet ready to give up and asserts, "Last time I checked it was DJ Fresh." Rolling her eyes, the other girl again replies that it is a nonissue: "I don't care

who the real Mzekezeke is." The video then quickly moves to a shot of Mzekezeke dancing and pulling off his mask, each time revealing a different identity. The mask comes off and a young man, smiling wildly, shakes his dreadlocks. Then a slender young woman reveals herself, staring demurely at the camera. With each subsequent unveiling a different identity is revealed, and as the video progresses familiar faces begin to appear: George Bush, Nelson Mandela, Robert Mugabe, Osama bin Laden . . . At first we think we are being continually tricked, that each time the mask comes off we are simply seeing someone *pretending* to be Mzekezeke. But then another thought occurs: all of these people could, at different times, be "Mzekezeke." After all, what is Mzekezeke if not an idea, a signifier without content? And indeed, about halfway through the video we see dozens of people wearing Mzekezeke masks—at least thirty people wearing the famous Mzekezeke balaclava dance around tables, reveling and singing. From one perspective, any of these people could be Mzekezeke. From another perspective, all of these people *are* Mzekezeke.

Mzekezeke's mode of performance can, of course, be interpreted in light of other political meanings as well, especially the history of armed struggle and the present violence, criminality, and gangs. As such, one may reasonably ask: would it not be more appropriate to view this anonymous musician in terms of subversive behavior and to listen for resonances with African-American hip-hop figures such as the "gangster" or the "thug"? Although plausible, there are several reasons to doubt this interpretation. For one thing, Mzekezeke states repeatedly in interviews that he is against any and all criminal activity. In fact, he is deeply invested in biopolitical concerns—that is, in the idea that citizens should commit themselves to honest, hard work for the general betterment of society. As he stated in an interview with Aryan Kaganof: "I represent for the people in the street who are working hard, who are struggling and who have a positive mind. I'm not interested in crime or criminal things, no. I always encourage people not to get into crime and they listen to me because they understand the language that they speak and they are like me, they struggle like me."<sup>16</sup>

Here, "struggle" is depoliticized and instead comes to mean the "everyday struggles" of ordinary people. Explaining why he often wears overalls during performances, Mzekezeke continues: "They

[i.e., ordinary people] wear work clothes when they go to work, I also wear overalls just like them. I'm just like people, I'm ordinary. I'm not [interested in] wear[ing] gold chains, gold rings, I'm not like that and I don't like that bling bling thing. Even if I can have money to buy [them], I don't want those things because I'm just ordinary, you see." Thus, Mzekezeke explicitly rejects crime and the hip-hop "bling" aesthetic and valorizes humility and hard work. Furthermore, as part of his persona, he speaks and sings in an innocent, humorous, and even childlike voice. In every way, he rejects a militant posture.

An even more radical version of musical anonymity may be found in the form of Bleksem (thought to be the alter ego of Cleophas Monyepao).<sup>17</sup> Like Mzekezeke, Bleksem wears a mask. Bleksem, however, goes one step further: a cross (resembling a Band-Aid) covers his mouth. Not only is Bleksem's "human" identity unknown, but his voice is metaphorically closed off. When he did a guest appearance with the Jaziel Brothers at the South African Music Awards (SAMAs) nominations party in March 2009, it was not even clear when (or whether) he was singing along with the rich vocal polyphony of the two brothers and several backup singers. Not only was Bleksem's identity invisible but his vocal identity was also inaudible, hidden within the fabric of the song. The most visible and flamboyant of the eight or so singers on stage, Bleksem was nonetheless unidentifiable.

Thus, although Bleksem's performance at the SAMAs nomination party was meant to represent the "best of South African music," he actually represented nothing at all. If he sang that night, the audience did not and could not hear him. Or, stated more precisely, we could not know that we heard him, we could not know that what we were hearing was or was not him.

And yet, the audience knew or at least suspected that we heard Bleksem. In fact, I think it is fair to say that we *did* hear Bleksem that night. But we heard "him" without hearing him, we heard him without knowing what he sounded like and, as such, he was registered as a strangely mute effect. The resolutely uncanny experience of "hearing" Bleksem is only compounded by his name, which in South African slang means "to strike" or "to punch."<sup>18</sup>

The notion of a pure sonic effect, of music as a kind of uncanny punch that cannot be felt as such, sheds interesting light on the fundamental process of interpellation. Scholars have seldom noticed that

Althusser's classic account contains a peculiar observation about the particularity of sound in the production of national subjects.<sup>19</sup>

Let us recall his famous example: you are walking on the street and a policeman shouts, "Hey, you there!" By turning her eyes toward the source of the sound, the individual recognizes that she is being hailed; at this moment she becomes a subject. The individual can thus be hailed from any direction through sound, but can only become a subject by facing and looking at the sound source. For Althusser, there is an almost mystical quality inherent in hailing. When an individual is hailed (that is, approached through sound) she knows that it is she who is being hailed, and not another. Althusser admits that he cannot explain why this is the case, and concludes that it is a "strange phenomenon" (174).

In one of the only extant theoretical texts to explicitly link interpellation with sensory perception, Mowitt presents an important insight about Althusser's so-called strange phenomenon. He writes:

It is not accidental that the experience Althusser seeks to capture in the category of interpellation is one where, because he stresses (as will I) the corporeal act of turning in response, the individual is addressed verbally from behind—that is, precisely from the place one cannot see. (2002, 46)

Thus, according to Mowitt the fact that "hearing is omnidirectional and automatically receptive" allows the interpellating apparatus to "address more than you in order to constitute you" (47). As he suggests, "Althusser's point is not that just anyone could be the addressee, but that for all of us, it could be me." Through a careful interpretation of both words and music, Mowitt employs these Althusserian concepts to analyze the ambiguous interpellation of the Rolling Stones' "Get Off of My Cloud."<sup>20</sup>

Extending Mowitt's analysis, I would argue that shifting from Althusser's example of the policeman to musical contexts may benefit from a slight analytical transformation. If music says, "Hey you!" it necessarily means "you" in the plural. From this perspective, music has the ability to function as a device of mass interpellation—music hails many individuals simultaneously and, while each individual knows that she is being hailed, she knows that she is being hailed along with others, and never alone. Moreover, with music the individual becomes a subject not by turning toward the sound source

(what would be the point of that?) but by engaging with the music: by singing, dancing, or simply listening.<sup>21</sup> With music, it is not “me and not another” that is being hailed, but “me and all the others.” One turns not toward the source of the music, but toward a friend or a citizen. An individual recognizes that she is a subject by recognizing that she is sutured to others through sound.

It is interesting to note, moreover, that the emphasis on bass in kwaito music in particular results in the music being not only heard but literally felt as tactile pressure in the torso. In fact, one subgenre of kwaito is known as “guz,” a word referring to the phenomenological experience of bass vibrating in the chest.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, it is significant that in Zulu a single word (*zwa*) designates both the experience of hearing and of tactile sensation (of “feeling”). Kwaito, then, cannot be adequately apprehended in acoustemological, or even audio-visual, terms; it is, rather, a deeply synesthetic practice, interacting with the sensorium on at least three levels. Seen this way, music mass-hails not through sound alone but also by sympathetically vibrating the bodies of national subjects.

Taking stock of the preceding analysis, I suggest that kwaito—and guz in particular—participates within what Mowitt terms a “percussive field.” On the one hand, and even though kwaito is by no means limited to drumming or percussion as such, this genre undoubtedly moves “the bodies of others through the medium of sonic contact” (Mowitt 2002, 6). As a compound experience of hearing-feeling, *ukuzwa* (to hear/feel) in kwaito entails precisely an amplification of the “catachresis of the skin” and a “percussive sense-making” through “beating that assembles sounds and bodies and the practices that articulate them” (6). On the other hand, the value of Mowitt’s conceptualization of the percussive field lies precisely in its irreducibility to somatic concerns. Unlike much recent work on sound that refuses to move beyond the level of empiricism, Mowitt’s notion of a percussive *field* necessarily entangles the musicological, the sociological, and the psychoanalytic (4). The listening subject, to reiterate a point from earlier, is always empirical and transcendental.

As a final and somewhat different example of kwaito as pure sonic effect, consider Oskido’s (Oscar Mdlongwa) multiplatform project, “I Believe.” Since the early 1990s, Oskido has been one of South Africa’s most prominent producers, performing artists, and DJs, and in 2012

he launched the “I Believe” project that includes among other things a main theme song, a series of CD compilations, a weekly radio show (on Metro FM), and a concert tour. The song, “I Believe,” consists primarily of a chorus of men and women singing in unison repeatedly: “Say I believe, Oskido I believe / Well I believe, Oskido I believe.” But what, precisely, does it mean to believe Oskido, or to believe in him? Although such questions are seldom directly posed, in Vincent Moloï’s and Norman Maake’s 2009 documentary, *Vuma: A Music Revolution*, Oskido himself reflects on these questions for a moment: “Oskido, I believe. You believe in what? You believe in the way you take the crowd to another level. You believe in whatever touches you. Because music is a soulful and spiritual thing.” This short reflection does not, of course, do much to clarify what people who believe in Oskido believe. The third sentence is particularly ambiguous, since Oskido obfuscates the pronoun “you”: in saying that “you believe in the way that you take the crowd to another level,” he blurs the boundaries between “you” as believer and “you” as the one believed in.

Following Amy Cimini and Jairo Moreno, it seems to me that Oskido’s “I Believe” is best understood according to the logic of the fiduciary—that is to say, the “conjunction of fidelity with faith in the shared root *fides*” (2016, 7). Cimini and Moreno suggest that thinking about sound is often governed by a fiduciary logic according to which “perception always already believes that *it* senses and *in* what it senses” (37; emphasis in original). Focusing primarily on Western knowledge production (including phenomenology, performance theory, and the affective turn), they observe that we are entrusted to trust *what* we hear and, before that, *that* we hear. In other words, the song “I Believe” is a pure instantiation of the fiduciary logic of sound, a trading on the root *fides* from which both faith and fidelity are derived. To believe Oskido means nothing more or less than singing in unison with others, “Oskido, I believe!”

This sonically generated fiduciary relation is not necessarily a national one but it often functions as such due to Oskido’s history and the contexts of his performances. For one thing, he frequently performs at state-sponsored events where citizens come together to celebrate the postapartheid nation. Additionally, the ecstatic rapture associated with believing in Oskido is closely aligned with postapartheid experience more generally. And as producer of the first successful kwaito

group (Boom Shaka), Oskido was crucial in shaping the soundscape of the “new” South Africa in the mid-1990s.

Insofar as it functions as pure effect, kwaito is nothing more or less than the making-present of kwaito. Kwaito does not create national myths, nor does it or reify particular traditions. Through its sonic and tactile force, it lays bare the emptiness and fragility of a nation that it can never represent. Kwaito shows us that there is a nation to which all South Africans belong, but also that this nation is untouchable, invisible, inaudible.

### THE POLITICAL STAKES OF THE INAUDIBLE NATION

To conclude this paper, I offer a few remarks on how South Africa qua inaudible nation functions in terms of power relations. Recall the formula that I have argued best characterizes postapartheid nationalism: “A and B are admissible to C to the extent that they share C.” This means that South African nationalism functions despite, and even because, of multiplicity and difference. Now, some of these “differences” are cultural, and in that sense South Africa is rightfully praised for its ability to sustain a robust democratic political community in the midst of cultural diversity. But as James Ferguson reminds us, the line between cultural difference and economic inequality is often rather blurry, occasionally even obscuring the fact that these two forms of difference are closely related.

The problems become increasingly evident when one recognizes that South African nationalism at once mitigates cultural difference while simultaneously *repressing* social and economic inequality. Twenty years after the end of apartheid, inequality has increased and white South Africans remain far wealthier than black South Africans (despite a growing black middle class). A popular T-shirt worn by young, black, and poor South Africans in Johannesburg reads: “Fuck the rainbow nation.” The notion that the “transformation” is simply taking longer than expected is now seen by a frustrated multitude as the farce that it always was.

The negotiated “settlement” of the early 1990s actually contained assurances that white South Africans would not have to give up their

property: the provision for the protection of property rights is enshrined in the very constitution (see Ramphele). Although such provisions encouraged white South Africans (and white capital) to stay home and reassured international investors, the lack of wealth distribution was certainly “a bitter pill to swallow for those who were long denied the right to acquire property” (11). As internationally renowned musician Hugh Masekela recently observed: “We’re the only place I think in the world where people not only forgave their oppressors but also gave them an elevated international social status. We actually freed our oppressors in this country” (qtd. in Davis).

Thus, the advent of liberal democracy in South Africa, along with the attendant formation of “tautological” nationalism, has functioned at least in part to suppress revolution, insurrection, and war. Drawing on the work of Chantal Mouffe, Cimini and Moreno succinctly describe the paradox of liberal democracy in general terms:

Pluralism orders the social field as a non-conflictive accommodation of differences and identities. The implication that this accommodation eliminates conflict constitutes pluralism’s ethical dimension. But pluralism also functions as a management measure because cultural identity counts as capital in a political and material economy administered by the state. This is its economic dimension. (131)

As Cimini and Moreno emphasize, the two “dimensions are incompatible.” Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri agree that the circular tautology of liberal-democratic nationalism implies the emptying of representational content: “The democratic regime, or the well-ordered society, is not only the end point but also the point of departure for the contractual process. The circular movement of self-reference gives the system a perfect equilibrium and thus the idea of a social contract is reduced to tautology” (233). In sum, the “system is an equilibrium machine, abstracted from the passional field of social conflict and thus empty of all social contents” (237). South Africa is precisely an equilibrium machine that neutralizes difference and conflict by affirming itself as a complete tautology.

In order to neutralize difference, South Africa qua equilibrium machine must necessarily become inaudible—which does not, paradoxically, mean that it produces no sound. Instead, sound is generated by and in the name of the nation everywhere and always, it is just that this sound can never represent the nation that generates it.

Through the dual mechanisms of negative representation and pure sonic effect, South African nationalism can only affirm its inaudibility by and through sound. One might say that postapartheid South Africa constantly *sonorizes its inaudibility*. And this is why South Africa the equilibrium machine is also an “impossible machine” (Sitze), producing equal quantities of awe and doubt, resonating silently from the depths of its empty core.

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## Notes

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1. I acknowledge that this is a very narrow reading of what a set is. Without entering into the immense difficulties of set theory (from Ludwig Wittgenstein's criticism of the set as a “thing” to Alain Badiou's specifically mathematical understanding of set theory), I use the concept of a set heuristically as a point of departure into a larger discussion of national being. On various critiques of the set as a thing, see Ferreirós, 306–11. Badiou's interpretation of set theory, and his claim that mathematics is the only true form of ontology, is most clearly explicated in *Being and Event*.

2. Same-sex marriage was legalized in South Africa in 2006.

3. I will discuss kwaito at length later in this article. I will not, however, go into detail about its musical characteristics or history; that has been done elsewhere. For more detailed accounts of kwaito's historical and political significance in South Africa, see Boloka; Allen; Coplan; Steingo 2016. For discussions of kwaito and linguistics, see Satyo; for kwaito and hip-hop, see Swartz; for kwaito and “coloured” identity in South Africa, see Bosch; for kwaito and dancehall, see Stanley-Niaah.

4. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a series of public hearings held in South Africa directly following the end of apartheid that sought to foster forgiveness and reconciliation in the country's nascent democracy. Three excellent and quite different accounts can be found in Wilson; Sanders; Sitze.

5. From a Lacanian perspective, the psychoanalytic process is successful when the analysand accepts that his or her being is arbitrary and unjustified.

6. Žižek provides the citation of Schelling thusly: F. W. J., Schelling, *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (Frankfurt, 1978 [1809]). Žižek has written extensively on Schelling. See his book *The Abyss of Freedom*, published together with an English translation (by Judith Norman) of Schelling's *Die Weltalter*. See also Žižek's *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters*.

7. According to Žižek, Schelling's theory of the subject is derived from a late eighteenth-century conception of Good and Evil, first articulated by Kant. In contrast to earlier conceptions, in which evil was motivated pathologically by beneficial consequences such as pleasure or profit, for Kant (as for Schelling) Evil acquires a properly ethical status and is an eternal and transcendental quality determined by atemporal choice.

8. Of course, Žižek *would not* historicize Schelling in the way I propose. Here, I interlace Žižek's Lacanian thesis with a more overtly historical approach.

9. Sitze invites us to consider the etymology of the word "machine," derived from the Greek *mēchanē*, "which denoted a theatrical apparatus, an elaborate crane devised of pulleys and weights to lift actors, specifically those impersonating gods, into the air, so that they could appear to their audience suddenly to float or fly. Understood in this sense, a 'machine' is not a thing made of steel and glass or plastic and silicon, a thing of gasoline or electricity. . . . In its etymological sense, at least, a 'machine' is a device or contrivance that is used to produce miraculous 'stage effects' and that works only to the extent it remains invisible and off-stage" (19).

10. Clint Eastwood's film *Invictus* similarly positions the 1995 Rugby World Cup as a monumental moment in postapartheid reconciliation.

11. "Coloured" is a controversial South African racial designation typically used to refer to people of mixed race. For important studies of "coloured" identity, see Erasmus; Adhikari.

12. From an interview with the author in Johannesburg.

13. The Mbeki quote is from an online press release at [http://archive.rockpaperscissors.biz/index.cfm/fuseaction/current.press\\_release/project\\_id/191.cfm](http://archive.rockpaperscissors.biz/index.cfm/fuseaction/current.press_release/project_id/191.cfm).

14. It is interesting, too, that aficionadas claim that Mzekezeke is "really" DJ S'bu when, of course, "DJ S'bu" is simply *another* alias for the man who is really (or is he?) Sibusiso Leope. Names, in South Africa, are a tricky business. Most urban South Africans have at least three first names: a "Christian" name (what one of my black South African friends calls his "slave name"), a "traditional" name (used in the rural areas), and an everyday, urban name. These three names—and sometimes more—are used in inventive and playful ways, revealing a fluidity of meaning.

15. Although somewhat controversial, I use the term *tsotsitaal* here to refer to South African urban slang. For a more careful analysis, see Satyo.

16. This quote is from Aryan Kaganof's 2003 documentary, *Sharp! Sharp! The Kwaito Story* (Johannesburg: Mandala Films). Transcriptions of interviews from the film are available online at <http://kaganof.com/kagablog/category/films/sharp>

-sharp-the-kwaito-story/. All subsequent quotes from Mzekezeke are from this web page. I have made slight typographical alterations and corrections to the transcriptions.

17. Cleophas Monyepao is more commonly known as an unmasked producer and DJ with the moniker “DJ Cleo.”

18. More commonly spelled *bliksem*, the word is of Afrikaans origin. The Afrikaans word is derived, in turn, from the Dutch *bliksem*, meaning “lightning.”

19. One important exception is John Mowitt, whose work I return to briefly below. Referencing de Certeau, Mowitt in fact asks us to consider “the blow” (*le coup*) of the hail, a strike very similar to what I have referred to as an uncanny punch.

20. The lyrics of the chorus begin: “Hey you! Get off of my cloud!”

21. Of course, on another level, singing, dancing, or listening are forms of “turning toward” the sound, at least in a broader sense of interpellation. Here, I am emphasizing interpellation’s relationship to different modalities of sensing.

22. Zwai Bala, who developed guz along with Kabelo and Tokollo, told me this in an interview.

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