



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Oudano as Praxis: Archives, Audiotopias and Movements

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies
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April 2023.

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ABSTRACT

Several Namibian studies have looked at Oudano as an expansive Oshiwambo and Rukwangali concept that implies utterances of play, performance, and performativity in spheres of culture, sports, religion, and politics. This thesis offers experiments that explore the critical usefulness of Oudano. I embark on these experiments in a deliberately undisciplined way, crossing media, time periods, ethnicities, geographies, and emphasising embodiment and mobility. In the process I show how Oudano is a practice of critical orientation in various respects, by looking at cultural work that questions institutional constraints and exclusions.

This study departs from the disjuncture between cultural work that is authorised by hegemonic national heritage discourse and unauthorised cultural work **in action**, offering other ways of knowing with different aims that slide into the cracks, between and outside of power. The disjuncture endorses structural disparities that are a direct result of a cultural hegemony, its aims and exertion of power. I was motivated by a deep anxiety caused by Namibia's post-apartheid dominant epistemologies that fundamentally exclude indigenous and subaltern methods of knowledge production.

This thesis was aimed at finding a range of conceptual and methodological approaches for critical consciousness and radical imagination across place and time. I made a choice to focus on a set of 'unrelated objects' which include my cultural practices and those of other cultural workers in Namibia. African queer and performance theories are interfaced with Oudano to demonstrate the relatedness of these objects. The objects gathered and analysed in this study were given status of archive to point to their role of memory making in social and cultural movements. Methodologically, I relied on Archival research and Practice-as-Research (P-a-R) to interweave my (performance and curatorial) practice and historical research. The thesis is a collection of six papers divided in two movements which offer specific insights about the various objects of analysis. These objects include lino-cut prints, rock art, colonial photography and sonic archives, performance art, museum theatre, site-related performance, jazz, struggle music, HipHop, Kwaito, Shambo, documentary film, orature, oral history, protest action, as well as curatorial practice.

Given its epistemic potential, Oudano is a generative approach of decolonising our understandings of performance cultures. Through close reading and listening to works of Oudano produced in Namibia, I demonstrate how people have historically practiced Oudano to construct audiotopic imaginations and build social movements. While this offers decolonial lessons for both performance and archivality, Oudano is an indigenous framework of preserving and queering knowledge. In that sense, a queer understanding of Oudano exceeds geo-political and ethnic borders, signifying how it has historically accompanied historic migrations of artists and material culture, as well as activists and non-normative ideas. By reading Oudano across time allowed this study to interrupt periodisation, showing Oudano's potential as a trans-temporal practice. Overall, this study contributes to the long-existing gap of performance studies as a field in Namibian studies. It pays attention to overlooked archives of cultural work, most of which have hardly received any scholarly attention. The thesis

exceeds my disciplinary training of drama and theatre, demonstrating Oudano as an intellectual praxis that is leaky, slippery, and undisciplined.

KEYWORDS: Oudano, Archives, Audiotopia, Movements, Undisciplined Praxis, Cultural Work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

God and the ancestors for being patient with me, for my wellness and for guiding me. Aakuusinda, Aakwanekamba, Tate, Meme, Hanganeni, Konekuni, Ndemtungila and Ndemutungila Jnr, Ndatoolewe and my family at large, AakwaMushaandja and AakwaShuumbwa.

To my advisors, Dr. Mbongeni Mtshali and Prof. Carolyn Hamilton, thank you for holding space for my undisciplined ideas and always reminding me of my potential. You have cultivated a deep commitment to research and intellectual labour in me.

This study was made possible by the generous scholarships from the National Research Fund (NRF) SARChI Chair of Archives and Public Culture, the Carl Schletwein Foundation as well as the National Arts Council of Namibia (NACN).

Special thanks to Dr. Nadine Siegert and Prof. Henriette Gunkel for the additional technical, moral and scholarly support.

Special thanks to artists, activists and cultural workers who worked with me in performing/recording *Ondaanisa yo Pomudhime* (Dance of the Rubber Tree) or contributing to Odalate Naiteke Practice-as-Research Programme. Julia Hango, Neige Moongo, Fellemon Ndongo, Lavinia Kapewasha, Gift Uzera, Fellipus Negodhi, Keith Vries, Tuli Mekondjo, Nesindano Namises, Joonas Leskelä, Ten Ten Negumbo, Lovisa Abner, Lamek Ndjaba, Ouma Paulina Hangara, Maspara Pantsula, Elrico Gawanab, Kresiah Mukwazhi, Samuel Batola, Chris Eiseb, Raymond Mupfumira, Vilho Nuumbala, Elisia Nghidishange, Nguundja Kandjii, Melchizedek Nehemiah, Joe Bamm, Ori, Veronique Mensah and Jackson Wahengo.

Additional thanks to Erna Chimu, Elemotho, Carlos Kambaekwa, and Gina Figueira. I am also thankful to Fenny Ndapewa Nakanyete, Timo Sheya and Nekulilo Neliwa for the memorable field trips to Daures, Spietzkoppe and Skeleton Coast. I would also like to thank Dr. Martha Akawa for collaborating with Ndapewa and me; Dr. Dag Henrichsen for reading my drafts and being an academic mentor to me.

Sincere gratitude to everyone (too many to mention) at the Archive and Public Culture research initiative (APC) for the rich feedback from the research development workshops. Special shout out to Rifqah Khan. I am also grateful for my Ph.D. cohort at the CTDPS, comrades Elikem Kunutsor, Tendai Mtukwa, and Kabi Thulo for all those support sessions.

I am also thankful to the staff that assisted and supported me at the following organisations/platforms. The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation's Music Library, National Archive of Namibia, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, Stolen Moments, ProHelvetia Johannesburg, Museum am Rothenbaum Kulturen und Künste der Welt, M.Bassy and the Research Center Hamburg's (Post-)Colonial Legacy.

My Cape Town comrades and friends, Asher Gamezde and Dr. Koni Benson for all the radical histories workshops and debating the national question in Katutura and Cape Town. I am also indebted to the following friends and comrades for the support and encouragement during my PhD process. Dr. Guillermo Delgado, Dr. Philip Luhl, Dr. Kelly Gillespie, Dr. Leigh-Ann Naidoo, Dr. Lovisa Nampala, Tuwilica Kahuika Dr. Luregn Lenggenhager.

This thesis was written during a difficult time of the Covid 19 pandemic which claimed lives of some of Namibia's seasoned artists and historians. I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of Prof. Minette Mans, actor David Ndjavera, historian Jeremy Silvester, and artist Cynthia Schimming who all loved and contributed to Namibian culture wholeheartedly.

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INTRODUCTION

Oudano as/and public culture

This dissertation situates the African concept of Oudano within an expansive framework for creating and archiving performance as a human practice. Oudano – an Oshiwambo and Rukwangali word – implies play, performance, and performativity as processes of enculturation. Culturally, Oudano is a term that is used to refer to a range of social activities for the purposes of rituals, learning, leisure, labour, sports, politics, religion, festivities, and commemorations. Oudano comes from the word *dana* (play), the verb being *okudana* (to play). Oudano thus refers to play-driven secular and sacred rituals that combine dance, music, drama, visual arts, and literature to facilitate everyday social functions (Mans, 1997 and 2017). In this thesis, I unpack different forms of Oudano practice (including my own) to argue for an understanding of Oudano as a fluid praxis of cultural production that is mobilised through play, publicness, protest, place, archive, sound, ritual, and pedagogy.

Oudano is embodied. This includes its orality, which is a central feature in indigenous music, dance, and storytelling practices. Oudano is ritualised behaviour, often taking various forms in Oshiwambo social events such as *efundula* (women's initiation rite); *Oshipe* (harvest); and *Oudano wokoluvanda* (moonlight dances). It is, however, important to note that Oudano is not a term limited to Oshiwambo as it also exists as a cultural practice in other languages and performances. It is through this trans-cultural view that I intend to experiment with the critical usefulness of this concept by exploring its capacity to function as a trans-local concept of (decolonial) cultural production. Oudano is also referred to as *Mutambo* in Shona, *Motshameko* in Setswana and *Dala* in Afrikaans slang. These terms are conceptual drivers of play that refer to a range of cultural performances as practised in everyday activities. Oudano is what contemporary performance and cultural studies scholars such as Agawu (2007), Mugo (1994), Chinyowa (2005), wa Thiong'o (1988), Amkpa (2010), Sirayi (2001 and 2003), hooks (1995), Desai (1990), and Mans (2017) have read as African and African diasporic performance practices as vehicles of historic, spiritual, political, and educational work. This scholarship on performance is situated in the fields of literature, theatre, musicology, choreology, and anthropology. Various works of these cultural scholars are referenced widely in this thesis to unpack Oudano as a practice of critical orientation. I am interested in **archives, sounds, and movements as objects/subjects** of Oudano and how they exist in relation to one another to make the critically generative work of Oudano possible.

Oudano privileges an ethos of communality and holistic participation that would generally be reflected in the feeling, structure, and content of its sound and movement. African music scholar Kofi Agawu (2007) refers to techniques such as call-and-response, repetition, and improvisation as expressions of that communal ethos among the Ewe of Ghana. These performance techniques and the ethos of communality traditionally characterise Oudano practices such as *oyiimbo* (songs) and *oidano* (dances). Namibian Professor of Ethnomusicology Minette Mans (2017) also highlights the notion of playing together in her discussion of “Women’s Moonlight or Entertainment Play” also known as Oudano *wokoluvanda* (Mans, 2017: 94). This Oudano practice – which involves dancing, drumming, singing, and clapping hands – is often performed at *oshana*¹ and other public spaces. This ethos of communality is also marked in the basic structure of several Oudano dances amongst the Aawambo. Mans (1997) writes:

In oudano, for example, the basic structure - rhythmic singing, foot and drumming patterns - is fixed. But the individual movements, the melodies and texts, the total length, these constantly change. A model score would, therefore, provide the fixed, recognisable aspects, while giving a general description of other forms which the event may take. (Mans, 1997: 123).

This structure is common in many African languages of performance and can be seen in *Mutambo*, as theorised by Kennedy Chinyowa (2005) in his Ph.D. study ‘Manifestations of Play as Aesthetic in African Theatre for Development’, Chinyowa defined *Mutambo* as play that denotes “...a form of human symbolic interaction performed for its own purposes and/or for the understanding of existence.” (Chinyowa, 2005: 5). Chinyowa uses the term *aesthetic* to read play as a phenomenon of public culture that is dynamic and plural. *Mutambo* is read for its discursive, participatory, and dialogical functions, which manifest as playful aesthetic (Chinyowa, 2005). Chinyowa draws our attention to the artistic features of play such as freedom, imagination, secrecy/disguise, space, rules, and enjoyment to understand Shona cultural expressions such as *ngano* (folktales), *detembo* (praise poetry), *mahumbwe* (children’s games), and *nyau* (masquerade) as forms of *Mutambo*.

Another performance concept that is entangled with Oudano is *Ngoma*, a southern and eastern African concept that refers to practices and objects relating to musical and healing contexts.

¹ “Flat sandy plains of Northern Namibia and Southern Angola make up Ovamboland, with water courses that bisect the area. These are known as *oshanas*. In the northern regions of the Ovamboland there are thick belts of tropical vegetation. The average rainfall in this area is around 17 inches during the rainy season. The *oshanas* can become flooded and sometimes submerge three-fifths of the region.” (Adrienne Berkstresser, <http://dice.missouri.edu/docs/niger-congo/Ovambo.pdf>).

The meaning of the term Ngoma varies in different siNtu languages and cultures. In Nguni languages, the word *ingoma* refers to a song or music, while in Oshiwambo the word *ongoma* refers to a drum. In Kiswahili, Ngoma refers to musical practices such as traditional drumming and dancing, *taarab* (sung Kiswahili poetry), and *dansi* (urban jazz) (Askew, 2002). Ngoma is also related to the Nguni word *ubungoma*, which is understood as divination. Mans (1997) argues that Ngoma offers a holistic, embodied, and integrated epistemic framework that is useful for reforming arts education in Namibia. She criticises the restricting Western canon of music theory while ethnographically reading the tonal systems, rhythms, timelines, patterns, forms, structures, movements, focal points, and designs of Ngoma as an artistic practice. Ngoma can also be noticed in the diverse dances practised in Namibia's Kavango regions. Namibian anthropologist Akuupa (2015) refers to these dances, some of which rely on the musical practice of 'daya ngoma' (play the drum). These Oudano practices are embedded in "traditional ritual dances, stories and old-time riddles [*sic*]" (Akuupa, 2015: 203). Akuupa writes:

The dances in eastern Kavango (*Kambembe, Rengo, Shikavedi, Thiiperu* and *Nyambi* respectively) are common among the *Vagciriku, Vashambyu* and the *Vambukushu* while *Mutjokotjo, Ukambe, Uyambi, Epera* and *Kambamba* are popular in the west among the *Vakwangali* and the *Vambunza*, and *Mahamba* is popular among the *Vanyemba*. The *Vakavango* dances are led by three drums, typically one bass and two tenors, the clapping of hands and singing by men and women. These dances were performed by the people of Kavango for celebration and thanksgiving after good harvests, deaths, rituals of passing and healing and to comment on any social situation of note. (Akuupa, 2015: 203).

I treat Ngoma as part and parcel of Oudano as a result of what it offers artistically, linguistically, and historically. This is to point out Oudano's layered meaning, which ranges from performance aesthetics to everyday performative encounters beyond the stage. The layered meanings of Oudano are what Chinyowa (2005) has described as being 'linguistic copulative' in his definition of *Mutambo*. Here, linguistic copulative refers to how the verb 'tamba', which means to play, is used to describe playing and performance in music, dance, rituals, sports, and other contexts. The notion of a linguistic copulative is not only meant to distinguish between performance aesthetics and everyday performativity, but it also seeks to show how entangled and intertwined performance and performativity are. This is the essence of Oudano. This entanglement is reflected in questions posed by African performance studies scholars Kene Igweonu and Osita Okagbue (2013: 3), who raise key questions regarding the relationship between performance and performativity. They write:

How does performativity differ from performance? Is performativity a central quality of African performance? How does the notion of performativity help us to understand ideas of presentation and representation in performance? Does performativity help in the understanding and presentation of the Self and Other? Is performativity a key element in the perception of theatre as culture in action, or of performance as a cultural process? Finally, is performativity a performance that does not end? (Igweonu and Okagbue, 2013: 3).

The word performativity is derived from language philosopher J. L. Austin's speech act theory and has been in use since the 1950s. Austin (1979) describes performative utterance as a linguistic practice that enacts the action it names. Austin posits that everyday speech does not only describe reality but rather that language holds the potential to change the social reality it describes (Austin, 1979). Igweonu and Okagbue's questions (above) indicate how performativity should not be understood as the opposite of performance but rather in relation to it, pointing up how Oudano is essentially both performance and performativity. As I demonstrate in this thesis, activism, gender, bodies, place, and historical objects are all performative in as much as they use performance. Doing Oudano is situated in the performativity of everyday life in its reliance on language and culture. Specific songs and dances are performed and associated with specific rites in which the real and unreal are both distinct and blurred. This is to say that Oudano as an African concept of performance intrinsically renders itself as functional and contemplative in public life. Performativity in Oudano refers to human activities and objects as acts of social behaviour and public life. Oudano practices are transferred and preserved through contested embodied processes of knowledge production. I see an important power in Oudano as lying in its capacity to build ways and create possibilities for people to figure out forms of public engagement that function to negotiate transformation and identify as well as address social struggles.

In the thesis, I engage with performativity in relation to archivality. The concept of the archive denotes the collection and usage of historical data, information, and knowledge that is preserved for current and future uses. The term 'archives' as used in this study therefore implies a range of tangible and intangible cultural objects, repertoires, and sites that are a result of historical and contemporary socio-cultural processes. These can be artworks, texts, recordings, and photographs that may – or may not – be part of formal institutional archives, or the performance meanings that are culturally transferred through embodied and spatial processes. I not only explore Oudano as a performance practice, I also engage with it as an archival practise. I do this with an objective of setting up a critical conversation between embodied, spatial, and institutional modes of archival work. These three modes of archival production are

not only distinct, but they also exist in relation to one another and hence are entangled. The archival relationship is characterised by a playful circulation of ideas, bodies, artwork, documents, and happenings in different places and over time. Although there is a relationship between these modalities of archiving, they do not exist as equals in terms of power dynamics inasmuch as they have different modes of circulation. Writing on the circulation of visual culture in public life, Hamilton, Modisane and Bester (2020: 43) suggest that circulation takes place through four phases namely, "...production, entry, take-up and archivality ...". In the archival praxis of Oudano that circulates between the identified three modes of archiving, these phases may happen simultaneously in the sense that the production process already constitutes moments of archive making.

Oudano is a practice of public culture that is signified by its nature of play and playing in performance and performativity. In this thesis, public culture is a broad term that includes a range of practices that relate to the arts, heritage, media, and social movements. Public culture is also marked by the notion of the public sphere which – as Marchart (2019) insists – is inherently political in its construction of 'the public'. Marchart argues that "Even if we narrow our concept of the public sphere to political and democratic public spheres, their plurality remains irreducible, constituted around a collection of equally irreducible political language games and divergent demands." (Marchart, 2019: 123). Hamilton and Cowling (2020) make a clearer distinction between different public spheres, which include the convened public sphere and the counter-public sphere, as well as those isolated publics that are part of the crisscrossing and intersecting capillaried networks. Hamilton and Cowling (2020) remind us that publicness has a close relationship to power in the sense of how ideas are appropriated in public, co-opted, and even captured by institutions such as universities, museums, the media, and the state. The term convened public sphere "...draws attention to what is being brought together into the space of the public sphere and in what forms. By implication, this opens up the question of what is not drawn in, or is sidelined." (Hamilton and Cowling, 2020: 27). This thesis therefore explores how public deliberations are mediated through Oudano – such as orature and protest performances – have historically created counter-public spheres that speak back to institutional constraints and exclusions, and continue to do so. This is not in any way to assume that Oudano does not occur in convened public spheres but rather to show how Oudano has the capacity to circulate ideas in the mobilisation of critical consciousness.

Oudano and national cultural memory

Public culture in independent Namibia is still pre-dominantly caught up in the colonial knowledge systems that have historically created a division between art and culture. This is reflected in the structures of the broader national culture, which is still entangled with its colonial past. Akuupa (2015) discusses performances at the State-sponsored cultural festivals – known as the *Annual National Culture Festival* – that are used for the purposes of nation building in post-colonial Namibia. On a national level, these festivals are understood to be essential for social cohesion, nation building, and reconciliation, and respond to the colonial heritage of cultural invasion. The division between art and culture has its roots in the cultural invasion by Western imperialism which deemed ‘fine art’ (high art) as an exclusively Euro-American tradition, thereby reducing African cultural production to ‘tribal crafts’ and therefore ‘low art’. This notion of ‘high art’ in Namibia is historicised by art historian Palumbo (2005), where she relates it to the imperial mission of civilizing the colony. The ‘fine art’ and ‘crafts’ split is further unpacked by veteran artist and cultural worker Joseph Madisia, who describes it as a divisive ideology that continues to be sustained in independent Namibia (Madisia, 2000).

For Namibia, this dichotomisation is historically reflected in the establishment of institutions currently known as the Namibian Arts Association (NAA), the National Art Gallery of Namibia (NAGN), the National Theatre of Namibia (NTN), and the National Museum of Namibia. These institutions were historically set up as disciplinary foundations, established for the purposes of imperial cultural and scientific activities. Both the NTN and NAGN were built by the then South African Association of Arts (currently the NAA), which has had a branch in Namibia since 1947. Namibian theatre historian Suzette van der Smit (2018) writes about the building of the Arts Theatre in 1960 and the Art Centre and Gallery in 1965 by the Association of Arts as cultural platforms that exclusively catered for English, Afrikaner, and German audiences. These venues were used for local and imported white and European cultural activities – such as ballets and operas – that were supported by the apartheid regime (van der Smit, 2018). The Owela Museum, which is part of the National Museum of Namibia, has a longer history than the NAGN or the NTN. The existing Owela Museum was opened in 1958 but the institution began as the Landesmuseum in 1907, established through a directive from the German Governor at the time. While there has been a degree of political transformation of these institutions in the last three decades, they have not fully committed themselves to decolonising their structures, part of the issue being that they continue being institutions that cater for an elite and urban audience. Moreover, these bodies of arts and culture are

continuously implicated in the politics of the nation state, even though they position themselves as public institutions.

Cultural theorist Raymond Williams' concept known as the structure of feeling is useful here to make sense of cultural fragmentation of Namibia. The structure of feeling refers to the gap between the official cultural discourse and the public response to that discourse in literary and other cultural texts (Williams, 1977). Williams highlighted the essential aspects of lived experience, consciousness, and affective knowledge as crucial and central to popular struggles and social articulations. Terence Zeeman (2004) reveals that Namibian culture has been demobilised and depoliticised after Independence and that artists in different spheres of the industry have subsequently created works that express a critical consciousness. Zeeman (2004) discusses some post-apartheid protest theatre productions and the politics they raised when they were first staged at Windhoek venues such as the Warehouse Theatre and the National Theatre of Namibia (NTN).

Zeeman (2000) also has highlighted the urgency for Namibian theatre to unearth and critically engage with post-colonial narratives. One example of this is the acclaimed play *The Show Isn't Over Until ...* by Vickson Hangula, staged in 1998 at the National Theatre of Namibia. This play represents one example of artists speaking truth to state power and questioning the deteriorating status of arts and culture in the new dispensation. The SWAPO-led² government's attempt to censor the play by labelling it as an embarrassment to the country points to the kinds of restrictions and limitations that the government has imposed on artistic freedom (Zeeman, 2004; Mans, 2003). *The Show Isn't Over Until...* is a published and award-winning play that highlights the plight of the struggling artist in post-apartheid Namibia. It is a historic text that serves as a rejoinder to the neo-liberal cultural ideology that characterises national culture (Zeeman, 2004; Mans, 2003). Its reception can also be understood in relation to patriarchal nationalism as articulated by Mans (2003) in her critique of Namibia's statehood. Mans writes:

The nature of Namibia's statehood, which is a patriarchal nationalism where the people are presided over by the typical male head of state, is constructed on a needs-driven democracy. The patriarch employs a father-like system of undisputed authority, supplying guidance, instruction, development and in some cases punishment and even censorship. Citizens, like children, have a somewhat limited power to criticise, and should they do so, they are accused of disloyalty and even traitorous behaviour. The bureaucracy is highly politicised, with the

² SWAPO is an acronym for South West Africa People's Organisation, one of the Namibian liberation movements and the ruling party of the Namibian government since 1990.

President of the state also being de facto leader of the ruling party. The smiling image of the President, Dr. Sam Nujoma, as ‘Father of the Nation’ characterises both state and SWAPO as a political party. (Mans, 2003: 117)

This concept of patriarchal nationhood also speaks to the heteronormative ethos embedded in the country’s everyday culture, sports, religious, and economic systems. Patriarchal nationalism is also held responsible for the silencing of certain narratives. Scholars of Namibian historiography such as Ellen Namhila (2017) and Jeremy Silvester (2015) have shed light on colonial gaps and nationalist silences in Namibian (post)colonial archives, speaking to a very common issue that confront institutional archives. Namhila’s study was an inquiry into the substantial gaps in the records of “native estates” at the National Archives of Namibia, while Silvester pointed to the restricted access to SWAPO’s archives of the liberation struggle. These archival silences, emphases, and exclusions are also highlighted by Stonehouse (2018) in her study on the politics of memorialisation at the Independence Memorial Museum (a branch of the National Museum of Namibia). This critique is also raised by Renzo Baas (2021) in his theorisation of contemporary artistic and activist work around the site of the Independence Memorial Museum. Baas notes that the “...absence of artistic and curatorial participation in a museum that was supposedly created to represent all Namibians is contrary to its initial aim. Its symbolic worth as an archive of Namibian history also means that it will, by default, become exclusionary...” (Baas, 2021: 15).

This gap is still visible in institutional archives as collections, documentation, and discourse about the development of local content in Namibian arts remain poorly supported. This is not to say that artists have not been making original and relevant work, but rather that Namibian arts scholarship and institutions have not adequately mapped, nor critically engaged with, local content development – including the decolonisation of arts and culture. One good example of this is the National Theatre of Namibia’s *Theatre Zone* (2007-2018) which aimed at staging original plays by emerging writers and directors. Although productions staged on this platform offered socio-political, economic, and historical imaginaries of independent Namibia, there is no research or critically reflexive account that specifically looks at these disjointed works of local theatre. I also argue that most of these plays’ forms and structures did not radically re-imagine and challenge the Western heritage of theatre making since they were predominantly scripted dramatic plays. We can therefore think of culture as fragmented in the new dispensation.

Indigenous concepts such as Oudano have not been widely explored nor used enough to transform the Namibian cultural-production landscape. There have been several institutional efforts to centre orature through isolated projects such as the 1997 *Namibia Oral Tradition Project* (NOTP), which produced television, radio, and theatre shows, as well as publications. However, these isolated efforts have received little attention in contemporary Namibian studies. The *Annual National Culture Festival*, organised by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, has been criticised for dealing with cultural heritage through ethnic and tribal categories, without a deliberate effort to blur the lines between art and culture. For example, it is organised separately from other cultural bodies such as the NTN and NAGN, which are historically white institutions that only catered for white settlers.

This challenge of a fragmented national culture relates to the cultural practice of nationalism as a two-fold issue. On one hand, the ‘official’ national culture is produced by the nation-state to construct ethnic identities that are rooted in the colonial era, as Akuupa (2015) reminds us. On the other hand, different communities have been historically engaged in processes of constructing their cultural performances as local efforts of nation building, healing, and memorialisation. These community-based practices are not all accorded an equal status in the official register of national culture. Baas (2021) argues that these exclusions “obstruct urgent processes such as remembrance and healing” (Baas, 2021: 16). I argue that the disciplinarity of Namibian scholarship is also responsible for this hierarchisation of national culture. For example, African orature in Namibian studies is predominantly studied in the disciplinary silos of ethnomusicology, literature, and history. Important contributions have been made over the years but the value of this work is underappreciated since it remains trapped within its ethnic and disciplinary categories.

A validation of Oudano and other African concepts of performance is necessary in order to challenge this ethnicisation and disciplinarity, since concepts are fluid in their practices. Furthermore, not only can Oudano restore ‘lost’ indigenous ways of knowing, but it also refuses the apparent division of value between ‘high’ and ‘low’ forms of cultural production, thus revealing the complexities through which Namibians negotiate this tension in their daily lives. Oudano also holds the potential to collapse all of these distinctions and this can be seen in how people perform their personhood and cultural belonging. This happens not only in the nation-state’s institutional contexts but can also be seen in community performances of cultural memory that are found all over Namibia.

I refer to the literary scholar Jekura Uaurika Kavari's (2000) theorisation of form and meaning in Otjiherero praise. Kavari unpacks a range of performances that include poetry, dance, and music performed by Ovaherero. Kavari points to the overlapping nature of different forms of poetic genres such as omutandu (praise-song about places, people, and animals) and omutango (praise-songs about people), which he describes as essentially synonymous (Kavari, 2000). Another poetic genre is otjiyano, which is specific in the sense that it refers to praise of the matrilineage of a person's paternal grandfather. Song-dances include ombimbi (praise/warrior's song), outjina (woman's dance), omuhiva (men's dance), and ondjongo (a communal dance performed by Ovahimba of Kaoko) (Kavari, 2000). All these genres and practices are forms of Omanyando, which is the term for Oudano in Otjiherero. Kavari posits that "...praises are a sort of concise encyclopaedic source of knowledge presented in a stylistic or poetic fashion." (Kavari, 2000: 18).

The above-mentioned performances of cultural memory are discursive texts that are intertwined with all kinds of social performances (Kavari, 2000). For example, ombimbi is performed on memorial occasions such as Otjiserandu (Red Flag Day) and at other annual commemorative events held by communities in remembrance of the 1904-1908 genocide.³ In his Ph.D. thesis 'Chains of memory in the postcolony: performing and remembering the Namibian genocide' performance studies scholar Pedzisai Maedza (2018) discusses Otjiserandu as an example of performance's contribution to the formation of cultural memory in post-apartheid Namibia. Maedza's study also looks at other contemporary performances staged outside Namibia that provide "a useful aperture to investigate the enduring contemporary role of German colonial genocide memory as well as its simultaneous reconfiguration." (Maedza, 2018: 9). These contemporary performances include *Black Box/Chambre Noir* by William Kentridge, Brett Bailey's *Exhibit B, SOLD!* By Themba Mbuli and the Unmute Dance Company as well as *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as Southwest Africa, From the German Südwestafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915* by Jackie Sibblies Drury.

³ Marion Wallace (2011). The tensions and conflicts that had prevailed between Africans and white settler colonialists in German South-West Africa led to the war of resistance which, in Namibian historiography, is known as the early resistance war. Africans in central and southern Namibia rebelled against the German colonial administration following the forced occupation of their land as part of building the German colonial empire. Africans lost their land and cattle and were consequently driven into the Namib and Kalahari deserts to die of dehydration and starvation. Ovaherero, Nama and San that survived this genocide were put in concentration camps and used as slave labour to support the colonial economy. By 1908, approximately 24 000 - 100 000 Ovaherero and 10,000 Nama people had been killed in what eventually became acknowledged as the first genocide of the 20th century. For more details about these historical events, see Paper 2 of this dissertation.

Another crucial reference is the doctoral study of Memory Biwa (2012) which looks at community practices such as the 'Gaogu Gei-tses' and 'Fees' developed by the /Khowese, Kai//khaun and !Gami#nun in southern Namibia to remember the colonial wars through 'narrative genres and public commemorations' (Biwa, 2012). All these performances of cultural memory discussed by Maedza and Biwa are acts of humanising, which rely on Omanyando and |Huru (Oudano in Otjiherero and Khoekhoegowab) respectively. They are local practices with philosophical orientations that require us to recognize the entanglements of the nation, memory, and performance. It is through these notions of entangled, shared and multi-directional memory-making practices that I situate Oudano as a critically useful concept.

Oudano, the body and archive(s)

The body is central in Oudano practice. This is to say that the work of Oudano is activated through bodies in conversations with other bodies. The body is therefore considered as a site of knowledge about the self, others, and their environment(s). Apart from the orature that is performed across various communities, embodied knowledge is also historically recorded in Namibia and Southern Africa's rich heritage of rock art. These ancient paintings and engravings visualise human and animalistic bodies as ways of mapping and documenting the immediate environments. I am interested in the ancient processes of making rock art and the portrayal of different and shapeshifting bodies in central and southern Namibian rock art as an indication of the important role of the body in indigenous performance cultures. This relates to what theatre scholar Marié-Heleen Coetzee (2018) has argued for as the significance of embodiment in the South African context. Coetzee argues that: "Without the bodily, we would not be able to organize ourselves in our environment: we will not know where/what we are, what/how we are learning or how we can communicate about our feelings, experiences and modes of being" (Coetzee, 2018: 1). Coetzee theorises the turn towards embodiment and embodied knowledge in performance pedagogy as a recognition of the failure of practices and discourses that uphold the mind/body duality (Coetzee, 2018).

As I have already pointed out in the previous section, I intend to expand the conventional understanding of what constitutes an archive to include the ephemeral embodied and spatial knowledge produced through the mobilisation of repertoire. Performance-studies scholar Awam Amkpa (2010) reminds us that African bodies are 'texts, methods and archives' –

because of the ways in which repertoire is used to store and transfer knowledge. Amkpa also posits that to read the body as archive is to come to terms with its complexity as a social text (Amkpa, 2010). Amkpa writes as follows:

I come from a continent where the body is spoken for. We don't have the luxury of stepping in and out of the textuality of the body. From that very moment when the body is born, that body is immediately named and sometimes mired with all kinds of social crisis. So, the body now finds itself having to do two things. One is to learn how to textualize the mythologies, the grand truths and moralities, and the other is to learn how to deconstruct them. For people who become politicized through the process, they begin to utilize their body as a way of thinking contrapuntally. So that for them every image, every text that's produced is produced to be deconstructed rather than to be canonized. (Amkpa, 2010: 83).

The process of de-construction that Amkpa discusses above is enabled by performance practices such as Oudano that make space for discursive engagement. For example, a recent series of site-specific performances – *The Mourning Citizen* (2016, 2019 and 2020) – which I co-curated with choreographer and educator Trixie Munyama, made space to initiate collective mourning and for coming to terms with Namibia's memories of genocide, apartheid, and neo-colonial violence. The performance was a response to the question of Namibia's delayed collective healing and how there has not been a space in the post-colony to address collective trauma and our shared heritage of violence on a national level. In Windhoek, *The Mourning Citizen* was performed by the Da-mâi Dance Ensemble at the Alte Feste, a fort that was a military centre and concentration camp during the period of German colonialism. The Alte Feste is currently a branch of the National Museum of Namibia in Windhoek.



Figure 1: 'The Mourning (2016), choreography performed by West Uarije, Justina Andreas, Gift Uzera, Thabiso Dube, Joanne Sitler, Patricia Amoomo, Joy Kaperu and Jasmine de Voss.' Photograph: Da-mâi Dance Ensemble.

The body was central in this work in the sense that the ensemble of dancers, musicians, choreographers and visual artists derived material from personal experiences and shared histories of grief, loss, and genocide. This meant that the composition of the work did not rely on reading bodies in colonial photography archives alone; we also sourced material from local oral historians such as the late Jarimbovandu Alex Kaputu. In the 2019 and 2020 performances, dancers such as West Uarije performed his own *omutango* as well as *Omitandu* (praise poetry) of several genocide memorial sites in Namibia. Visual artists Isabel Katjavivi and Vitjitua Ndjiharine's contributions to *The Mourning Citizen* (2019) led to the creation of artistic images of wounded, traumatised, 'broken' bodies as well as visuals of reconciling and the restoration of historically colonised bodies. Katjavivi made moulds of human faces that were placed on the ground throughout the foyer of Alte Feste to make a scene that reflected the place's memory of 'bones littering the land'. Ndjiharine contributed collages made up of images of colonised Africans and material culture captured in German colonial photography. Rensing (2022) posits that "Ndjiharine appropriates art's communicative effects and designs narratives about black women's shared colonial experiences that stretch across borders, celebrate women's dignity, agency and self-fashioning while simultaneously confronting photography's power to subjugate and exploit." (Rensing, 2022: 22). All these contemporary art practices not only reflect how bodies in Namibia are marked by historical violence but also show that they are

constantly in search of healing and the reconciling knowledges that have been historically erased.

To regard the body as archive is to pay attention to the body's potential and its tensions in relation to hegemonic archives. Art historian Tamar Garb poses the following questions in reflecting on the body's potential and tensions in contexts of archiving the 'in-between', which I read as the archival matter that is on the margins of hegemonic archives.

Whose archives were being preserved and destroyed? Whose bodies were being buried and exhumed? Whose histories were worthy of the name? Who was the keeper of memory and how did it manifest in material/symbolic form? And what was the artists', archivists' and curators' responsibility to preserve and protect, imagine and unearth, rewrite and rework the residues and remnants of history? (Garb, 2017: 117).

Garb reflects on these questions, which she draws from attending a 2013 gathering of cultural workers and scholars debating *The Archive: Static, Embodied and Practiced* at the W.E.B. Dubois Memorial Centre for Pan-African Culture in Accra, Ghana. I encountered these questions at the early stages of my Ph.D. research and they have been useful as tools that I could use during the process of interrogating the Oudano cases I write about in this thesis. One way of reading the thesis is to look at it as a way of 'archiving the in-between' that is attentive to Garb's question: "How can queer subjectivities be articulated in societies of prohibition and repression?" (Garb, 2017: 119). Garb argues that this "...requires digging deep, not only into the resources of the personal, but into the 'archive', that font of local knowledge..." (Garb, 2017: 119).

The ensemble of *The Mourning Citizen* was working with the archive of 'how do we mourn?', which allowed us to tap into and offer vocabulary that represented different Namibian and African cultures of mourning. These performances of mourning could be understood as part of what performance studies scholar Diana Taylor (2003) has theorised as 'acts of transfer' in her analysis of performances of cultural memory in the Americas. Taylor suggests that these acts have the power to transmit cultural identity and memory, relying on performance as an unconventional system of transfer (Taylor, 2003). Oudano can also be understood through a lens of live archives (such as the body and place) that exceed the formal institutional archival capacity to capture, categorise, and classify. While I find Diana Taylor's notes on performance and cultural memory to be relevant to Oudano, I argue that the conceptual nature of Oudano is expansive in the way that it blurs the lines between repertoire and archive but also addresses

the dichotomisation of the ‘official’ archive and the ephemeral archive. This thesis articulates this difference in the method that I have conceptualised by using Oudano. I have termed this method as archival frictions, an embodied process of assembling historic images, sounds, and experiences as well as using the imagination to play with them. ‘Playing’ implies an expression of intelligence which – in this thesis – means listening, performing, organising, curating, and theorising.

Oudano as a methodology of archival production does exhibit shortcomings as it is characteristically slippery and ephemeral. Scholars of performance studies such as Peggy Phelan (1993) and Rebecca Schneider (2001) have grappled with this question about the disappearance of performance and what that means for archiving. These scholars have questioned whether performance actually ‘disappears’ when we refer to its ephemerality, or whether it remains in ways that remain indecipherable and hence poses what Taylor (2003) has termed an administrative challenge for institutional archives. This arises from the premise that live performance is ephemeral, and its generative potential is embedded in its embodied presence. These international perspectives on the archivality of performance have offered thoughtful arguments on performance as an act of ‘appearing and disappearing’. They speak to how concepts such as Oudano inherently complicate presence and absence in the sense that the two can exist simultaneously and not necessarily as binaries.

The practice of holding is a method of embodiment and embodied knowledge production in Oudano. I understand ‘holding’ to be any literal and symbolic cultural practice that forges relation and intimacy. As I discuss throughout this thesis, holding is a way of containing a collective performance through collaboration. Holding can also refer to specific cultural ceremonies of strengthening familial and community ties – for example, Oshiwambo performative act of okukwata (which literally translates as ‘to hold’). I also apply the concept of ‘holding space’ as a critical reflexive language and method used by facilitators in theatre-making processes and social movements. All these examples of holding thus reinforce the haptic as a somatic experience. Writing on other sensualities, Rizvana Bradley argues that:

Our collective attempts to theorize the haptic as a visceral register of experience and vital zone of experimentation, direct us to somatic forms of knowledge attuned not only to contemporary bodies and spaces, but also to the worlds and imaginations that have both conditioned and surpassed the body in and of performance. (Bradley, 2019: <https://www.womenandperformance.org/ampersand/rizvana-bradley-1>).

Rizvana writes about hapticality as a concept that Harney and Moten (2013) describe as the “the feel that what is to come is here.” (Harney and Moten, 2013: 98). In their book, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, Harney and Moten theorise hapticality as an experience that is about feeling the other. They claim that “Though forced to touch and be touched, to sense and be sensed in that space of no space, though refused sentiment, history and home, we feel (for) each other.” (Harney and Moten, 2013: 98). Oudano as an embodied practice produces the haptic touch by the virtue of enabling performers and audiences to feel each other’s struggles and freedoms. In Oudano, bodies are in touch with each other, their material objects, and places, as well as ‘beings in other worlds’, too.

In conceptualising the body as archive, I am also interested in the archive of the protesting body as a reoccurring figure in Namibian theatre and performance history. Protest culture in Namibia has historically been shaped by various Oudano practices such as *toyi-toyi* and other forms of popular cultural expression. According to Alexander and McGregor (2021) “...*toyi-toyi* is a high-kneed, foot-stomping dance, rhythmically punctuated by exhaled chants and call and response”⁴ and it was historically performed by South African, Namibian and Zimbabwean liberation movements. The roots of *toyi-toyi* can be traced in these Southern African liberation movements’ cultural performances, which hybridised African musical and military cultures. These regional manifestations of *toyi-toyi* are evidence of Southern African cultures’ entangled histories. This shared sense of history is not merely political, it is also about the rhythmic and tonal structures of these performances, which borrow from the indigenous musicalities of Africa.

In the photograph below (Figure 2), the late Namibian photographer Tony Figueira captures *toyi-toyi* in action – a protest performance in 1989 during the transition from apartheid to democracy in Namibia. In the Tony Figueira archive, this photograph represents a continuity of his images from the 1988 nationwide student protests. As it can be seen in the physicality of these protesting students, there is an embodiment of social and cultural movements. On the other hand, I am inclined to think that their physicality also shows the sense of excitement and euphoria that continued through to 1990, when Namibia gained its independence from South African apartheid rule.

⁴ See <https://theconversation.com/the-incredible-journey-of-the-toyi-toyi-southern-africas-protest-dance-153501>).



Figure 2: 'The Youth (1989), photograph by Tony Figueira. Young Namibian protesters performing toyi-toyi during the transition period from apartheid to democracy.'

Toyi-toyi is a form of Oudano and is in turn part of the larger resistance culture that has shaped other forms such as protest theatre – that were performed in community theatres, halls, churches, schools, under trees and in streets (as depicted in Figueira’s photograph). Another notable contribution to this kind of community theatre in Namibia is the work of playwright and director Frederick Philander. Olifant (2010) posits that “Philander’s writing for the stage belongs to and issues from the ancient communal roots of theatre as a form of a symbolic yet frontal artistic engagement with society” (Olifant, 2010: 13). In Philander’s work, there is continuous engagement with the politics of the body in relation to historical displacement and contemporary struggles.

Namibian educator and theatre maker Laurinda Olivier-Sampson posed a key question in her 2016 Ph.D. study: “What happened to Protest Theatre after Independence?” (2016: 210). In studying the work of Aldo Behrens, Frederick Philander, the Bricks Theatre Collective, and Committed Artists of Namibia of the 80s and early 90s, Olivier-Sampson took note of shifts that characterised Namibian theatre trends and practices during this transitional period. Her study shows that artists felt that there was a need to shift from liberation struggle narratives to work that focused on development and nation building, in view of the fact that it was the post-

Independence era, heralding the new Namibia (Olivier-Sampson, 2016). I use Olivier-Sampson's question as a point of departure to make a connection between old and recent performance practices in Namibia and to look at how they contribute to protest culture and the larger project of decoloniality. Hence my focus on Oudano – as a Namibian performance artist-scholar whose work is centred around the body – and how it is a practise that invites spontaneous and unrehearsed participation, making it a transitory, elusive and layered process of embodying knowledge. Oudano is a fluid and inclusive concept that offers room for the deconstruction of contemporary performance practices, making it thus critically useful for knowledge production.

Oudano and spatiality/borders

In theorising Oudano, I apply the concept of audiotopia to explain the ways in which Oudano can be understood as a spatial practice. I adopt Josh Kun's (2005) notion of audiotopia to unpack the music and sonic productions of Oudano as audiotopic imaginaries. Kun (2005) frames audiotopia as a way to think about sound and music as spatial practices. Kun argues:

We should be thinking of pieces of music—be they songs, samples, lyrics, chords, harmonies, rhythms—as “audiotopias,” small, momentary, lived utopias built, imagined, and sustained through sound, noise, and music. This, of course, requires another adjustment, to think of music in terms of space and in terms of its spaces—the spaces that the music itself contains, the spaces that music fills up, the spaces that music helps us to imagine as listeners occupying our own real and imaginary spaces. (Kun, 2005: 21).

Josh Kun invites us to imagine how sound and music production in the Americas has been at the centre of spatial production and identity politics (Kun, 2005). The notion of audiotopia evokes the differences that make music and sound audible and not merely how sonic works harmonise and unite (Kun, 2005). For example, Kun suggests that geo-political borders are also aural, in the sense that they produce audio-spatial territories and communes (2000).

Audiotopias are plural and multi-vocal sonic registers that constitute as heterotopic spaces. Kun adopted Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia, which refers to cultural, organisational, and discursive spaces that are to some extent ‘other’– for example, troubling, intense, paradoxical, contradictory, or transformative (Foucault, 1967). Heterotopia is how place (the real space) and ‘placelessness’ (the virtual space) may (or may not) relate and generate layered

meanings that make the utopian place possible. I also draw on Jill Dolan (2001), who argues that performance will always be one of the ways in which utopia is possible. Dolan theorises utopia as “social reorganizations or the redistribution of wealth and cultural roles” for a radically different future (Dolan, 2001: 459). While she acknowledges the potential in what she terms ‘the utopian performative’, Dolan contends that “Utopias can be enforced at the expense of liberty, general consensus achieved by limiting choice. Fascism and utopia can skirt dangerously close to each other.” (Dolan, 2001: 547). Utopia can manifest as a practice of both freedom and coercion.

By framing audiotopia in relation to Oudano, this thesis also points to questions of mobility, migration and circulation, as mobilised through performance and visual culture. Here, I highlight audiotopia as well as other outcomes of Oudano as practices of borderlessness, because of their inherent potential to defy and resist borders whether they be real (for example, geopolitical borders) or imagined. In theorising this contested terrain of mobility, I am inspired by various African artistic works such as artist-scholar Mwenya Kabwe’s autobiographical choreopoem *Afrocartography: Traces of Places and all points in between* (2007). This performance piece – which has had several iterations in different sites in South Africa, Spain and The Netherlands – has been central in influencing my discursive and artistic impulses for thinking about the politics of spatiality. The performance of *Afrocartography: Traces of Places and all points in between* highlights the tension and contradiction of global urbanity that attracts and rejects migrants, both on the African continent and in the world (Kabwe, 2015). In 2013, I was part of the ensemble that performed *Afrocartography: Traces of Places and all points in between* at the Wits Theatre in Johannesburg. This was one of the productions that sparked my interest in spatial politics and migration, as well as in the site-specificity of performance.

I also draw from the late Namibian artist John Muafangejo’s linocut print *Angola and Southwest Africa/ Kunene Republic* (1976), which is discussed in the first paper of this thesis. In this print, Muafangejo reminds us of the performative nature of one geo-political border and in turn shows how African migrants have perceived colonial borders as artificial constructs. Muafangejo’s portrayal of historic places, wildlife, homes, and people in northern Namibia and southern Angola directs us to his imaginations and to the fact of local migrations, in spite of the historic border and the apartheid conditions that displaced many people living on either side of the border. The print is thus an imagination of ‘borderlessness’. I argue that the choreopoem *Afrocartography: Traces of Places and all points in between* and the linocut print *Angola and Southwest Africa/ Kunene Republic* are forms of Oudano that perform a crossing

of borders. Both works offer audiotopic possibilities as spatial practices that can be read and experienced through a method of close and deep listening.

Oudano, the radical imagination and queer epistemes

Oudano is not only a practice of the imagination; it also has the capacity to forge a radical imagination. Radical imagination relates to notion of counter-public spheres, as discussed in this introduction. Although radical imagination is not exclusive to counter-public spheres, it inherently refers to imaginaries that are either leftist, non-normative, and/or 'otherwise'. In indigenous or struggle terms, I draw on Amílcar Cabral's notion of returning to the source. Cabral claims that "...the question of a "return to the source" or of a "cultural renaissance" [*sic*] does not arise and could not arise for the masses of these people, for it is they who are the repository of the culture and at the same time the only social sector who can preserve and build it up and *make history*." (Cabral, 1973: 61). Cabral is writing from the African perspective of the struggle for liberation in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, highlighting the need for decolonial production of African history and heritage. African musicologists such as Kofi Agawu also point us to what I see as radical imagination. Agawu (2001) – who argues that African music cannot only be understood as merely functional – reminds us that African music is contemplative. Agawu directs us to the linguistic nature of African music in its compositions, insisting that there is a great deal of imagination and criticality (Agawu, 2001). In his problematisation of the functional attribute in African music, Agawu contends that, "To insist on the centrality not just of hearing but of listening is to hint at an approach to African music that takes the partnership with language seriously." (Agawu, 2001: 9). I find this to be a refreshing perspective as it helps me with grounding Oudano in its imaginative power as a praxis.

As already alluded to in a section of this introduction, the official Namibian 'material memorial landscape' is not inclusive in its memorialisation. It not only deliberately restricts the participation of most local communities, it also systemically excludes queer and radical feminist imaginaries of memorialisation. As Baas reminds us: "Counter-memories that remain within their specific communities are often at odds with the current material memorial landscape. Hence it is clear how the monopolisation of memorialisation becomes dangerous when it creates and perpetuates hierarchies of accomplishment." (Baas, 2021: 16). This also

relates to British cultural theorist Stuart Hall's (2006) notes on black popular culture, which cautions against the dichotomisation of different kinds of imaginations. Hall writes:

...black popular culture is a contradictory space. It is a site of strategic contestation. But it can never be simplified or explained in terms of the simple binary oppositions that are still habitually used to map it out: high and low; resistance versus incorporation; authentic versus unauthentic; experiential versus formal; opposition versus homogenization. There are always positions to be won in popular culture, but no struggle can capture popular culture itself for our side or theirs. (Hall, 2006: 108).

I therefore argue that by studying Oudano and related local concepts such as Dala and Zula, we can see value in the undisciplined nature of concepts. I explore this notion of undisciplined practice throughout this thesis.

Apart from performance theory, this research project also draws on African queer theory (Nyanzi, 2015; Macharia, 2009). I write this thesis as a queer black man whose performance practice is informed by a queer orientation. In this study, I define queer as a subject-position related to non-normative gender and sexuality. Queer is also used as a discursive orientation, however. I apply this theoretical position not only because of my subject-position but also because the archiving and pedagogies of Namibian cultural production have been predominantly heteronormative. There is a need to include both queer perspectives in the theorising and historicising of Namibian performance cultures.

Macharia (2009) and Nyanzi (2014) make important suggestions of queering African studies and thinking of queer in Africa as a way of being in relation. They respond to the outright historic erasure of the queer in African studies while critically reflecting on the invisibility of African queer scholarship. Macharia (2009 and 2015) particularly draws us to notions of African embodiment and personhood while reminding scholars of African queer studies to re-think and broaden their approaches with regard to method and archive. He takes note of the limited resources allocated to contemporary African queer studies for scholars, artists, and activists and how this hinders the development of African queer scholarship. Nyanzi (2014) points to the imperial implications of queer scholarship and languages while she embraces their critical and creative usefulness. Both Nyanzi (2015) and Macharia (2009) both call for more production of African queer scholarship by Africans on the continent.

Anzaldúa (1987) invites us to read hetero-patriarchal culture as part of the larger project of cultural invasion, as discussed by Paulo Freire (1972) in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This overarching gaze is visible in the way that dominant cultural memory and archives are

organised and performed in Namibia (Mushaandja 2021 and Mukaiwa 2011). Although not all cases discussed in this thesis are positioned as queer, I privilege the work of queering as both an ontological and epistemic claim. The thesis uses the theoretical frameworks of critical performative pedagogy, indigeneity, and queer-feminism to study selected cases of Oudano praxis and argues for the decoloniality of performance studies. Therefore, the thesis engages in a conceptual labour of mapping/translating/transgressing through this praxis.

The study at hand uses queer praxis (Nyanzi 2015; Anzaldúa, 1987; Macharia, 2009) as critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972; wa Thiong'o, 1986; Giroux, 1992) to read and generate notions of movement in selected historic practices of Oudano, as well as my own. I particularly locate Oudano in relation to queerness since they have the potential to complement and challenge one another. The thesis explores Oudano's potential to shift between **tradition and transgression** while operating as both **rehearsal and revolution**. It attempts to identify the features of Oudano that flow from the (historical) mobilisation of archives that are texts, recordings, memories, cognitive (visual, aural and oral, or bodily), or contained in repertoire or landscape. It does this to alert us to what the focus on an indigenous concept of this kind enables us to bring into view, which the generalised and universalised concept of performance smooths out and possibly effaces.

In particular, the thesis seeks to explore the following research questions: How does Oudano, intertwine, complicate, expand, mediate, or invite us to re-imagine the relationship between archivality and performance? How does it mobilise the work of decoloniality and indigeneity? How does it expand the terrain of cultural production to achieve the objectives of critical consciousness and radical imagination?

‘Archives and repertoire’: an undisciplined study

This dissertation is a collection of six papers, divided in two movements. The first movement is made up of three papers: theoretical and practical explications of Oudano as a basis for making and studying performance. The case studies that I discuss in this first movement range from visual to sonic archives as well as my own performance project. I theorise my thinking and the playful process of embodied and spatial practice. I read the cases as practices of Oudano with the intention of demonstrating its epistemic potential to collapse ethnic, national, and disciplinary borders. The first paper is a visual culture study of Oudano as reflected in the work

of Southern African visual artist John Muafangejo, as well as selected rock art paintings in Dâures and #Igaingu, Erongo Region, Namibia. I begin with these cases because I intend to show how visualisations are both acts and documentations of Oudano. This is done to imagine and theorise what I propose as a post-Muafangejo movement, which interrupts periodisation in Namibian art histories. This trans-temporal movement pays attention to cultural production in the decolonial era in conversation with Muafangejo's work and that of his contemporaries, including the rock art from the distant past. Although the post-Muafangejo movement is meant to direct us to recent cutting-edge performance practices that are discussed in the papers that follow, this paper dwells on selected prints by Muafangejo and ancient rock paintings. This is done by showing visual archival traces of transgression as embodied in both the making and content of the prints and paintings. This visual history is highlighted as a gap in Namibia's performing arts education, a result of established disciplinary conventions. This first paper explores themes of spirituality, prayer, radical imagination, ritual, love, critical intimacy, and borderlessness as the embodiments of Oudano in Muafangejo's work. The paper further looks at the contested politics of representation and the ownership of visual history.

The second paper unpacks the conceptualisation and performance of my Practice-as-Research (PaR) project *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* (Dance of the Rubber Tree), a site-related performance that took place in museums, archives, libraries, theatres, and monument sites in Africa and Europe between 2018 to 2020. The performance sets up a critical conversation between colonial archives and the embodied-spatial archives by using Oudano as method of production and inquiry. *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* came out of an artistic residency during which I worked with a colonial photography archive housed at Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt in Hamburg, Germany. It is a ritualised performance that responds to the systemic erasure embedded in the colonial and nationalist archives. It draws on generative notions of erasure to confront the specifically colonial erasure reflected in the photography collection. The work proposes a form of erasure that I argue to be restorative. This form of erasure references materialities such as omudhime (the rubber tree), which is a significant and symbolic cultural object for me. The performance also used salt, poetic text, a spear, marula seeds, stones, costume, fire, flowers, and sound as additional materialities, in order to establish this archival contestation. Performed in Germany, Switzerland, Namibia, Cameroon and South Africa, *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* is a project of queering the archive and working towards restorative justice. It does this by bringing queer voices to the forefront and inviting the audience to think queerly about how to deal with colonial collections.

The third paper explores historic and contemporary ‘audiotopic’ imaginaries of **Kgala!Namib Jazz and Othered Struggle Sonics**. It offers a reading of the hybridised musical practices of Namibian musicians Ben Molatzi, The Dakotas, Carlos Kambaekwa, the Outjo Singers, Erna Chimu, and Elemotho as part of the long and overlooked historical process and development of jazz and struggle music in Namibia. This reading also includes reference to Hidipo Nangolo’s *Skymaster: Township Jazz Pioneers* (2008), a documentary film that offers a genealogy of township jazz during apartheid in Namibian urban settings. This paper maps how the music recorded and performed by these artists in both apartheid-era and independent Namibia has made claims to space and land, and as a result travelled across place and time. The paper locates Namibian jazz and struggle music practices in such a way as to deliberately shift them away from the ethnomusicology that has been central in studying Oudano musical practices in Namibia studies. I posit that the mobility of these artists and their music reflects their self-determination, critical consciousness, and practices of border crossing. The paper traces this music in indigenous performance practices such as /Gais, Xoma and Tsutsube.

The Second Movement is a collection of papers that unpack Oudano praxis in curating performance and trans-historical work. In the paper **Ons Dala die Ding by Odalate Naiteke**, I reflect on curating and organising a public art initiative, *Operation Odalate Naiteke*, for different publics in the township of Katutura and elsewhere in the city of Windhoek. This paper suggests the notion of ‘the curative’ as an ethos of heightened and radical care work in curating public art and trans-historic work in Katutura. As a practice-led paper, it is one that attempts to blur lines between performing and curating by referencing traditional Oudano practices that challenge this dichotomy. I reflect on the experience of organising *Odalate Naiteke* and witnessing performances by local artists Lamek Ndjaba, Paulina Hangara, Maspara Panstula, and Lovisa the Superstar in Katutura that brought together art and history. I show how holding space and intimacy are crucial aspects of developing the curative as an important consideration in curatorial practice.

The paper **Hoeing through Remnants of Onghili ya Nashima** is a close and deep listening to the Oudano practices of the late Namibian singer, poet, historian and performer Nanghili Nashima. I suggest that her work be read as African queer feminist intellectual praxis because it is an imagination and practice of freedom. While her orature and embodied practice constitutes theorising and historicising liberation, she is not included in Namibia’s official register of artists of the liberation struggle. Her music is not just traditional Oudano, but rather suggests and performs transgression in her critique of Christianity, normative heterosexuality,

patriarchal nationalism, slut shaming, and black elitism. The thesis presents Nanghili Nashima as a trans-local figure by doing a close and deep listening to her songs and live performances currently archived at the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation's music library. Nanghili Nashima's tradition of intellectual work took place in an everyday context, enabled by the Oudano communal ethos of singing and dancing together with other women. Her autobiographical literature looks at migration, labour, and sexuality – citing her lived experience as a way of orientating herself in her communities as a traveller. Oudano enabled Nanghili Nashima to cite places, people and ideas and become a gender non-conforming woman. She used her imagination to negotiate and take up space through performance, a practice of speaking truth to power.

The last paper of this dissertation is titled **Protest and Indigeneity in Contemporary Performance**. This paper looks at additional performance, visual and sound works that were curated for *Odalate Naiteke*. I reflect on the performance work *I AM HUMAN* by Julia JuliArt Hango; *What's Love Got To Do With It?* by Neige Moongo; and *theKhoest* by Nesindano Namises. In addition to these performances, this paper also reflects on the protest action by the Namibian youth-led *#ShutItAllDown* movement against sexual and gendered violence (SGBV), which emerged countrywide in October 2020. The paper situates the performances happening in the contexts of *Odalate Naiteke* and the *#ShutItAllDown* movements as youth-led decolonial imaginaries that can be read through lenses of queer-feminism and indigeneity. I argue that these new performances are radically different in their tactics of speaking back to patriarchal nationalism while calling up indigenous traditions. I theorise that these recent performance practices are becoming more visible as they emerge from the cracks and margins of nationalist archives, moving national discourse towards the global decolonial turn.

NOTES ON METHOD

Oudano as method

Locating Oudano as a concept that is publicly practiced as both performance and archivality suggests that there are countless methods in which it manifests. Throughout the process of my doctoral research, I have been interested in how Oudano has been historically used as a method and how this could possibly inform my performance and curatorial practices. The assemblage of cultural production that this thesis theorises different tools that facilitate the making of sacred rites, cultural discourses, and social movements. This reminds us that Oudano is an epistemology with a strong pedagogical impulse. For example, most the performances discussed in this thesis are loaded with social messages mobilising critical consciousness. It is this Oudano value of ‘learning and culture’ that I draw on in crafting my own method for my practice and research. The method I set out for this thesis is a process of listening to sound recordings of Namibian orature and reading performance in ancient and contemporary visualities. It also includes making performances as well as organising and curating performances and other practices of public culture in my home township of Katutura.

My scholarly orientation of critical pedagogy is crucial here as I theorise my process of ‘playing’ which takes multiple forms of performing/curating and writing. This process produced what critical pedagogues have termed as praxis. The thesis is therefore exploration of how and why we must look at Oudano as a praxis in its method(s) of theorising in practice or theorising that which has been practiced. Conquergood’s (2002) theorising of performance studies speaks to the heart of what I posit as Oudano praxis, highlighting its practical, theoretical and reflexive implications. He writes:

Performance studies is uniquely suited for the challenge of braiding together disparate and stratified ways of knowing. We can think through performance along three crisscrossing lines of activity and analysis. We can think of performance (1) as a work of imagination, as an object of study; (2) as a pragmatics of inquiry (both as model and method), as an optic and operation of research; (3) as a tactics of intervention, an alternative space of struggle. Speaking from my home department at Northwestern, we often refer to the three a’s of performance studies: artistry, analysis, activism. Or to change the alliteration, a commitment to the three c’s of performance studies: creativity, critique, citizenship (civic struggles for social justice). (Conquergood, 2002: 152).

By approaching performance this way, we also reconcile multiple modes of cultural and historical processes that are embedded in the principles of Border crossing, ownership, agency, self-determination, and critical consciousness as put forward by critical pedagogues such as Paulo Freire (1972) and Henry Giroux (1992). I draw from the concept of ‘Borderlands’ as a conceptual framework which connects to how Oudano works as a pedagogical framework. Borderlands studies as theorised by Giroux, (1992) and Anzaldúa, (1987) have pointed us to the politics of dis/location and dis/placement which have been useful in framing both critical pedagogy and cultural production. Anzaldúa’s (1987) writing conceptualizes the notion of Borderlands along the lines of critically engaging and transgressing geographic, ethnic, spiritual and gender borders as a queer-feminist praxis which is useful for both learning and culture. These theorisations are useful for this study as they potentially speak to the pedagogical nature of popular culture as highlighted by Giroux (1992). In Giroux’s discussion on decolonising the body co-authored with Roger I. Simon (1992), they ask the questions below to help us think of varying and shifting forms of popular culture as ways of border crossings.

What are the historical conditions and material circumstances within which the practices of popular culture are pursued, organized, asserted and regulated? Do such practices open up new notions of identities and possibilities? What identities and possibilities are disorganized and excluded? How are such practices articulated with forms of knowledge and pleasure legitimated by dominant groups? What interests and investments are served by a particular set of popular cultural practices and critiqued and challenged by the existence of such? What are the moral and political commitments of such practices, and how are these related to one’s own commitment as a teacher [and if there is a divergence, what does this imply]? (Giroux and Simon 1992, 202).

Critical Pedagogy frames praxis as a meeting point of theory, practice and critical reflection. Giroux’s (1992) writing on Border Pedagogy, particularly on decolonising the body, encourages educators to consider both meaning and pleasure as useful sources of a transformative education. He not only suggests that we read a range of popular cultures as pedagogical vehicles, but he also notes that border crossing as an act of a larger intellectual project is a necessary political project based on post-modern, Feminist and Marxist principles. I read both Giroux and Anzaldúa as critical pedagogues advocating for critical consciousness, culturally and pedagogically, as also suggested by Freire (1972) and (wa Thiong’o, 1986).

I am a classically trained actor, playwright, and singer with a background in the academic discipline of drama and theatre but over the years, my performance practice has turned to Oudano as an approach of re-defining my language and vocabulary for making performance.

Although my classical training that began in my undergraduate studies at the University of Namibia has shaped my work, I have had to revisit my earlier performance education which took place in the formative years of growing up between Katutura and Owambo. Oudano practices such as family and community rituals, street games, Ondilimani⁵ and school choir have been central to my early performing arts education. These ‘informal’ performance practices have been essential in re-imagining my performance practice beyond my classical and disciplinarian training. It is for this reason that Oudano is interesting for me because of the opportunities it offers an undisciplined undertaking. Here, the notion of an undisciplined study is a deliberate shift from the disciplinary foundations of drama, music and visual arts. It does not imply an interdisciplinary project but rather a study which collapses and blurs the academic disciplinary lines. This thesis achieves this by demonstrating Oudano’s broad nature and refusal to fall in the neat lines of academic disciplines.

The arts and crafts split discussed in the earlier section of the introduction are deeply reflected in Namibia’s arts education system. Again, this can be attributed to disciplinarity as a long-standing tradition that was initially set up as part of the colonial project. Part of being a classically trained artist is rooted in the western and colonial tradition that has largely excluded indigenous concepts such as Oudano and the pedagogical potential of such. The cases that I discuss in this thesis all reflect different pedagogical potential in their various contexts of play. I theorise this pedagogical potential as critical consciousness and radical imagination located playing on the streets, at homes and in museums, art schools, theatres, archives as well as monument sites. I explore this potential by reading selected cultural productions from a queering cultural discourse point of view of in Namibia. This subject matter has received very little attention in Namibian arts pedagogies.

Practice-as-Research and Archival Research

This thesis uses two research methodologies namely, Practice-as-Research (P-a-R) and Archival Research to study different praxes of Oudano in their historic and contemporary forms. In this thesis, Oudano is treated as both method and subject of inquiry. As articulated in the earlier sections of the introduction, the method of inquiry includes listening to sonic and

⁵ Oudano practiced in form of cultural troupes that predominantly perform Oshiwambo traditional songs and dances promoting SWAPO’s political ideology. This brand of Ondilimani was developed in exile. I performed regularly in children’s troupes at independence celebrations in the 1990s.

visual archives to inspire a practice of performing, organizing, and curating cultural production. This repeated engaged practice of listening and playing and vice versa is what I have used to frame the method of archival frictions. Different events, practices and objects are put into conversation with each other to theorise the concept of Oudano and explore its epistemic potential.

I use the term archival frictions to describe an engaged practice that relies on the conceptual usefulness of frictions and intimacies. In exploring frictions, I reference African queer theorist Keguro Macharia's (2019) use of Frottage as a metaphor and method that takes from the aesthetic and libidinal practices, denoting the usefulness of the artistic and the sexual for imagining and creating new worlds. Macharia theorises Frottage as:

Frottage tries to grasp the quotidian experiences of intra-racial experience, the frictions and irritations and translations and mistranslations, the moments when blackness coalesces through pleasure and play and also by resistance to antiblackness. More than simply proximity, it is the active and dynamic ways blackness is produced and contested and celebrated and lamented as a shared object. It is bodies rubbing against and along bodies. Histories rubbing along and against histories. It is the shared moments of black joy and black mourning. (Macharia, 2019: 7).

Macharia's theorizing Frottage points us to the uses of the erotic and intimacy to read and imagine relatedness amongst African and Afro-diasporic bodies and histories. This kind of reading allows these subjects to come into proximity with one another through touching and rubbing, consequently producing irritations and/or pleasures. Archival frictions draws from this relational ethic and speculative practice to frame a performance-archival method of critical inquiry.

Practice-as-Research is relatively new in Southern African academies and it holds a lot potential for theatre and performance pedagogies (Baxter, 2013). Fleishman (2010) highlights that performance has always been a great knowledge paradigm for Africa. He also adds that performance is an epistemology that facilitates correlations between the worlds of material objects/places and ideas/sentiments. This correlation is achieved by what Fleishman calls "vantage point of the body-subject and through the body-mind in active engagement with the world" (Fleishman, 2010: 118). Here, Fleishman is referring to P-a-R's methodological potential to blur lines that make up the dualities of subject/object, head/body as well as theory/practice. This is reflected by Østern et al (2021) who describes the alternative processual nature of performance-based and other creative research methods.

“A performative research paradigm, then, ultimately produces movement. It moves from trying to stabilise knowledge towards emphasising knowledge as fluid and complex knowledge-creation; from language to languaging, from meaning to meaning-making, from text to body, affects and materialities; from subject, identity and being to relations, entanglements and becomings; and from something pre-existing to something being enacted. In this, it does not make sense to talk about development, growth or progression. All there is, are new differences, new possibilities, new creations. And as knowledge is be(com)ing created, so is the researcher, and all other units in a typical (traditional) research design.” 2021:12.

I draw on this growing methodological tradition of performance studies as an artist-activist-academic interested in the production and circulation of Oudano. My practice as a cultural worker and theorist interested in social/cultural movements in Namibia is what brought me to this inquiry and making of a conceptual research project. I framed this thesis as a 4-year project that conceptualizes Oudano as a praxis that expands the terrain of performance and popular culture differently from how it has been studied in post-apartheid Namibia. I refer to the questions below posed by Keguro Macharia (2020) in his Twitter thread on concept making, which I find very useful. Macharia posits that these questions as a guideline to understanding that concepts are not apolitical nor neutral. Macharia questions;

I think one of the most tedious AND necessary things to figure out is exigency for conceptual work. Why was a particular concept or method developed? What was it engaging? What work was it supposed to do? What work did it do? Why is it still necessary? Why might it be exhausted? Which people did it assemble? What happened when they assembled? If the concept or method is lost, what caused that loss? What lessons can be taken from the history of that concept or method and who it assembled and how it assembled? Macharia (07 Sep 2020).

These are important questions that invite critical reflection on theorising and practicing concepts. Macharia’s questions point this thesis’ theorisation which is based on the conceptual usefulness of Oudano in my practice as an artist who is ‘obsessed’ about archival production. The thesis also looks at ways in which other artists’ work in Namibian history and contemporary art make use of or reflect Oudano and related concepts of performance. I gather colonial photography, sound and music recordings, material culture, lino-cut prints and live performances to inform my conceptualisation of Oudano in this academic project.

How hygienic are Practice-as-Research and Archival Research?

My proposal to use of P-a-R methodology and particularly Performative Writing faced an administrative challenge during the early stages of my research. Performative Writing is a method of academic writing that is widely practiced by many practitioners of P-a-R. This textual tradition is inspired by Austin's (1972) linguist notion of a performative utterance, and it is characterized by Della Pollock (1998) as 'evocative, metonymic, subjective, nervous, citational and consequential'. Performative Writing is queer in the sense that it exceeds the normative writing methods and therefore collapses the boundaries imposed by these dominant scholarly traditions. The challenge I faced in my PhD programme included a reluctance from the Centre of Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies (CTDPS) and hence required me to further justify in my research proposal why this method Performative Writing should be accepted by the doctoral board committee. I found this to be contradictory to the school's postgraduate tradition of P-a-R. Once this tension had been resolved between myself and the PhD requirements, I struggled with implementing this method of Performative Writing. I had not been able to apply it to my thesis writing because the PhD environment was not enabling enough. This has been a notable methodological limitation to this study.

I soon realized that even though the postgraduate curriculum at UCT's Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies offers the option of P-a-R, a lot of the university's academic culture remains rigid and canonical. This challenge revealed that there was a split between the artistic and the academic which inherently defeats the ethos of P-a-R. This is because Performative Writing uses the artistic as the academic vocabulary, and its legitimacy is often questioned in many academic environments. I experienced the same challenge during my MA research at the University of Namibia's Performing and Visual Arts department several years ago. The PhD course at CTDPS is yet to reflect on its structural issues around privileging epistemic forms that are rooted in sustained reading and writing. I had to take my methodological challenge into consideration and reflect on the question of how I (practitioner-researcher) could negotiate some of the PhD requirements, much of which are not open radically open to Oudano as a method of P-a-R?

In the introduction to his book *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization*, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) advises Africa 'Seek ye epistemic freedom first'. Here, he is speaking in the context of genocides, cultural and scientific imperialism that has historically plagued the African continent and the global south at large. My methodology in this PhD is therefore geared towards the work of epistemic justice and hence the conceptual

approach of doing Oudano as a praxis. I understand epistemic justice to be an end goal of decolonial thought and practice. Ndlovu-Gatsheni writes that, "...epistemic freedom speaks to cognitive justice. Epistemic freedom is fundamentally about the right to think, theorize, interpret the world, develop own methodologies and write from where one is located and unencumbered by Eurocentrism" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018: 3). In another paper, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019: 481) writes about the 'dirty roots' of research methodology as it is predominantly established and reinforced by Euro-American scholarship. He refers to the "anthropo-ethnological pseudo-scientific colonial methodology" as the dirty roots of research methodology. It is because of this history that I turn to Oudano in arguing for it as an African epistemology.

Speaking of dirty roots of research, one can refer to histories of grave robberies and looting human remains being the norm in contexts of cultural and scientific imperialism. Studies by Hillebrecht (2019) and Legassick and Rassool (2000) show different cases of human remains being looted from Namibia by German colonial scientists for colonial sciences as early as 1885. These human remains were sent to countries such as South Africa and Germany, and later to others such as the United States of America, Switzerland and Austria (Hillebrecht, 2019). These are few of many historic examples of how Southern Africa has been playgrounds for scientific racism. Colonial projects have been enablers of disciplinarity in contemporary Namibian and South African academies. I am attentive to this historic scientific practice of human remains collections and the connection between epistemicide, disciplinarity and the production of ethnicity. Scholars of Namibian historiography Silvester, Wallace, and Hayes (1998) remind us that there was a long process of ethnic formation between the 18th and 19th century in Namibia that African communities had to adapt to. This process was formalized by explorers, traders, missionaries as well as colonial officials and scientists. The above-mentioned history of human remains collection in Namibia also serves as a reminder that embodiment and embodied knowledge of colonized people has suffered extermination in literal and symbolic terms. To turn to the body as a methodological choice is to confront this historic erasure. I draw on Pelias (2005) who writes, "Moreover, the self can be a place where tensions are felt and uncovered, a place of discovery, a place of power, of political action and resistance. One often knows what matters by recognizing what the body feels." (Pelias, 2005: 420).

It is against this background that I chose to reflect on what it means to be 'researching' today, using an embodied practice to do decolonial work. In pursuing this thesis, I posed the question,

how hygienic is P-a-R, as an artistic, archival, and activist methodology? As I battled with the emerging ethical and methodological issues that emerged from the process. These issues are addressed from time to time in the following six papers which delve into Oudano, unpacking its rich conceptual nature.

THE FIRST MOVEMENT

PAPER ONE: TOWARDS A POST-MUAFANGEJO MOVEMENT

Introduction: Muafangejo and movement formation

This paper theorises the post-Muafangejo movement, which I conceptualise as a critical performance and visual culture that is rooted in genealogies of radical imagination and movements for social justice. This movement is conceptually framed through Oudano as one method in which the post-Muafangejo movement can be read, theorised and mobilised.

I refer to the movement as post-Muafangejo for many reasons, which I discuss in this paper. The name and work of John Muafangejo has been at the centre of Namibian art histories and discourses both during and after apartheid. John Ndevasia Muafangejo was prolific Southern African artist born on 5 October 1943 in Etunda lo Nghadi, Owambo, Southern Angola. Muafangejo worked as an artist and received his art education from Evangelical Lutheran Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa between 1967–1969 (Mtota, 2015 and Palumbo, 2005). Muafangejo's work became widely known in the world of contemporary art following several international prizes and exhibitions since the 1970s (Mtota, 2015 and Palumbo, 2005). His work continues to be widely exhibited and written about even after apartheid. His work such as *Hope and Optimism* (1984) was also used in international solidarity campaigns against apartheid such as *Free Mandela concert* (1988) in London, United Kingdom.

Muafangejo is one of the few artists in Namibia whose work is thoroughly documented and widely known to international audiences. While his legacy continues to be celebrated, it is also highly contested. Muafangejo's work and narrative is often presented by art businesses and historians as a single Black successful artistic practice to emerge from apartheid Namibia. One of Muafangejo's contemporaries, veteran Namibian artist Joseph Madisia is critical about this single narrative. Madisia challenges historical accounts in publications such as *Art in Namibia* (1997)⁶ which profiled Muafangejo as the first Black professional artist in the late 1960s. Madisia points to the erasure of Black artists such as John Mohlankana who had already been

⁶ Published by the National Art Gallery of Namibia which was still being co-administered together with the Namibian Arts Association.

working in both Namibia and South Africa before apartheid (Madisia, 2015). Namibian art histories tokenized Muafangejo's name and work; ignoring and subsequently erasing the artistic contributions and efforts of other artists. Moreover, it is also important to note that the memory of Muafangejo's work and narrative is kept for a selected few, elitist scholars, curators, artists, and collectors. Despite his successful contribution to Namibia's visual culture and independence, his work is not thoroughly studied in the Namibian curricula in art, cultural heritage, and history of public schooling.

Palumbo's (2005) discussion of Namibian art and nationalism at the beginning of apartheid uses narrow definitions of fine art discourses. Palumbo writes;

Although black artists produced numerous functional traditional objects, these works of art lacked iconographic content that addressed the colonial experience. Throughout this period of nation building, [aristocratic nationalism, 1945-1959] black artists lacked exposure to fine art, received no fine art education, and were disallowed access to white owned galleries and exhibitions venues, therefore; they did not participate in the white dominated fine art visual discourse. (Palumbo, 49-50: 2005).

This is historically inaccurate because it only relies on western definitions of fine art. It does not account for the black artistic practices and productions outside the 'white sphere' and how they spoke back to aristocratic nationalism. I claim here that the 'white sphere' discourse cannot be used to conclude that "black artists lacked exposure to fine art, received no fine art education" because it is not inclusive. This analysis only relies on the canonical understanding of fine art. Although Palumbo's (2005) PhD study titled *Alienation, Consciousness, and Reclaiming: The Trajectory of the Visual Arts in Namibian Nation Building* makes significant contributions to local art histories, it does not necessarily include expand on other cultural work produced in informal and marginalised zones.

Today, there is a huge printmaking tradition in Namibia that has been influenced by the work of Muafangejo and his contemporaries such as Josef Madisia, Helena Brandt, and Trudi Dicks. There has been a rise of young artists making prints in post-independence Namibia. They used different mediums such as linocut, cardboard, etching and even extending their printmaking practices into mixed-media mediums. These artists have been predominantly trained at the John Muafangejo Art Centre and the College of the Arts (Mvula, 2016 and Rogge, 2016). The genealogy of this rich visual tradition can also be traced in our changing traditional textiles, wood carvings, pottery, rock art and basketry over time. Although these cultural productions

are not read as prints as such, their aesthetic and technical influences are visible in the printmaking tradition. The art collections of the Namibian Arts Association, John Muafangejo Art Centre and National Art Gallery of Namibia own huge volumes of prints that use iconographies derived from these aesthetic traditions.

In an introduction to an article on the legacy of printmaking in Namibia, Rogge (2019) notes that printmaking is a dominant and favoured medium of creative expression amongst young contemporary Namibian visual artists. While acknowledging radical usefulness of printmaking in Namibia as a Muafangejo continuity, Rogge also points to the male domination visible in these national art collections. Although the local genealogy of printmaking in Namibia suggests a grassroots praxis, the culture is predominantly art-school and gallery-based. This post-independence printmaking tradition is not widely appreciated, studied and distributed in the Namibian public imagination. More needs to be written about the life and work of other artists that are Muafangejo's contemporaries and predecessors. This also includes new cultural production that emerged post-1987, taking from and building onto the Muafangejo tradition of printmaking. This might be in terms of form, content and positionality.

The year 1987 is significant here because it is the year Muafangejo passed away and it is also the year I am born. This personal connection is also significant because it is the transition period leading to 1990, the year Namibia gained its independence. Thus, my theorizing frames the post-Muafangejo movement as one that is trans-temporal- in the sense that it directs our attention to moments and objects of cultural production that are marked with different registers of time. Hence, the 'post' in post-Muafangejo refers to Muafangejo's work as cultural objects of the past in as much as it is artwork that are still relevant for the present and future. The 'post' is not just a linear marker that signifies cultural production in the post-apartheid moment (after Muafangejo), it also signifies new forms of performance and visual cultures that call in indigeneity and forge social justice, as discussed in the following five papers of this thesis.

Movement is used in this thesis to refer to the work of social movements and their reliance on the emotional and affective dimensions of activism (Danbolt, 2010). This relates to how popular culture is an inherent aspect of social movements as highlighted by Becker in her historicizing of social movements in Namibia. Becker writes, "The impressive array of ongoing political and artistic activist initiatives and protests are part of essential conversations about the entanglements of Namibian past, present, and future." (Becker, 2021: 191). Becker discusses the recent *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* movement against SGBV and femicide as part of a long

history of grassroots organizing in Namibia. In the first issue of the *Namibian Journal of Social Justice* (2021) in which Becker writes, I also contributed a photo essay showing how these recent social movement (including the Reproductive Justice and anti-racist) mobilize transgression through their protest performances and other forms of praxis in urban public spaces. My usage of movement in this thesis moves between notions of cultural movements, social movements, and movement building.

The post-Muafangejo movement is personal (as political), intimate, and collective. It is a continuity of Muafangejo's radical imagination and intellectual tradition. It makes new connections between emerging and ancient aesthetics that value African indigeneity, and decoloniality. The post-Muafangejo movement is not just about the radical imaginaries happening currently in Namibia's popular culture but the sub-culture before and after independence. These old and new Oudano practices are discussed throughout the thesis. This paper will therefore focus entirely on Muafangejo's visuality and Southern African rock art to set up the theoretical and conceptual basis of the post-Muafangejo movement. I return to these visual cultures to highlight how Oudano is always marked in the production of visual history.

Spirit and prayer as devices of movement formation

The post-Muafangejo movement considers prayer as a political and creative strategy in its mobilization process⁷. This also refers to the understanding of artistic practice as a godly and spiritual process as articulated in local understandings of pre-historic Southern African rock art (Gwasira, Bassinyi and Lenssen-Erz, 2017). What is important for the project at hand is the notion of divinity and the creative ability of artistic production to intervene, mobilise and reconcile multiple worlds (wa Thiong'o, 2007). Decolonial scholar Maldonado-Torres (2017) writes about prayer in oration as a form of agency for decolonial thinking. He specifically refers to Frantz Fanon's "O my body, always make of me a man who questions!" (Fanon, 2008: 205) as a state of embodying vulnerability in the process of self-critique, critique of Coloniality and the pursuit of decolonial love (Maldonado-Torres, 2017).

"The prayer is for the body to serve as a site of questions, for which it has to shed the "masks" that colonial subjects wear in order to attempt to appear as human in a context defined by coloniality. The prayer is about shedding the masks, emerging as a subject who questions, and, as a result, finally being able to "touch the other, feel the other, discover each other" (ibidem). These are the

⁷ Considering prayer as a feature of Oudano Praxis.

conditions of possibility for the damnés to find each other and join in the revolutionary struggle.” (Maldonado-Torres, 2017: 125).

I think of prayer as a revolutionary tool in any social movement and at the same time, I am also aware of how it can be practiced in oblivion and naivety. In fact, it is against this background of prayer and vulnerability, and works towards radical consciousness as discussed above by Maldonado-Torres. The genealogy of the popular Xhosa classic *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* originally composed by Enoch Sontonga in 1897 is one great example of a Christian hymn that was eventually adapted by early African anti-colonial movements as a lament and to mobilize political action (Gillespie and Naidoo, 2019). This song was previously translated in different African languages and used as a national anthem of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania and South Africa. The melody of this hymn has also been used as the anthem of SWAPO. This hymn also emerged in Fallist⁸ protests through student activists such as Koketso “KK” Poho (Wits University) who reimagined and rearranged parts of the anthem, adding to its melodic and some lyrical content (Gillespie and Naidoo, 2019). This shows how spirituality is significant to the work of any social movement. The performance and performativity of prayer transcends material circumstance by tapping into emotive aspects of the human body. These dimensions are sites of survival, resistance, resilience, and freedom. Gillespie and Naidoo (2019) capture this when they write that, “The students used the song to redefine the nation as still in struggle, still seeking to end apartheid and its long colonial inheritance.” (Gillespie and Naidoo, 2019: 228).

Spiritual work in African movements goes beyond Christian hymns. In fact, African spirituality has been a source of knowledge for many popular struggles against colonialism. For example, in the first Chimurenga⁹ of 1896 – 1897, Mbuya Nehanda was one of the Zimbabwean spiritual leaders who fought against British colonialism (Gonye, 2013). After the colonial forces captured her, she refused to convert to Christianity and was therefore hanged. Mbuya Nehanda was “...defiantly performed a traditional dance and prophesied that “my bones will rise,” meaning another Chimurenga "uprising" would follow.” (Gonye, 2013: 65). The second and third Chimurenga have always turned to Nehanda’s prophecy as a way of continuing the

⁸ Fallism refers to the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall student movements (2015-2016) for free and decolonized education in South Africa. This Fallist moment of public pedagogy forged the decolonial turn in global academic spheres.

⁹ Chimurenga is a Shona word for the liberation struggle and war against British colonialism in Zimbabwe.

unfinished work of the liberation struggle. This was done through Pungwe¹⁰ meetings which hosted dance practices such as Kongonya that facilitate spiritual possession and therapeutic significance in the context of Chimurenga (Gonye, 2013; Vambe, 2004 and Chinyowa, 2001).

Muafangejo's autobiographic print (Figure 3) below '*No Way To Go, What Can I Do? No Place to Stay. Lord Please Help Me*' (1972) is one of his most popular artwork that shows him in prayer in the context of his struggle as a Black artist. This print is a self-representation of playing a guitar, depicting an awareness situation of his condition as a Black person part of a larger community that is politically dispossessed and displaced. Muafangejo reaches out and asks for divine intervention in his struggle and that of his people. He does this through multiple playful and performative encounters such as the making of the print which is about playing and prayer. Playing the guitar is also an act of Oudano.

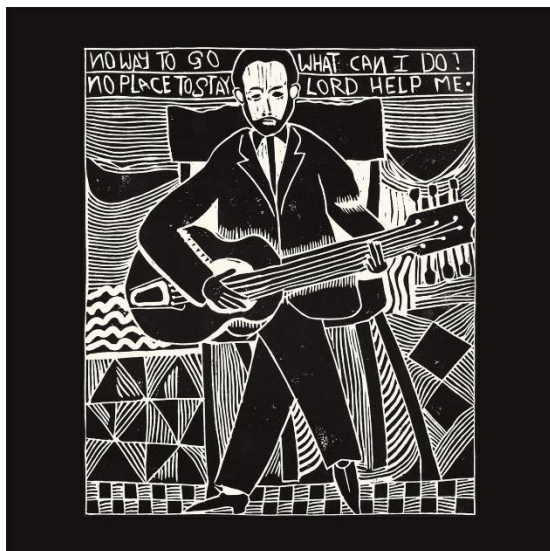


Figure 3: 'No Way To Go, What Can I Do? No Place To Stay, Lord Help Me'. Print by John N. Muafangejo (1972).

Nigerian poet Odia Ofeimun (1993) takes inspiration from this artwork for his poem titled '*No Way To Go*' which highlights the feeling 'othered' and lonely; while continuing to sing for freedom of movement and expression which the apartheid government denied people of colour through its racist nationalist policies. Post-apartheid Namibia's state of arts and culture unfortunately still finds itself in this position of dispossession and displacement. Artists and cultural workers continue to be systemically marginalized while relying on their creativity and spirituality as sources of their resilience. Today, this print is therefore still highly useful and

¹⁰ Pungwe is "(all-night community) gatherings were performed by both the freedom fighters and the *povo* (the masses) in order to entertain the masses and educate them about the struggle for independence" (Matiza, 2015: 62).

relevant for a contemporary African cultural worker who is continuously negotiating their changing place and voice in an art sector that is largely a neo-colonial formation.

This print was made while Muafangejo worked as art teacher at St. Mary's Mission School in Odibo, northern Namibia. The 1970s are a turbulent time in Namibian history characterized by mass uprisings, political violence as well as Black Consciousness ideologies penetrating the people's imagination (Palumbo, 2005). '*No Way To Go, What Can I Do? No Place to Stay. Lord Please Help Me*' therefore depicts the artist's internal struggles caused by spatial, ideological, spiritual and economic borders imposed by the apartheid regime. Nevertheless, the artwork is evidence of how Muafangejo challenges and crosses these borders. Here, he relies on his divine (*Lord Please Help Me*) and critical (*What Can I Do?*) imaginations. His creative imagination is also layered in the sense that this print visualizes his other artistic practice which is guitar-playing. Very little is known about Muafangejo as a seasoned guitar player in his personal space and time. The patterns (wavy lines and shapes) that make up the backdrop of the print show Muafangejo's visual reference, which is Oshiwambo iconographies. These symbols and images which are common in many Muafangejo prints as they are in costumes, basketry, and jewellery of Aawambo. Muafangejo's cultural and spiritual imagination reveals his vulnerability evident through the process of making this work as a way of opening himself up to himself and his audiences.

Embodiment in the rock art of #Igaingu and Dâures

Rock art is an archive of the body, in multiple ways. The visibility of rock art around the world is generally stylised, and the human and animal figures feature prominently. The body is often ritualised in various acts of healing, hunting, war, cosmology and socialisation. Southern African rock art has been analysed as an ancient cultural practice in its different super-natural potency and social intervention by indigenous people (Lewis-Williams and Pearce, 2004; and Dowson, 2007). Embodiment in rock art production is in the act of both making and the images as visual histories that show human bodies in relation to animals such as rhino, giraffe and elephants in events such as rainmaking. Therefore, the visualisation of hunting, harvesting of honey, rain and trance dances seen in many Southern African rock art sites is an archive of Oudano. Rock art visibility in Southern Africa shows us its consideration and recognition of the living body as both a physical and spiritual entity (Lewis-Williams and Pearce, 2004). Bodies and objects in rock art are depicted as shapeshifting entities that are merging,

dissolving, migrating, breaking, and disrupting their shapes. These stylistic features characterise rock art's incompleteness of rock artforms. Trance dancers as visualized in Southern African rock art become animals and other imaginative figures as they cross borders between multiple worlds and forms. I read these incomplete motifs and figures as queer relations. Southern African rock art articulates figures and motifs that could be read as queer given their fluidity, ambiguity, and incompleteness. The fluidity and ambiguity are not only in terms of gender and sexuality, but they are also about how the rock art imagery points us to other uses and practices of queerhood. As I demonstrate in this section, these queer uses and practices are relations between people, their immediate environments, and the cosmos at large.

Embodiment and embodied learning as they manifest in ancient rock art traditions are some of the many practices of indigenous epistemologies that have been scientifically excluded by colonial sciences (Gwasira 2020 and Lewis-Williams, 1990). Archaeologists such as Lewis-Williams (1990) criticised the empiricist archaeological studies (predominantly by German scholars), and therefore suggested an interpretive ethnographic approach that takes local knowledges into consideration. To take these local knowledges into consideration would mean engaging with oral and community histories as embodied knowledge to gain better understandings of rock art. I argue that rock art as a product of an embodied process must be understood as a trans-temporal form of cultural production. This is to say that rock art is not merely a historical object of the far past, but rather that it is relevant and useful for the present and imaginations of the future. Trans-temporality is a key feature of African popular cultures (Barber, 2018). This register of time considers past, present, and future as intertwined. Barber's (2018) historical study of popular culture in Africa notes that the concept of time as intrinsically entangled. Barber writes:

“...creative works have a transtemporal or multitemporal character. In oral genres, this character is evident in the text itself, which has passed through successive mouths, each of which has slightly or significantly changed it. The orally transmitted text does not belong entirely to the moment in which it was first enunciated, nor entirely to the latest occasion of its recreation; rather it belongs to all stages of transmission layered upon one another.” (Barber, 2018: 14).

The same can be said about a Muafangejo print or a rock art painting in central Namibia. The visual and performance cultures are generally citational in the sense that they reference other concepts, ideas, place, people and times in their processes of production. There is an opportunity here for Southern African scholarship on performance studies and visual culture

to explore this embodied and spatial practice. This would be a shift from the established social scientific methods of discovering, representation, documenting and re-tracing the art which is often dominated by white scholarship. This would also signal a shift from periodising rock art to ‘prehistory’. Archaeological studies have backdated the production of historic San rock art in Namibia to what they consider the Later Stone Age which is between 2000- and 5000-years BP (Before Present) (du Pisani, 2022). I argue that this periodisation is still limited as it does not account for the uses relating to rock art before and after the said period. The cultural production is fixed to that single period.

The San trance dance and hunting as spiritual practices documented in rock painting such as Namibia’s Dâures mountains and #Igaingu conservancy area are reflections of indigenous people’s historical, cartographic, and cosmic imaginations. This art has always been useful over the centuries although this usefulness is not always visible to different academic disciplines in Namibian studies. According to Gwasira (2020), it is possible to develop a decolonised archaeology by paying attention to the disciplinary limitations of archaeology, which he has critically historicised. This decolonisation will also have to address scholarly understandings of the usefulness of the rock art in contemporary Namibia. Gwasira, Bassinyi and Lenssen-Erz, (2017) write that “...from colonial times until about 25 years ago, there is no noticeable connection between the local population and the rock art.” (Gwasira, Bassinyi and Lenssen-Erz, 2017: 150). The locals referred to here are the Damara people who are settlers in the surrounding areas of Dâures and #Igaingu. In the same paper, they refer to the Matopo Hills in southwest Zimbabwe which is also occupied by Bantu people who use the rock art sites to perform their rainmaking rituals. I am drawn to question how Damara indigenous performances such as |Gais and Xoma might cite the knowledge inscribed in the rock art in Dâures and #Igaingu (even though they are not practiced at the actual sites).

Turner’s (2012) ethnographic study of Dâures’ rock art criticises the restrictive scholarly gaze concerning hermeneutic and phenomenological readings of the rock art of Namibia. Turner (2012) as Mguni (2004) criticises the readings of rock art that are mostly based on dichotomies of reality/abstract, human/animal, subject/object, gender, race representations etc. Mguni (2016) suggests that painting sequences in rock art in themselves constitutes as archives that have had important role in local communities. Turner (2012) turns to the body as a way of theorising and reading Southern African rock art. She notes that very few studies have historically read rock art through social theories of the body (Turner, 2012).



Figure 4: 'The Shaman' rock art painting in #Igaingu / Spitzkoppe mountains. Photograph sourced from <https://sacredsites.com/africa/namibia/spitzkoppe.html>

Reading the shapeshifting body in rock art is one way in which we can blur the binaries that have been established through previous interpretive readings. The photograph (Figure 4) above portrays a rock painting of the shaman in trance, found in #Igaingu conservancy area, central Namibia. Many stories around San and Khoe performance rituals involve hunting and transforming into animals and transcending into other worlds. The role of the shaman in the trance dance facilitates this transcendence. “It is a very painful process for the shaman to enter the spirit world. Shamans have described the process of entering the spirit world as involving their body being stretched” (du Pisani, 2022: 48). The shamanic body’s ability to shapeshift shows the body’s potential and connection to its ecology and cosmology. Kinahan (2021) reminds us that these ritual activities are not only performed communally, but they also require intense preparation in places of physical seclusion. Kinahan writes about emperor moths depicted in the rock art of hidden sites such as dark crevices such as the Dâures massif in the Namib desert. He argues that the painted months show shamans as individual specialists in seclusion and as itinerants (Kinahan, 2017 and 2021). “The painted moth represents the shaman with his knee-length animal hide cloak which resembles the wings. The cocoon rattle, the moth

and the cloaked shaman thus combine the two essential stages of ritual performance: concealment and reappearance” (Kinahan, 2021)¹¹.

The shapeshifting body is therefore a source of supernatural energy to guide, heal and protect other bodies and the larger ecosystem. For example, San and Khoe healing dances such as N/om and Xoma share similar characteristics as some of the oldest Southern African dances (Keeney, Keenay, and Boo, 2016). These are kinetic dances performed in relation to fire. People gather around the fire clapping and singing as the ‘medicine dancers’ possessed by N/om which is an intense energy/power that produces somatic vibration. N/om is in the fire and it is summoned through connecting with it. (Keeney and Keenay, 2020). These dances are performed for purposes of healing and warding off evil and the songs are generally made up of few words and named such as rain, elephant, sun, giraffe, gemsbok, honey etc.

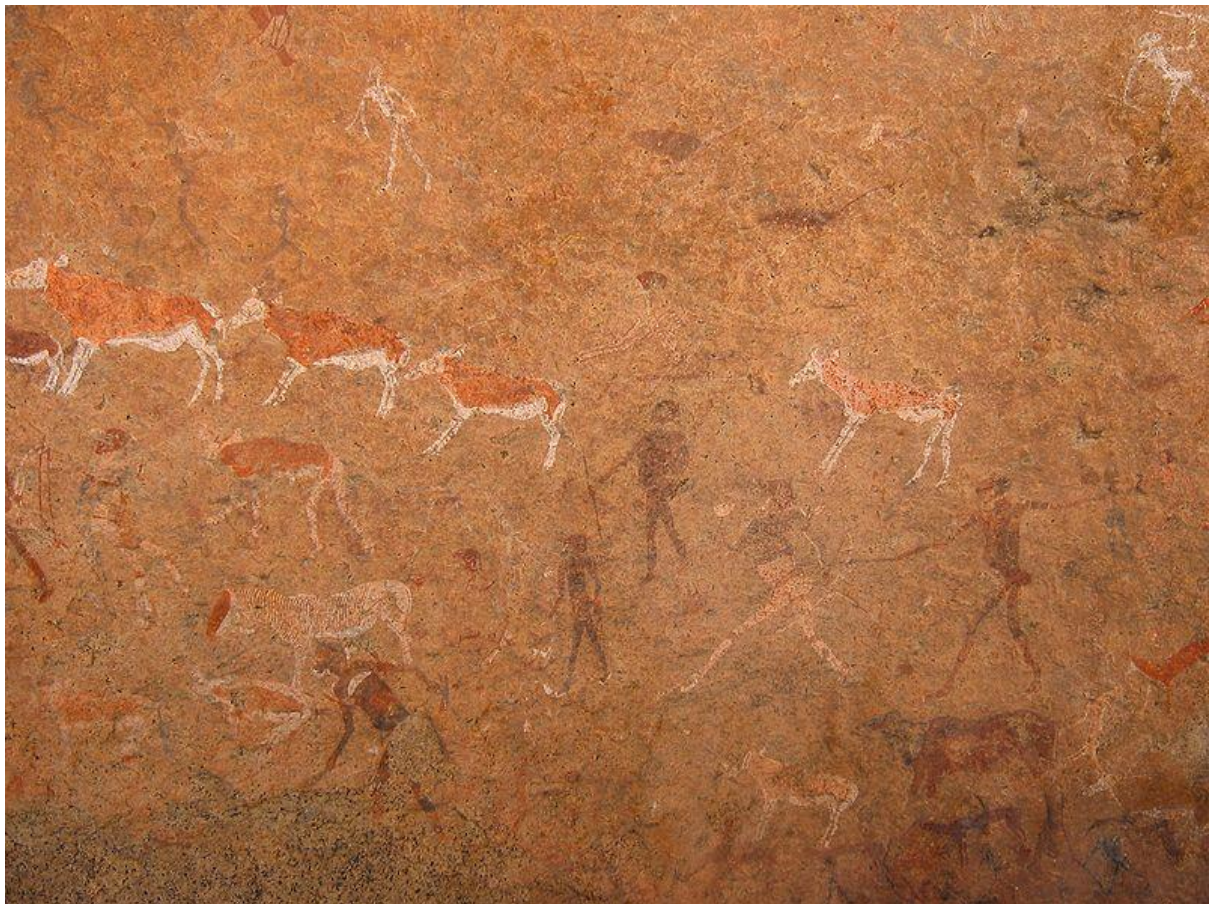


Figure 5: Rock art painting popularly known as 'The White Lady' in Dâures, Namib desert, Erongo region of Namibia. Photographer Harald Süpfle.

¹¹ Kinahan, J. 2021. *Emperor moths in the rock art of the Namib Desert shed new light on shamanic ritual*. Available: <https://theconversation.com/emperor-moths-in-the-rock-art-of-the-namib-desert-shed-new-light-on-shamanic-ritual-172640> [2022 August, 6].

The photograph (Figure 5) above shows what is popularly known as the ‘*White Lady*’ site of rock paintings found in Dâures. The white lady is the figure in motion surrounded by three human figures and the gemsbok above it. Nankela’s (2015) study on rock art research in Namibia states that this site has been widely written about since it was supposedly ‘discovered’ in the early 20th century by the topographer Reinhard Maack. Nankela writes in detail about archaeological research that criticized this discovery and claims of it being un-African because it depicts a Mediterranean kind of civilization (Nankela, 2015). In framing the post-Muafangejo movement, I add to this critique not only by problematising the claim of European discovery but also the naming of this ancient heritage site, which is loaded with racialised and gendered connotations. To do epistemic justice to this painting, we will have to divorce the concepts of race and gender because they are restricting in their constructions. By rejecting the gendering and racialising of this historic work, we may open another terrain of theorising ancient visualities and embodiments. There is a need to de-centre the ‘*White Lady*’ and recognise that there is a lot more happening in this imagery.

When I visited this site in June 2020 with two friends, I soon learned that it is a map of different events, times and bodies. It tells us what happened in Dâures, surrounding areas and related ‘worlds’ many centuries ago. Enid Eichas was the guide of the National Heritage Council who gave us a tour to the site and unpacked this map for us. Eichas showed us depictions of a fire on a full moon making space for a healing ritual performance. We were shown an illustration of a shaman with a bleeding nose who used his blood to massage a patient’s chest. The shaman eventually collapses and goes into ‘trance form, half human, half animal’ as a way of communicating with the ancestral realm so that the sickly person can heal. The animalistic forms on this map include baboon, buffalo, gemsbok, elephant, springbok, hyena, jackal, zebra, which are all animals found in the Dâures and the Namib desert ecosystem. Eichas also pointed out illustrations of a hunter with a bow and arrows, wearing a mask of a baboon as well as a medicine man digging medicine from the ground. On the margins of the imagery are depictions of skeletons which she explained remind people about a time when there was drought in this area which led to many people and animals dying. These are not only stories that Eichas has only learned from being a tour guide in this area but also through oral traditions as a Damara woman who lives in Dâures.

Apart from the complex temporalities, there have been many questions around the authorship of rock art which remains a mystery considering the ancient nature of this form of cultural production. This mystic tradition is understood as collectively owned. In the same way that we

cannot reduce orality, music and dance to single historic period, it is tricky to reduce rock paintings one individual artist. In some cases, the artists were the shamans who had documented their dreams and travels in their rituals. This plurality relates to the potential of entangled participation and collaborative storytelling/mapping in the process of making the ancient artwork, as well as how contemporary communities communally use these sites. The notion of ownership is shared and relational, it changes and passed on from one generation to the another. Nankela (2015) situates rock art paintings and engravings in Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia and Angola as cross-cultural production authored by San, Khoe and Bantu communities. This causes what Taylor (2003) terms as the administrative challenge for contemporary cultural institutions which are obsessed with curating and crediting artwork to individual artists. Gwasira, Bassinyi and Lenssen-Erz (2017) refer to local communities crediting the rock paintings to God. For example, the !Kung San living in the Tsodilo Hills, Botswana in the early 1970s suggested that the great God Goaxa is the creator of the paintings. This speaks to interesting connections in the notion of artistic and creative practices as divine interventions as discussed by wa Thiong'o (2007).

A question that arises is whether there is a difference between embodiment and figuration in rock art paintings considering that the "...art is essentially figurative in content" Maggs (2017: 14). It would be reductive to read the figurative in rock art as mere representations and it therefore becomes imperative to understand it as a visual outcome of embodiment. Figuration is an extension of embodiment; they exist in relation to each other. I am not using figuration in the narrow sense as conventionally defined in modern art suggesting that the figurative retains strong references to the real world. Figuration in rock art collapses the binary of physical and the meta-physical worlds, manifesting as evidence of what both the body and the land knows. To return to Maggs' cartographic reading of ancient Southern African stone art traditions, produced both by hunter-gatherers and agriculturalists in the region, these are cosmological maps (Maggs, 2017). They are celestial maps depicting lived experiences of journeying between worlds, emphasising the body's therianthrope potential. Rock art therefore requires more than a semiotic reading because it also marks other bodies and spatial configurations that are not immediately visible.

Love and critical intimacy

I am interested in reading love as mobiliser of critical intimacy in the context of Muafangejo's work. It is interesting to notice how Muafangejo had developed several works that comment on love and yet his expression of love has not been unpacked in the religious, political and cultural aspects that previous research has focused on in studying his work. I consider love as a political strategy for revolutionary change, an ethos for social justice (Freire, 1972 and hooks, 2001). Critical intimacy is a result of this kind of love and it places emphasis on kinship and relatedness. Critical intimacy therefore is generated from a space of affect and being closer to the people or objects that we love. Keguro Macharia (2015) also reminds us that love is also an intricate and complex concept to embody. Macharia writes;

While a love ethic may be central to politics, love remains a slippery concept. More accurately, love remains a leaky concept. Despite scholarly efforts to distinguish between and among love for a deity, love for a country, love between friends, love between lovers, love in a family, and other kinds of love, the concept remains stubbornly promiscuous, acting like sticky tape that amasses objects and situations and relationships. (Macharia, 2015: 68 -69).

This complexity is visible in the way in which Muafangejo portrays love. Love's slipperiness, leakiness and promiscuity is well captured in Muafangejo's print *Forcible Love* (1974).



Figure 6: 'Forcible Love', linocut, John N. Muafangejo (1974).

An African queer reading is necessary to trace non-normative love and how love manifests in this print. The work signifies queerly, in the epistemic sense. *Forcible Love* (1974) is a self-portrayal of Muafangejo navigating and negotiating his own society's heteronormative

expectations. Muafangejo chooses his passion for work and education instead of what he calls 'forcible love'. This is Muafangejo either rejecting compulsory heterosexuality or simply choosing his craft over an orchestrated social relation. What is also interesting in Muafangejo's text is him extending his gratitude to God for making it impossible for the forcible love to happen. His gesture of prayer also appears here.

What is also interesting is the social pressure, the organised force by the boyfriend of the 'beautiful girl'. The line in the print, '*While the frankly artist is busy cutting linoleum and etching without fear and worried...*' is an overt reflection of Muafangejo's self-determination and self-assurance of his practice as a cultural worker. He recognises his work as significant, and this makes the choice of investing in this kind of love as opposed to the forcible love or '*probolism love*' as he calls it. This choice of artistic labour by a young black man in 1974 in Oukwanyama or potentially elsewhere in colonial Namibia is a labour of queer love because it is non-normative in the sense that it enables radical imaginations, which Muafangejo continued to embody in his work. Although this is the time when he worked as a teacher at St. Mary's Mission School in Odibo, Ohangwena, Muafangejo's consistent focus and investment in his etching and lino-cut practices created space for his expressive and critically engaging labour.



Figure 7: 'Love is approaching but too much of anything is very dangerous', linocut, John N. Muafangejo (1974).



Figure 8: 'They are shaking their hands because they are longing each other', linocut, John N. Muafangejo (1981).

Muafangejo also explores love as a process of critical intimacy in two of his prints namely, *The love is approaching but too much of anything is very dangerous* (1974) and *They are shaking their hands because they are longing each other* (1981). In these prints Muafangejo portrays intimate partnerships in contexts of struggle. Struggle in both prints can be read in the political context in which the images were produced- which is apartheid and the heightened fight for liberation. In the 1974 print, struggle can be read in Muafangejo's use of the word dangerous to describe 'too much love' as embodied between the two figures. Here, I am reminded of South African curator and educator Gabi Ngcobo who read the queer sites in this image during a presentation at the John Muafangejo Art Centre in 2016. Here queer love is signified in the sense that it is generally a risky and potentially dangerous kind of love to embody because it is intrinsically non-normative. In the 1981 print, Muafangejo portrays a connection and friendship between two figures who look like they are woman from two different races. In fact, race does not seem to be the most significant factor in this situation of the two figures but rather their meeting which results from 'longing each other' (being not allowed to be in touch because of racism).

More importantly, these actual prints and the situations they depict are performative encounters of love. For Muafangejo to imagine love in a time that is largely defined by racial segregation and violence is to offer alternatives to apartheid. It is a labour of love that works towards the

vision of bell hook's (2001) idea of a love ethic; Fanon's (2008) idea of sociogenic love and Macharia's (2015) notion of hygienic love. I understand all these embodiments of love as processes of critical consciousness and social justice.

Border crossing and borderlessness

What made Muafangejo's imagination radical was that his prints that were not just commentary on his experiences of geo-political borders but also historical objects that document how he crossed those borders. Here, borderlessness is framed as the praxis of border crossing as discussed in earlier parts of this thesis. I am framing borderlessness as the process recognising and collapsing geo-political, socio-economic, ideological and epistemic borders that intentionally seek to control knowledge production, access to resources and freedom of movement. I adopt the term border crossing, as it is popularly used in critical pedagogy as a term to explain how we critically (un)learn and deconstruct our histories, knowledge, and practices. The result of border crossing is learning to value alternative forms of knowledge or acquiring new status. It is important to note that borderlessness implies a fluid and radically open generative praxis of dialogic action. Paulo Freire proposes that,

The object of a dialogical-libertarian action is not to 'dislodge' the oppressed from a mythological reality to 'bind' them to another reality. On the contrary, the object of dialogical action is to make it possible for the oppressed, by perceiving their attachment to opt to transform an unjust reality. (Freire, 1972: 174).

As such, radical change can only be achieved if the oppressed unite and "cut the umbilical cord of magic and myth which binds them to the world of oppression; the unity which links them to each other must be of a different nature." Freire, P. (1972: 175). This is therefore a generative praxis of dialogic action in the sense that the oppressed have agency and ownership of their process of liberation. I refer to other key texts in critical pedagogy such as Henry Giroux's (1992) *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* which argues for the need of critical readings of cultural politics and how they intersect with ideology, pedagogy and intellectual labour. Another key text that I lean on here is Anzaldúa's (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera* which re-conceptualises the meaning of a border in her writing of her experience as a Chicana lesbian, activist and theorist. Anzaldúa demonstrates the

complexity of a border as a cognitive, public and cultural marker that we inhibit/inhibits us (Anzaldúa, 1987).

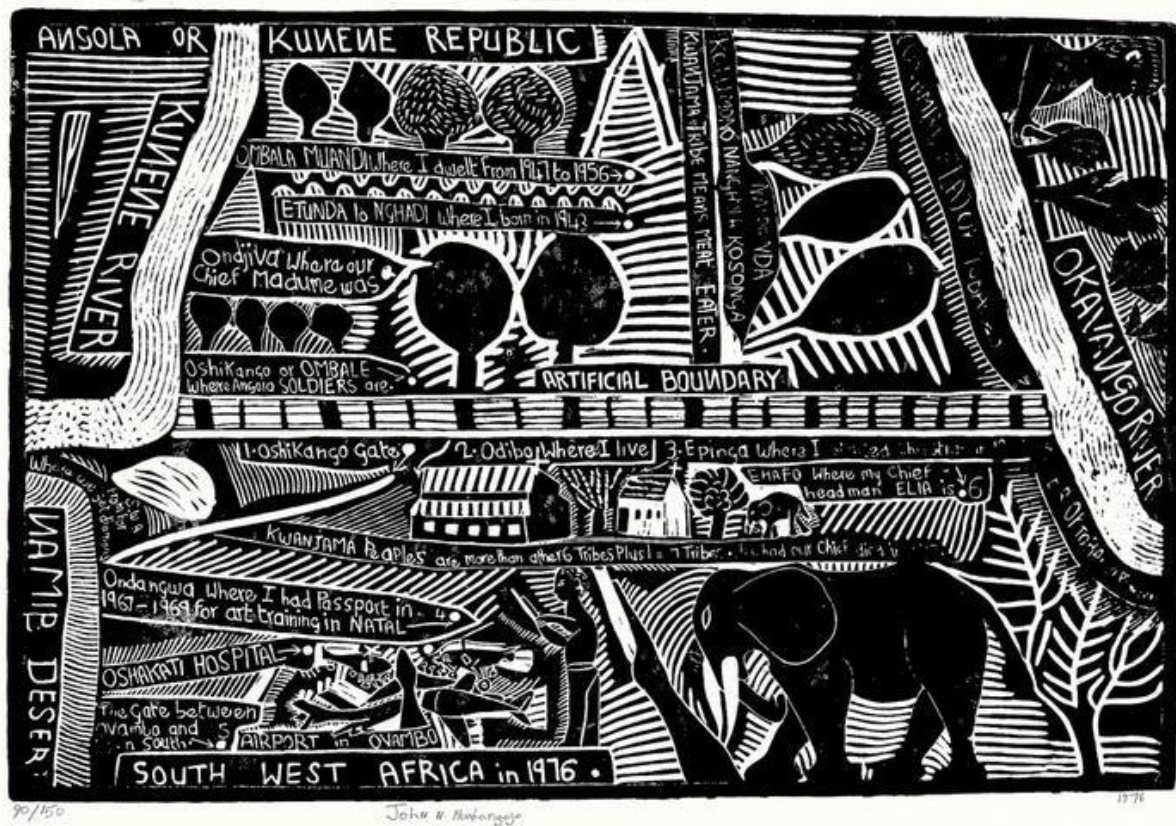


Figure 9: 'Angola and South West Africa/Kunene Republic', linocut, John N. Muafangejo (1976).

Muafangejo's print (Figure 9) *Southwest Africa/Kunene Republic* (1976) above is one of his prints that illustrates embodiments of borderlessness, in other words, 'a map with a border that does not exist'. In this print, Muafangejo illustrates his critical awareness of the geo-colonial border between the then South West Africa (present day Namibia) and Angola. In this print, Muafangejo illustrated a fence, a divide-and-rule mechanism of colonial order. We see both the Angolan and Namibian sides of Oukwanyama, Owambo. Muafangejo calls it the artificial border to point to its problematics and superficial nature. The artist is reflecting on his lived experience of having lived on both sides of the fence that are historically known for border wars, both during Portuguese and South African colonialism. The year 1976 is the height of apartheid, in this case specifically marked by an ongoing war that is popularly known as the "Bush" or "Border" War between SWAPO guerrilla fighters and the South African forces on both sides of the border. There is only one marker of this war on Muafangejo's map which is the Angolan side of Oshikango which is a border town, Muafangejo marks that this is where Angolan soldiers were. This site is also known as Ombale.

Muafangejo's cartographic imagination of Kunene Republic in this print is not limited to his critique of the artificial border, he also illustrates significant sites on both sides of the border that are personal and of historical importance to him. In this illustration he maps his place of birth (*Etunda lo Nghadi*) and early childhood, formal education, as well as key figures in Oukwanyama history such as King Mandume's palace in Ondjiva and Headman Elia's homestead in Ehafo. Oukwanyama kingdom is also on both sides of the border. There has always been unregulated 'border crossings' along this border showing how people have always transgressed the border's laws and regulations. Shiweda states that this "shows how fluid the border is, with an ethnic group such as the Kwanyama residing across national and regional boundaries, and Kwanyama people on both sides sharing similar cultural features, languages, that allow them to think of themselves as one." Shiweda (2011: 5). This is not to say that this border has not had serious effects on local people's relations, cultures, histories and spatial productions, in fact the debate about the border is a sensitive topic amongst Ovakwanyama (Shiweda, 2011). Muafangejo captures this sensitivity in as much he captures the fluidity. One way in which he captures this sensitivity is in how he makes claims to both sides of the border by autobiographically marking specific sites as part of his Angolan-Namibian heritage.

This border is attributed to the displacement and delegitimisation of Oukwanyama kingship (Shiweda, 2011). Muafangejo's work depicts his own displacement as someone who occupies and claims both sides of the border. Jones (2016) argues against geo-political borders as violent inventions. Jones' writes, "...disputes the idea that borders are a natural part of the human world and that migration is driven primarily by traffickers and smugglers. Instead, the existence of the border itself produces the violence around it." (Jones, 2016: 5). Muafangejo's critical observation of the artificial border recognises this violence. In contrast to the violent demarcation, the Kunene River (which runs across Angola and Namibia) and the Kavango river (runs across Angola, Namibia and Botswana) are illustrated as free flowing, shared and fluid natural creations that cannot be controlled by colonial borders. Muafangejo's appreciation of this natural heritage including wildlife and agricultural activities on both sides of the border points us to ways in which indigenous life and livelihoods are continued in Oukwanyama. Muafangejo's map, like older cartographic imaginations in southern African rock art (Maggs, 2017), are forms of counter-hegemonic maps that demonstrate Black agency beyond the restrictions of colonialism and its western cartographic traditions. I read this artistic work as maps with an understanding that they were not made to be imposed on other bodies or spaces,

they are personal and communal archives of crossing borders separating people, places, and worlds.

Muafangejo's *Kunene Republic* offers a decolonial imaginary that includes sites such as Oshakati Hospital which in colonial maps are outside the provincial demarcations of Kunene on both sides of the border. The print portrays the Kunene river as connective rather than divisive, a metaphor for relations across borders. All these unique cartographic features point to how Muafangejo's *Kunene Republic* can be read as an "Afrocartography" of sorts, which recognises the intricacies of colonial cartographic imaginaries and in turn offers a relational imagination of space and place. In *Afrocartography: Traces of Places and all points in between* (2007), Mwenya Kabwe draws on her lived experience as a migrant in Africa to offer a futurist cartography, Afrocartography, as a counter imagination to colonial map-making. Presenting stock characters such as the Traveller, Mapmaker, Afropolitan, and Afrosettler, Kabwe's Afrocartography¹² "is a story of migratory proportions and the travels take place in the timeless, surreal space of dreams. The Traveller and her other selves forge new paths, re-visit engrained routes and imagine a world where contradiction, uncertainty and complexity are the norm." (Kabwe, 2007: 1), unlike divisive colonial map- and world-making. Similarly, Harry Garuba (2002) argues that colonial maps were produced through a fixed exercise of mapping bodies, subjects and land which had detrimental consequences in Africa. Garuba writes,

...colonialism as a regime of power was obsessively concerned with mapping land and subject, and the body was one specific site which became a point of capture for colonial power. The centrality of bodies as sites of naturalised difference from the constitution of colonialist discourse cannot be overemphasised. There are bewilderingly numerous ways in which bodies were mapped for colonialist 'consumption', ... (Garuba, 2003: 106).

The cartographic imaginations in southern African rock art and Muafangejo's work do not treat the body as something that is to be contained or consumed. Nor were they done with "...mimetic accuracy which takes the form of demarcating boundaries, establishing ownership, numbering, and defining." (Garuba, 2002: 91). In fact, they are fluid and less concerned about ownership and territorialisation of land and the natural environment. This relational approach to mapping is fundamentally different to how the body in rock art was mapped in colonial archaeology. We could look at the above-referenced scholarly debates about the reading of the rock art and how the body such as the *White Lady* painting was mis-interpreted and

¹² South African Womxn Writers Day 20: Playwrights <https://glli-us.org/2021/01/28/sa-womxn-writers-day-20-the-playwrights/>.

subsequently erasing indigenous interpretations such as San perspectives. Muafangejo's body like other colonised bodies at the border were mapped by colonial cartography as ethnic, gendered and racialised bodies, whose freedom of movement was restricted to homelands and reserves.

Muafangejo also illustrates institutional borders in his linocut print *An interview of Cape Town University in 1971*. This print is autobiographical image by Muafangejo, reflecting on his unsuccessful interview to study at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town (UCT) in 1971. He is reflecting on the structural exclusion, historically executed by white and predominantly male gatekeepers in the South African academy. He reflects on the white head-centred form of pedagogy as it can be seen in Figure 10 below.



Figure 10: 'An Interview of Cape Town University in 1971', linocut, John N. Muafangejo (1974).

The table in official or formal arts education establishes a divide and hierarchy between those who sit around it. In this print, the table is a head-centred and disembodiment device used by the professors (interviewers) to disembody Muafangejo by reducing him to the spoken word and his portfolio to justify why he should get access to the University of Cape Town. The interviewers are holding pens, paint brushes and a book that could be Muafangejo's portfolio.

They look intimidating. Their eyes stand, in a way symbolising the white colonial gaze on the black artist body. Muafangejo is positioned lower on the one end of the table, under observation and being cross-examined through the gaze of the write “phalanx of interviewers” which “suggests a single authoritative narrative wielded by the pale faced custodians of the institution” (Mistry and Mabaso, 2021: 2).

An Interview of Cape Town University in 1971 speaks well to the 2015/2016 student movements in South Africa such as *Fees Must Fall* and *Rhodes Must Fall* calling for decolonisation and free education. The print is relevant in both post-apartheid Namibia and South Africa today because it points us to the burden of coloniality and the necessary project of decolonising the neo-liberal university. One might wonder where border crossing is depicted in this print. On the printmaking process as the reflective moment in which Muafangejo historicises his UCT experience. The print is a response to his experience of being othered and excluded. Mistry and Mabaso (2022) contend that this kind of othering and exclusion is prevalent in post-apartheid South African academies such as UCT.

How might this John Muafangejo image be inverted to reveal a revised relationship of seeing and being seen. Of being heard and hearing. Of deep listening that does not assume the certainty of knowledge, but recognises all knowledges and experiences. The artist sits at the head of the table. He is bearer of a system of knowledge unknown to his audience. How might the members of that audience recognise their complicity in white power – and take responsibility for the privileged place of whiteness and address their own dearth of knowledge in utterances they do not recognise – in languages they do not speak. (Mistry and Mabaso, 2021: 8).

Mistry and Mabaso (2022) write about historic strategies and initiatives by southern African artists whose work call in decolonisation of artistic practices and pedagogies. They draw us to the questions about contested ontologies and epistemologies in South African art schools. A copy of the *An Interview of Cape Town University in 1971* was acquired by UCT’s Works of Art Collection in 1989. Considering how this image of has re-emerged in decolonial discourses at the turn of Fallism, the UCT Works of Art Committee is yet to properly contextualise this artwork as part of the university’s long history of segregation. Part of the text that accompanies an image of the artwork in the university’s online catalogue reads as follows.

This image is ambiguous; the group’s raised pens (or might they be paintbrushes?) have nothing to write on; the two women look decidedly out of

place (looking quite playful compared to the solemn gentlemen); one is unsure what this interview is about, or how the artist felt about it.¹³

It goes without saying that this is one of many artworks in the university's collection that are yet to be properly contextualised. This however raises the question about what it means for the university to be in possession of artworks like *An Interview of Cape Town University in 1971* while still perpetuating the same systemic inequalities. Muafangejo ended up receiving an art education at Rorke's Drift in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. One of his teachers was Azaria Mbatha who had a distinct influence on Muafangejo's visual vocabulary.

This paper has offered a reading of visual culture for the purposes of blurring lines between performance studies and art history. I do this by offering a queer reading of John Muafangejo's linocut prints as well as rock art from central Namibia. I specifically look at the fluid, incomplete and shapeshifting figures that are depicted in these works. I pay attention to the body as a figurative feature of embodied knowledge that has the potential and agency to cross borders. Muafangejo's lino-cut prints are part of Oudano traditions that enables speaking back to institutional constraints and exclusions. I discussed selected prints by John Muafangejo to not only show their relevance today but how they form basis of the post-Muafangejo movement. I define the post-Muafangejo movement as a trans-temporal movement that is signified by contemporary popular culture and historic visual cultures. The post-Muafangejo movement refers to radical cultural imaginaries that are produced in relation to movements of social justice of their time. Rock art paintings from #Igaingu and Dâures are discussed as embodied and spatial practices that were produced through every day and supernatural events organised by indigenous people of Southern Africa. Notions of love, critical intimacy, borderlessness and prayer as features of Oudano are discussed to set precedence of movement formation as further unpacked in the following papers. The following five papers are experiments of Oudano as a practice of critical orientation, building on the dynamic meaning of the post-Muafangejo movement. I make connections between the papers by emphasising mobility and embodiment.

¹³ Interview at UCT. <https://ibali.uct.ac.za/s/woac/item/5337> Available, [2022, August 06].

PAPER TWO: ERASURE IS NOT PERMANENT IN ONDAANISA YO POMUDHIME

Introduction: revisiting the colonising camera

In April 2018, I took up a residency at the Research Center for Hamburg's (Post-)Colonial Legacy based at Hamburg University in Germany. I joined two other Namibian artists, Vitjitua Ndjiharine and Nicola Brandt, as well as German historian Ulrike Pieters on this project, with the objective of intervening in a colonial photography archive housed at Museum am Rothenbaum Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK). This museum was previously known as Hamburg's Ethnological Museum. Its photographic inventory included images of subjects from colonial Namibia, Zimbabwe, Togo, Mozambique, and South Africa, taken between 1884 and 1915 by colonial photographer Alexander von Hirschfeld and other unnamed photographers. The photographic inventory was acquired by the museum's archive between 1907 and 2016 and consists of roughly 1,000 images, including glass plates, prints, diapositives, negatives, and postcards that depict "landscapes, colonial cities and infrastructures; portraits and ethnographic photographs of colonized individuals and groups, as well as private snapshots of white colonial agents at leisure." (Wild, 2018: 08). This photographic archive captures the period of the 1904 to 1908 genocide of the Nama, Ovaherero, Damara and San people in central and southern Namibia. Our role was to intervene in this visual archive as artists and scholars from various backgrounds.

In December 2018, the residency resulted in a group exhibition held jointly by the MARKK and M. Bassy, a Hamburg-based public salon intended as a meeting place for contemporary African and African-influenced artists and creatives. *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime* was performed as part of this group exhibition: *Ovizire · Somgu: From Where Do We Speak?* This group show comprised a collection of collages, soundscapes, poetry, performances, and colonial photography showcasing our artistic and discursive responses to the colonial archive. *Ovizire · Somgu: From Where Do We Speak?* became a discursive space that facilitated difficult dialogues amongst ourselves as artists and historians on the project, as well as with our audiences. In July 2019, *Ovizire · Somgu: From Where Do We Speak?* was exhibited at the National Art Gallery of Namibia, where it continued to generate more dialogue, particularly around the Namibian genocide of 1904 to 1908. By 2020, we had developed the project into

an applied arts and trans-history project, which trained young Namibian artists to use artistic and critical pedagogies to conduct education workshops on these histories in the Otjozondjupa, /Karas and Omaheke regions of Namibia. This shift in format and methodology opened up the project to other audiences, including learners, the unemployed youth, activists, artists, teachers, and heritage workers who subsequently also developed creative material from this process, resulting in a final exhibition at the Frans Nambinga Art Training School in the Havana informal settlement, Katutura in November 2020.

Our initial conversations and reflections on the Hamburg archive focused on issues of representation and the ethical and decolonial responsibilities of intervening in an archive of this nature. As a team of artists and historians, we acknowledged the violence implicit in the colonial archive through its representations of colonised bodies and places. We explored the possibility of challenging and interrupting the colonial gaze while tracing moments of agency, resistance, and imagination by the African subjects captured in the photographic archive. We acknowledged that we were working at a scene of and misrepresentation, as historically visualised in both the photographic archive and the context(s) of an ethnographic museum, the university (previously a colonial institute), and the city of Hamburg – as a port that was a gateway for the colonial project. Apart from the problematic nature of this archive, there were also tensions and several confrontations amongst team members, given our political differences. Another important critique that is relevant here is the role of global capitalism in making a residency of this nature possible. The MARKK was founded 1879 and has collections of approximately 350,000 objects from Africa, the Americas, Oceania, Europe, and Asia.¹⁴ As a European ethnological museum that dates back to the 19th century, its collections are implicated in Europe's history of colonial extraction and racial capitalism. It is this colonial racial capitalism and its political economies that enabled this culture of collecting cultural objects and human remains to build European imperial wealth. This is the same wealth that is today often disguised as international aid to fund these 'cultural cooperations', which are becoming increasingly popular in the context of Namibian-German relations. What usually transpires is that this aid is – in effect – offered in exchange for African artists undertaking the affective labour required for the project of restorative justice.

However, we were nevertheless committed to facilitating multivocality and plural perspectives in the residency. Furthermore, I felt it was necessary to facilitate engaging this archive with

¹⁴ <https://markk-hamburg.de/>

other archives of African knowledge systems. This archival engagement is further articulated in the sections below in which I discuss how interfacing the embodied, spatial, and institutional archives produced what I frame as ‘archival frictions’.

In this paper, I discuss the process of bringing together the various conceptual and discursive elements that make up *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* (The Dance of the Rubber Tree), my performance that arose out of the Hamburg residency. This work was subsequently performed (2018 to 2021) as a site-related work in archives, libraries, museums, theatres and streets, as well as at monument sites in African and European cities such as Recklinghausen, Munich, Frankfurt, Berlin, Yaoundé, Cape Town, Windhoek, Basel and Zurich. In each of these iterations the work took different forms: performance art, museum theatre, an album, as well as a live digital listening event. My discussion of the work in this paper focuses on the conceptual development of the performance project by unpacking my artistic and discursive choices, to demonstrate how my praxis of Oudano unfolds within the context of doing archival work. By revisiting the colonising camera, the performance project demonstrates Oudano’s creative and critical usefulness as a method of historical study.

This paper draws on what Hartmann, Silvester and Hayes (1998) have theorised as the ‘colonising camera’ and its role in the making of Namibian historiography during the colonial period. Hartmann, Silvester and Hayes (1998) argue that studies on colonial photography in Namibia have read the “... dual potentialities: between positivism and fantasy, between truth claims and lies “that tell a truth”, and between photographs that denote and those that connote.” (1998: 5). Previous studies have consistently shown how the use of colonial photography during the late 19th century and the early 20th century was central to the production of notions of ethnicity, race and gender, as well as disciplinarity (Hartmann, Silvester, and Hayes (1998); Shiweda, (2011); Rizzo, (2020).

Colonial photography of African subjects during these periods fed into the ethos of colonial administrations and the epistemologies that were imposed on the colony. Reflecting Palumbo’s (2005) later notes on the landscape art of colonial artists that was used to justify white settler colonialism, Hartmann, Silvester, and Hayes (1998) remind us that the colonial notion of ‘this ideal conquest’ relied on photographic evidence of the empty, i.e., unoccupied, natural environment. *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* is thus a process of decontextualising colonial photographs by treating them as visual fragments and remnants that can be used to develop a trans-historical study. I achieve this by setting up a process of archival contestations through a

speculative method of working with – and between – the institutional, spatial, and embodied archives. This relates to what Lorena Rizzo (2020) discusses as the necessity of archival diversification given the limitations of hegemonic sources, methods, and epistemologies in Namibian visual historiography. Rizzo argues that “...the historiography continues to be marked by the parameters and geographies imposed by conventional repositories of historical photographs ...” (Rizzo, 2020: 54). Archival diversification, or being attentive to the ways in which different archival sources are already in contestation and conversation with each other, is fundamental for decolonising archivality.

During the Hamburg residency, I developed an interest in erasure as a historic strategy used by colonialists in the implementation of imperialism. *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* became an intervention into a colonial archive that studies different facets of erasure – which, depending on context, can either be destructive and constructive. *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* is a live performance (and album) that is not only dependent on colonial photography but also on sonic forms, cultural objects, embodied and spatial archives. The performance confronts decades of historic erasure of African bodies and epistemologies orchestrated by colonial administrations as reflected in colonial history. The performance responds to this by curating a cleansing and queering ritual that critiques the limits and violence of colonial collections.

Part of the title of this paper, *Erasure is not Permanent*, is derived from a conversation about my performance practice with art historian and curator Nontobeko Ntombela (2019). Our conversation reflected on what it means to be survivors and descendants of colonial and apartheid projects that were essentially aimed at exterminating black life. We were thinking about the opportunity and space given to these survivors and descendants to intervene in colonial archives and what this intervention process makes possible. In the context of *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime*, colonial erasure is not only critiqued but is also confronted; it engages creatively with other notions of erasure that are generative and restorative at heart. For example, I draw on omudhime (the rubber tree) and its associated rituals of dealing with loss (omudhime is discussed in detail in the next section of this paper). In essence, the notion of erasure not being permanent alludes to Oudano’s capacity to invoke, imagine, speculate, summon, orientate, and cite subaltern histories, calling them in from the margins of institutional archives.

In addition to the photographic archive, *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* was also developed through my encounters with other archives, such as the sound recordings of Namibian orality in the

collection of Ernst and Ruth Dammann at the Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB), Switzerland. In 2019, I worked as a Pro Helvetia artist-in-residence in Basel, spending three months at BAB and listening to pieces of orature in this collection, which had been donated to the BAB by theologian and linguist Ernst Dammann (1904 - 2003). The collection includes “diaries, manuscripts, tapes, photograph albums, negatives and slides related to his research in Namibia and southern Africa” between 1953 and 1997 (Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009: xiv). Dammann worked with his wife Ruth in generating this material from several fieldtrips they took across the country.

The following sections discuss my method and the approaches that I used in refining *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* as I performed it at African and European festivals such as the *Impossible Bodies Festival* (2019), *Ruhrfestspiele* (2019), *Owela Festival* (2019), *Theaterfestival Spielart* (2019), *The Burden of Memory* (2019), *Infecting the City* (2019), and *Zürcher Theater Spektakel* (2020 and 2021).

Archival frictions through performance practice

Colonial archives are historically constructed to incorporate the deliberate erasure of African subjectivities as a basis of their knowledge systems. Black bodies are often fetishised and exoticised, and labelled as ‘the primitive’ in colonial presentations. This is highlighted by Shiweda (2011) in her discussion of the production of visual evidence and colonialism when she writes that by “...1880s photography was being used more or less systematically by those engaged in the extension of colonial rule in a relentless quest to classify and catalogue ‘exotic’ places and peoples” (Shiweda, 2011: 40). Given the existence of just such an oppressive archive, it is logical to confront it with another kind of archive that suggests self-writing and restoration. I thus engaged this colonial archive with other archives that are not necessarily colonial so that I could rely on other knowledge systems beyond the narrow framework of a colonial, nationalist, and institutional archive. *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* as my artistic offering is an outcome of Oudano as a critical archival process. Museums and archival institutions such as the MARKK are very formal, disciplined, and clinical spaces; it is at such sites that I interrupted the stringent and rigid everyday rituals of collecting, researching and exhibition making with my performances. The principle and the practice of playing between, and with, various archival forms are enabled by Oudano’s requirement for intimacy. I interpret

Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime as my praxis of Oudano that referenced different African ritual practices of movement, healing, and memory.

The Omudhime shrub is well known amongst Aawambo communities of northern Namibia, being used for a range of sacred and secular purposes. I explored my cultural knowledge of this tree for its symbolic and literal significance, embedded in the embodied and spatial practices of Aawambo. By turning to this knowledge, I reference my experiences and memories associated with this shrub; for example, it holds herbal and mythical potentialities for cleansing during births and burials, amongst other rituals (Mbenzi, 2011). The shrub's medicinal power is used in treating health issues such as gonorrhoea and nose bleeds, and effecting abortions. In addition, omudhime is used to predict the future and for sorcery and the placing of curses. The omudhime shrub bears fruits called oondhime (Mbenzi, 2011). The word okudhima is a verb translated as 'to erase' or 'to extinguish'. The layered functionalities of omudhime offer conceptual and discursive potential, hence my framing of it as an embodied archive. I therefore turned to omudhime as a cultural reference and a spatial archive that is useful in dealing with erasure in the archive. Although omudhime does not feature in *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* in the material sense, Oudano enabled me to summon or call in the symbolic meanings of the shrub. This was done through the acts of remembering omudhime and citing it through poetic and lyrical texts.

I see omudhime as representing an interesting concept of erasure, one that isn't just destructive but is – in fact – principally generative, rich, and productive. In the context of *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime*, I draw on the speculative and cleansing elements of omudhime to make the work suggestive and evocative. At heart, *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* aims at carrying out a spiritual cleansing of the colonial archive, as a missing factor in the discussion of the transformation and decoloniality of the nationalist archive. The motivation for such cleansing has to do with a place and its physical structures, as well as what is (or was) kept in the found archival, museum, educational, or theatre sites where *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* was eventually performed. In the case of the MARKK, there is a range of cultural objects, artworks, documents, and photography collections from different parts of the world to be found in the archive and most of these collections were assembled during colonial times. The MARKK also has a history of collecting and exchanging human remains (Wild, 2018).

In addition to the idea of the shrub, I make use of salt, fire and marula seed-stones to create an atmosphere of cleansing. In the next section, I discuss how I make use of these objects, which

I frame as materiality that mobilises other forms of presence in the archival work of *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime*.

Given the limitations of a colonial photographic archive, I worked with very few images from the collection at the MARKK. Nevertheless, I particularly looked for ‘queer possibilities’ in this collection and the images I ended up choosing to explore were selected because I could read sites of resistance, movement, and agency in the black bodies, objects, and landscapes they depicted. I deliberately chose not to use photographs that overtly represented colonial occupation, violence, and victory because my intention was to trace and map voices and ideas that transgress and subvert the colonial narrative. During the Hamburg residency, the group raised a lot of objections around the reproduction of violent representation in the exhibition we created. We felt that any value in the reproduction of colonial violence had been exhausted. We considered this to be an important ethical consideration, as discussed by Macías (2016).

What are the ethics, for example, of working with archival records that are produced through processes of inclusion and exclusion that determine what life gets recognition and is, thus, rendered socially relevant, and what life does not? More specifically, what are the ethics of working with archives that contain, at times, quite descriptive records of violence? What kind of ethical negotiations are possible and necessary when researchers encounter archived stories of any kind and decide what, how, why, and under what conditions to reproduce or retell those stories in research reports?
(Macías, 2016: 21).

These fundamental questions posed by Macías remind us that even when one deliberately chooses not to reproduce records of violence, one is not exempted from the ethical implications of working with the colonial archive. By choosing to interrogate the colonial archive, we are already implicated in the violence that *is* the colonial archive. This means that even if my approach was about restoring, de-contextualising, and reimagining its sound recordings and photographs, I was always haunted by the question: how ‘hygienic’ are artistic interventions in colonial archival work? My question relates to Sullivan and Ganuses (2021), who work with Khoekhoegowab orature from the Dammann Collection. In reflecting on the ethics of doing creative work in this process, they ask, “By decontextualising the recordings from the temporal, geographical and social specificities of their recording, is there a risk of foreclosing the agencies, concerns and resilience of the individuals contributing the recordings?” (Sullivan and Ganuses, 2021: 104). Sullivan and Ganuses go further by pointing to questions around intellectual property rights, particularly the copyright of the persons and communities that have contributed to the Dammann archive (Sullivan and Ganuses, 2021).

These questions remain pertinent for any artist, academic, or activist who wishes to work with collections of this nature. Sullivan and Ganuses (2021) also direct us to the possibilities contained within the ethical questions. They ask, "...is it possible to 'recompose' recordings in the archive in a way that recuperates the voice and agency of those recorded, without indulging in utopian, paranoid or retraumatising recreations?" (Sullivan and Ganuses, 2021: 104). I argue that the possibility lies in understanding the communal ethos that underlies most of the songs, dances, praise poetry, and riddles that are recorded in the Dammann archive. At least in the African context, communality is one way concept that made me connect with some of the sonic material that I encountered in the Dammann archive. I recognised some of the songs that have been sung for many years by Aawambo, for example *Kapundja*, which I discuss below as one of the songs I recorded for *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime*. Before I reflect these sonic experiments, let me return to colonial photography from the MARKK.



Figure 11: 'Unnamed woman sitting in front of train tracks', glass negative, collection of Alexander von Hirschfeld, In. Nr. 2018.1:40, MARKK.

The photograph above (Figure 11) of a woman smoking while seated before some train tracks was one of the images that appealed to me in the Hirschfeld archive. Hirschfeld took this photo during the 1904 to 1908 colonial war in German Southwest Africa, as it was then called.

German colonialism in the country now called Namibia began in 1884, establishing an imperial genocidal gaze directed at African communities in the colony. In establishing the German settler economy, the settlers and Schutztruppe (colonial troops) tried to compel the African inhabitants to give up their land and resources. When these Africans resisted, the Schutztruppe wrested their land, stole their cattle, and raped women from the Nama and Ovaherero communities (Baer, 2018). Furthermore, for resisting this colonial invasion, the Schutztruppe poisoned dams and chased indigenous people away to die in the desert. The survivors became prisoners of war who were subjected to forced and exploitative labour for the colonial economy (Gewald, 1995; Kreienbaum, 2012). “Some of these forced labourers worked in confines of a concentration camp; others built railroads or worked as miners, and many were farm labourers for the German settlers” (Baer, 2018: 1).

Baer (2018) reads the African gaze of resistance as a response to the German genocidal gaze. She argues that it is crucial for these anti-colonial subjectivities of resistance to be restored and brought to the forefront as a way of restoring the dignity and humanity of the African communities who suffered genocide. This anti-colonial resistance is archived in Nama and Otjiherero orality; it is also available in written works, for example the subversive writings of the Nama intellectual and anti-colonial leader Hendrik Witbooi, who fought the German colonial invasion. My speculative reading of Figure 11 draws on an intimacy with the photograph and the subject it portrays to trace possible historical moments that might not be immediately obvious when only reading this photograph through the context of the genocidal gaze. The ‘unnamed woman’ is not merely a colonial subject, her body language also registers queerly to me as reader. I read a sense of agency in the act of smoking while seated on the tracks and this act looks and feels like a moment of repose. Tamar Garb reminds us that close reading of African subjects in colonial archives is crucial to see what might not be immediately visible in a colonial frame. “It’s easy just to think of them as compromised by the colonial narrative, but when you look at the images as portraits, in many of them you also get a sense of the sentience and inner life of the subjects, something that anthropological classification is not concerned with.” (Garb, 2019: 45).

This is how I read this photograph (Figure 11) as a site of queer possibility. The unnamed woman’s gaze of resistance is in her body language, in the position that she adopts and in gazing back at the camera. This kind of reading is not only a form of looking at the image but

also exploring the affective and haptic dimensions of the photograph. For example, Tina Campt (2017) suggests a listening to images when she writes:

Listening to images is constituted as a practice of looking beyond what we see and attuning our senses to the other affective frequencies through which photographs register. It is a haptic encounter that foregrounds the frequencies of images and how they move, touch, and connect us to the *event* of the photo. Such a connection may begin as a practice of “careful looking,” but it does not end there. (Campt, 2017: 9)



Figure 12: Women constructing the railway, forced labour during German-Namibian War 1904 - 1908, glass negative, collection of Alexander von Hirschfeld, Inv. Nr. 2018.1:298, MARKK.

Campt’s practice of listening to images as an embodied method that holds potential to unlock the speculative dimensions of the historical process resonates with me. For example, I selected the photograph above (Figure 12) of women building rail tracks for my research for two reasons. Firstly, Namibian labour scholarship tends to centre men in the labour histories; secondly, I often wondered how other Namibian artists would work with this photograph. Figure 12 is not the first colonial photograph of women as genocide subjects in conditions of forced labour but the intimacy between these women makes me wonder what their conversations were. Is it possible for us to be intimate with this image as a way of reading the intimacy between these women? What does it mean to be intimate with colonial photography?

Could it be that these intimacies (between the women) were moments of resistance and solidarity amongst them, as colonised subjects?

The questions are not meant “...to *give voice* to the slaves, but rather to imagine what cannot be verified, a realm of experience which is situated between zones of death- social and corporeal death-and to reckon with the precarious lives which are visible only in the moment of disappearance.” (Hartman, 2008: 12). My reading of these photographs therefore offers “... a history written with and against the archive.” (Hartman, 2008: 12). Figures 11 and 12 also produce queer and feminist affects. In the following paragraphs of this section, I discuss my queer reading of one of these photographs and the queer visualities that they both inspired in my performance practice. This queer possibility in and out of the colonial archive is a practice of speculative history as a strategy for dealing with erasure in the colonial archive. The work of queering the archive – which is what *Ondaanisa yo Omudhime* sets out to do – is a slippery and tricky task, given the historic erasure of queer life and ideas in Namibian history. While tracing queerness in the first genocide of the 20th century, I am attentive to the problems of such an undertaking. Avery (undated) warns against romanticising queerness in the institutional archive as the process can be potentially unethical. Avery argues:

Queering the archive can mean producing emotional and heavily romanticized depictions of past “queers” that can give queer people a false sense of security in the present and future. It can also mean reproducing the trauma of existing as a marginalized sexual deviant to expose the limitation of the archive, but still negatively affecting the individual queer subject that comes into research. Neither type of solution may be entirely ethical. However, both do reflect the core tenet of queer theory: that queerness exists within the tension between hegemony (and the desire for inclusion in the archive) and resistance (and the desire of subjective self-definition in the past, present, and future). (Avery, undated).

This returns us to the ethical questions raised in earlier parts of this section. I am interested in the tension between hegemony and resistance that Avery refers to, as a way in which trans-histories are produced. My approach of ‘queering the colonial archive’, which involves listening and playing queerly, is reflected in the collage as remnants of *Ondaanisa yo Omudhime*, below.



Figure 13: 'Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime', collage, Tuli Mekondjo (2020).

After performing *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime* several times, I assembled photographs I gathered from both MARKK and the BAB gave them to Namibian visual artist Tuli Mekondjo to create a collage that documents the visual research of my work and she suggested that I include images of myself from the live performances. Tuli Mekondjo is a mixed-media artist whose visual artwork brings together practices of embroidery, omahangu,¹⁵ collage, paint, resin, colonial photography, and performance. Her work generally draws on photographic archives and the displacement, erasure, and loss of Namibian cultural practices (Taylor, 2021). Tuli Mekondjo used her unique technique to create a collage of a landscape on canvas. The gold and brown background of the collage mirrors the wide Namibian landscape, train tracks and old rusted trains. This is layered with images of people cut from several colonial photographs of ritual performances in South Africa and Togo; rock art from central Namibia; a tunnel; a fertility doll; and people in Owambo. Individuals depicted in figures 11 and 12 are also included. All these images are layered to create an abstract and literal visualization of *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime*.

This layering is also explored by artist and musician Elrico Gawanab, who put together a digital collage using photos from the *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime* archive that Tuli Mekondjo also worked with. Gawanab's role was to design the sleeve cover of the 9-track recording of songs I made for *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime*.

¹⁵ Millet cultivated by Aawambo and VaKavango in northern Namibia.



Figure 14: Album cover artwork for *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime*, Elrico Gawanab (2020)

Gawanab specifically chose the two colonial photographs and collaged them with a photograph of me wearing the marula seed-stone costume that I use in my performance. This layering visualises an intergenerational intimacy and thus creates a trans-historic text. The excerpt below from the poetic text of *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* is another piece that demonstrates the queering of the archive. The text is generally delivered as a manifesto that I would read during the performance as though announcing and orating a moment of restorative justice in the colonial archive. The excerpt reads:

Here are a few photos from this concrete archive
 A few useful ones
 A womxn at forced labour in history, name erased, yet she is so present
 My body relates to her's in that historic and brutal moment
 She is super queer, deviant and feminist
 I read her as a queer archive
 The homosexual and transarchive that will not be buried by you
 She is smoking dagga and she says fuck the heteropatriarchy
 I read resilient, resistant womxn at work
 Doing double the labour here and at home
 I read queerness in the shapeshifting bodies in the Southern African rock art
 I found love in the colonial archive
 (Mushaandja, 2018).

This process of drawing material from multiple forms of archives— in this case the institutional, embodied and spatial – and putting them into conversation with each other through a creative project is what I present here as the method of archival frictions. I rehearse this method in the

making of *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* as well as in the writing of this thesis. This process happens through the repeated listening to, and playing with, historical traces and fragments. My lived experience and speculative Oudano practice of rubbing these histories together is inspired by Macharia’s theorisation on Frottage, as he notes below:

“Frottage does not provide a complete narrative or even signal where the researcher should look; at best, its traces demonstrate that someone or something has passed through a space and left some kind of evidence. Within the African and Afro-diasporic archives I explore, the figure of the homosexual appears rarely and often as a fragment...” Macharia (2019: 4).

It is through the rubbing together of embodied, spatial, and institutional knowledges that I aim to queer the archive – which means writing the queer figure and feeling into history. The excerpt and collage above are both products of this kind of archival work and more examples are unpacked in the following sections of this paper. I argue that this is enabled by the notion of finding love in the archive as expressed in the excerpt above. Here, I refer to Buckley (2008) who argues that working with colonial photographic archives is a lover’s discourse. Buckley suggests that “...the discourse surrounding decaying colonial photographs is a lover’s discourse. The decay causes controversy because it reminds us of our feelings for, and intimacy with, colonial culture and asks that we imagine ways of finally letting go” (Buckley, 2008: 270). In my method of archival frictions, ‘love’ is applied in the sense of finding possibilities of love in the archive that can be traced in body languages and intimacies, as expressed by Africans in the colonial photographs above (figures 11 and 12).

Presence in material and sonic cultures



Figure 15: Solo performance of Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime at Ruhrfestspiele in Recklinghausen, Germany (2019). Photograph: Ana Córcoles Siegersbusch.

In this section, I provide a detailed discussion about certain found objects and how they were utilised in my performance. By found objects, I refer to cultural artefacts that I encountered in the various museum collections I visited, such as spears and recordings of orature. I also refer to objects such as marula seed-stone costumes, fire, flowers, salt, and a rubber tree, which were repeatedly used for performances. These objects would be generally referred to as props in a dramatic context but because they play a bigger role than mere props in my work, I make use of visual-culture terminology by referring to them as found objects. By referring to them as found objects, I highlight the cultural meanings they hold which include the different forms of presence marked in them. For example, the spears that I used in the initial performance at the MARKK in 2018 were acquired by an unknown German collector in the 1950s from Otjozondjupa, a region in central Namibia. The term ‘found objects’ allows my analysis to explore the archival potential of material culture as an element of Oudano’s practice of encountering and engagement. This is reflected in Odin’s (2001) writing, which argues that material culture is performative, processual, and relational.

Previous studies have looked at the performative nature of materiality and material culture (Ting, 2009; Okoye, 2014). Cultural objects are used as symbolic and spiritual matter in events and rituals. In addition to viewing the bodily or lived experience as being central to human-object relations, it is important to interpret and read cultural objects as multidimensional elements that connect people, events, and gesture (Ting, 2010; Okoye, 2014). This is to say that objects in *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* such as spears, the marula seed-stone costume, sonic orature, and the cultural meaning of the rubber tree have histories. Hence, I consider a performer’s body as a multi-directional ‘compass’ that points to different sites of knowledge. This practice relates to Margie Orford’s (2018) notion of “gathering scattered archives” in her archival reading of Ovaherero women’s literature from the mid-19th century. Gathering scattered archives is an act of reconciling and restoring knowledges hidden in the cracks and margins due to their historical displacement by the colonial project. This act of resistance against erasure requires the historical study to look beyond the linear structure of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial archiving (Orford, 2018).

When the audience arrives at the site of the in *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* performance, they are received by the soundscape made up of arriving, moving, and departing trains as well as orature performed by Festus Shikolo, Lena Fender, Elifas Eiseb, Adam Horeib and several other unnamed groups and individuals recorded between 1953 and 1954. This selected Namibian orature that I encountered in the Dammann archive at the BAB includes recordings

of /Gais, Oongano (riddles), and Omitandu (praises). The soundscape also includes a repertoire of songs, most of them composed by myself and recorded together with my musical ensemble, Tschuku Tschuku. This ensemble is made up of musicians from Namibia, Congo Brazzaville and Zimbabwe. It includes Samuel Batola (lead guitarist), Raymond Mapfumira (bass guitarist and keyboardist), Chris Eiseb (percussionist), and Fernando Paulus (drummer). The soundscape of the performance-research project *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* (Dance of the Rubber Tree) was co-performed by this ensemble, producing an archive of music and poetry that was curated for the live performance. The ‘Tschuku sound’ of love, struggle and migration songs is therefore not only distinctively Southern African, but also widely influenced by many other global musical traditions, for example, my choral and classical training background. The sound of the Tschuku Tschuku ensemble is one of many contemporary continuities of historic train-related musicalities and their migratory dynamics are discussed in earlier sections of this paper. Below, I discuss one song from the *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* album, to speak to how presence manifests as an aspect of embodied knowledge.

Kapundja is an Oshiwambo traditional song about migration, exile, and home. It is a song familiar from my childhood that we regularly heard on the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation’s Oshiwambo-language service in the 90s. Before we went to bed at night, Tate Mwatala (a local storyteller) would regularly sing this song before and after he orated a folktale. I was delighted to encounter versions of this song in the Dammann Collection during my residency in Basel in 2019. I had not heard this song for a long time, but I remembered a few lines of it. There are two versions of *Kapundja* in this collection, one is performed by Festus Shikolo and the other by Epafra Amazila;¹⁶ both were recorded in January 1954 in Okahandja and Grootfontein, respectively. It is in light of this resonance that I decided to add this song to my repertoire of *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* by recording a Shambo and jazz cover with Namibian guitarist and singer Lovisa Abner. Some of its lyrics are sung as follows:

Kapundja aamwandje tutondoke/ tuye kuukwambi nongandjera/ iitunda yaanhu
kayi kalwa/ iilongo yaanhu kayi tindilwa/ yakweni ye kuthingile onime/ onime
yomiilya yaangandjera/ yagono nangame ndeyi gonene/ yuulu nangame
nduuluuwo/ nduuva ya lya omukulukadhi/ nokanona kokamati eengombe.¹⁷

¹⁶ Although Ernst Dammann recorded Epafra’s surname as Amazila, it is most likely that the correct spelling is Amadhila.

¹⁷ ‘Kapundja my children, let us run/ to Uukwambi and Ongandjera/ One does not belong in other people’s homes/One cannot insist on living in another’s land/ The others have bewitched you with a lion/ A lion from the plantation of Aangandjera/ It snored and I snored too/ I heard it ate up a woman, a boy and cattle.’

One account from oral history claims that a person from Uukwambi broke the law of the Ondonga Kingdom and they were reprimanded for it. The song's lyrics are therefore an expression of territory and the need to move back to one's home. On the *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime* recording, I sing this song with Lovisa the Superstar, whose work is also discussed in the fourth paper. *Kapundja* sheds light on the territorialisation of Owambo through its traditional authorities and kingdoms. Although these territories are not divided in the same way as colonisation's ruling through the imposition of borders, *Kapundja* as an old song sheds light on the differences and tensions that have long existed between the different kingdoms in Owambo. The reference to the lion is an interesting aspect of this song in the sense that it recalls historic migrations of Aangandjela and Aakwambi into Ondonga. During these migrations, many people would encounter lions and escaping them would be one of the reasons why they sought refuge in Ondonga, for example. The song is a struggle song that precedes colonialism in its expression of tension and territorialisation. Recording *Kapundja* for *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime* works towards restitution, since I encountered it during my archival research. It evokes questions of restitution in the sense of performing it as a way of bringing it back into the public consciousness. This was done to make it widely accessible again, especially to Namibian youth who might not know it.

In the live performance of *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime*, the performers moved through the crowd carrying candles, flowers, and buckets of salt as they encountered these sonic and visual elements. The salt was poured into an individual audience member's hands, while the lit candles and flowers were also handed out as an invitation to join in the cleansing ritual. The invitation was articulated through a careful and gentle act meant to draw the audience into the event, suggesting a protest and a cleansing ritual at the same time. The salt was also poured on the ground or floor as well as on the walls and windows as an act of cleansing derived from several African cultural practices. For example, the Aawambo used to have a tradition whereby young men would embark on a long journey to collect salt from the Etosha Pan as part of their initiation into manhood (Mans, 2017). Salt has been historically treated as a valuable trade commodity; however, it is still used to this day in our homes to cleanse spaces and respond to spiritual attacks. *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime* would intervene at a site on the basis that it is haunted by its colonial past and neo-colonial present and hence materialities such as salt and fire are meant to evoke and awaken suppressed voices.

Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime turns to fire as one of the archives that is activated through the body. Fire was chosen because it mobilises various kinds of presence and it is a constant in many

Oudano practices, such as healing and cleansing ceremonies. In these traditions, fire is generally used to evoke and summon an ancestral presence. For example, Ovaherero and Ovahimba homesteads have okuruwo, which is the place of maintaining the holy fire for the purpose of mediating communication with the ancestral realm. In *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime*, the use of fire suggests an awakening of ancestral spirits in a range of different contexts. These includes those that have had a dignified burial as well as those whose remains are kept in museum and university collections in places like Germany, Switzerland, the United States of America and South Africa, as well as Namibia. Through the poetic text, *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* also explicitly suggests the burning of museums, theatres and archives – with the purpose of inviting the audience to imagine the critical usefulness of such a conflagration.

Both salt and fire evoke the presence that would otherwise be trapped and hidden in the figurative margins and cracks of colonial and nationalist archives. Both materialities are ways of acknowledging the presence of ancestral spirits that might be imprisoned within institutional collections, for example, contained inside historically looted human remains and cultural artefacts in European and African museums. A *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* performance acknowledges its own arrival in a site and this is also reflected the poetic text that I wrote for the performances. Below is an extract of this text.

We are here to make you clean up your filthy wealth
We are not here to make war, we are here to make coffee
We are here to collect our things
With us we also have fire, salt and beer to awaken the black ancestors in your cabinets
Administrators of the academy and economics, we will not explain without compensation
We are here to take back our bags, our bucks, our bibles, our blankets, our books, our bones,
our bodies
To return them to the original archives, the repertoires and rituals of the Rubber Tree
(Mushaandja, 2018).

This extract shows the kind of self-recognition that is performed as a way of taking up space. The ‘we’ signifies a communal commitment to critically engage with the haunted site. The poetic text, which is usually recited during the performance, takes a tone of a manifesto, performing the ‘we’ as an invitation, intended to mobilise audience member into the project of institutional critique. Politically, the ‘we’ is a marker for Blacks as descendants of colonised people. The ‘we’ therefore stands for an act of speaking with, and on behalf of, the dead and the living. The poetic text is therefore the element that reveals *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime*’s political agenda as a project invested in questions of restitution and restorative justice.

In the text above, the burning is implied literally and symbolically. Fire is also suggested for its detoxifying potential for spaces such as museums, which contain looted objects that are often covered in toxic preservatives. To use fire in performances in institutional spaces often meant negotiating with the management of various museums, theatres, and archives because most do not allow fires to be lit inside their buildings. At venues such as the National Theatre of Namibia, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, and Mosountrum Künstlerhaus, we could only use candles outside the buildings; the MARKK was one of the few venues that allowed candles to be lit in its library and foyer. The restrictions imposed on usage of fire are institutional safety measures that are, for example, related to the historic burnings of theatres and museums in Germany. *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime*'s suggestion to bring fire into contact with institution is a gesture of restoration because it sheds light on histories and relational aesthetics that are generally invisible in these institutions.

A live performance of *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime* generally includes the lighting of candles by performers, together with members of the audience. In other instances, a bonfire is made. The implicit call to burn a museum, books, and art generally caused a lot of tension and discomfort amongst some people who experienced the work. These tensions were resolved through dialogues within which different experiences of fire were shared. In justifying the usefulness of fire, I referenced its multi-directional uses, which reveal what fire makes possible. I gave examples of practices I wrote about in my text *Black Boxes and White Cubes as Concentration Camps: Concerning Institutional Violence and Intergenerational Trauma*.¹⁸

Let us imagine productive, symbolic and metaphoric uses of fire in human civilization. Fire mobilizes possibility. I am thinking of agrarian fire practices for clearing and fertilizing the land, disposing waste, controlling diseases and generating nutrients. The *Mukanda* male-initiation in Zambia, masks made during the initiation are burned to signify a moment of border crossing for initiates. Ovaherero have a holy fire that signifies a third space in which ancestral presence is mobilized and consulted. What lessons can be taken from the recent museum burnings of Notre Dame (2019), National Museum of Brazil (2018) as well as Frankfurt's Museum of Modern Art (2019)? What is the critical substance of these ashes? Do they restore, heal or cleanse anything? (Mushaandja, 2020).

I turn to the words of Xola Mehlolakulu, who wrote about burning buildings in a Fallist context asking, "... what if the real answer comes from the ashes of this building, rather than its

¹⁸ "Black Boxes and White Cubes as Concentration Camps: Concerning Institutional Violence and Intergenerational Trauma" in, Jorge Munguía (ed.), *Echoes of a Place*, Mexico City: Buró—Buró, p. 149-163.

erection, what if the answer to our calls lies in burning buildings?” (Mehlolakulu, 2017: 65). Mehlolakulu suggests that fire has the potential to generate new solutions to structural issues; I do not read this suggestion as one that romanticises loss but rather as one that reminds us of the limits of hoarding and commodifying knowledge. An interesting example that speaks to Mehlolakulu’s argument is the devastating wildfire that burnt the University of Cape Town’s Jagger Library on 18 April 2021. At the time of this fire, the Jagger Library was the university’s archive for Special Collections, a symbolic academic home to many scholars of African studies. Sindi-Leigh McBride and Julia Rensing (2023) reflect on this fire by reminding us about what was at stake. “For an African institution to no longer hold the wealth of knowledge resources at UCT Libraries Special Collections represented is both epistemically and politically devastating.” (McBride and Rensing, 2023: 12). While recognising this loss, I would like to make a connection between Mehlolakulu’s argument and an 2022 durational performance of *The Fire This Time* by Qondiswa James and Tapiwa Guzha at the site of the fire on 6 February 2022). While attending to the labour of the African ancestors who built UCT, this work suggests that ‘the burning is the mourning’ (James, personal communication, 24 June 2022). Expressed differently, the 2021 wildfire could have been an ancestral response inviting us to reconsider how African knowledge is made accessible in the academy.

It is through these critical questions and considerations that I position *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* as an embodied and spatial practice that pays attention to cultural objects such as sound recordings of Namibian orature, marula seed-stones, salt, and fire to evoke intellectual histories that are either trapped or hardly seen or heard in colonial archives.



Figure 16: 'Performing *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* with Kresiah Mukwazhi at *Infecting the City* (2019)', Castle of Good Hope, Cape Town, South Africa. Photograph: © *Infecting the City* 2019/Xolani Tulumani.



Figure 17: 'Performing Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime with Kresiah Mukwazhi at *Infecting the City* (2019)', Castle of Good Hope, Cape Town, South Africa. Photograph: © *Infecting the City* 2019/Xolani Tulumani.

Being undisciplined in sites of concentrationality



Figure 18: 'Performing Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime in August 2019 at the entrance of Basler Afrika Bibliographien', Basel, Switzerland. Photograph: Hemen Heidari.

Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime is generally performed inside and around venues that I identify as sites of concentrationality. This word refers to the institutional structures that enable and maintain sameness, elitism, separatism, categorisation, and disciplinarity rooted in the everyday practices of archives, theatres, and museums. In the context of Namibia for example,

concentrationality is a product of the white-settler culture of imperialism and cultural invasion. Writing on the Jewish Holocaust and ghettoisation, Cole (2016) argues that concentration is marked in absences, presences, and boundaries in Nazi geographies. Cole maintains that this concentration was aimed at alienation, displacement, and segregation in this context. In Namibia, concentrationality is better understood when linked to the history of concentration camps during the 1904 to 1908 genocide, which I discuss below. Practices of German colonial scientists – such as grave robbing and the collecting of African human remains for the purposes of eugenics (Hillebrecht, 2019) – were all methods of concentrationality that established an apartheid of knowledges.

Site/place is a vital consideration in *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime*, being considered as representing an ephemeral archive that contributes to the body of work. This means that a place's genealogies, histories, and contemporary circumstances matter to the performance event. Performance artist and writer Ato Malinda's (2011) writing on the performative nature of the built environment mobilises an awareness of how sites are not passive, but play roles that are influenced by social aesthetics and cultural history. Wilkie (2004) writes about site-specific, site-responsive, site-generic, and site-sympathetic performances when referring to a range of environment-based performances. She theorises multiple ways in which performance and theatre can engage with everyday sites and places and shows how some British performance and theatre has been useful in mapping, locating, negotiating, conceptualising, representing, witnessing, memorialising, touring and hybridising place (Wilkie, 2004).

I draw on practices like these in conceptualising the language and vocabulary of my Oudano praxis as site-related. This is to say that the notion of site is part of conceptualising and performing the work as it happens. It is also to agree with Wilkie's (2004) theorisation of a performance as being able to simultaneously shift between being specific, responsive, sympathetic, and generic regarding the places and sites it finds itself in. The performance always has a symbiotic relationship with the site or place and vice versa. The process of making *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* thus involved playing with the architecture and archive of place by being in, and referencing, specific spaces and histories of the sites in question. *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* is a work that emerged from the MARKK as a specific site, but it responded and related to venues such as the Castle of Good Hope (Cape Town), the National Theatre of Namibia (Windhoek), and the Basler Afrika Bibliographien (Basel), all sites where it has been performed. All these institutions were treated as sites of concentrationality. Here, I draw on the symbolic metaphors of 'black boxes and white cubes' as sites of institutional violence and

intergenerational trauma (Mushaandja, 2020). Below is an excerpt of the poetic text that reflects this critique.

And then there were bodies that cannot breathe
This museum has been the new concentration camp
The poisoning preservative for the things that white people stole from us
The museum is here to defend and uphold the legacy of violence
It still reeks of our ancestral remains that were once locked up here
That are still here, in their cabinets
Its rules, policies, archives, walls, objects, people have blood on their hands

It is not built for living bodies, it is built for broken bodies
Bodies without voice and flesh
Yet, these bodies refuse to be erased and silenced
They are not sleeping, they are dancing
They remember their own archives carried by us, their children's children
And so we dance in the concrete archives
Removed from the Rubber Tree

Our bodies cannot breathe
Because violence is everyday bread in the theatre
The white box, black box are concentration camps
Because there has been no project for healing
Because our pain has been intellectualized and capitalized
Because white people haven't paid up yet
Because the wounded nationalists are suffering from amnesia
Because Ghetto love holds memories of dispossession
Where black people, the mentally-ill and the homosexuals fought for love
To hold on to their Rubber Tree
(Mushaandja, 2018).

This part of the poetic text brings the body to the fore, to unpack how it negotiates and processes a site that holds traumatic memories. I place emphasis on the suffocating body as it navigates the colonial archive in a post-colonial museum. This, for example, relates to the haunted and haunting nature of museums in both Germany and Namibia that hold African human remains – thus continuing to deny them dignified burials. While we are aware of the presence of human remains in these spaces, the hoarding and bureaucratisation of these collections reveal how concentrationality treats these bodies as absent (Cole, 2016). Namibian historian Vilho Shigwedha critiques this problem by bringing attention to the ways in which collections of human remains repatriated from Germany in 2011 and 2014 have been handled at the National Museum of Namibia.

Notably, when thinking of a museum as a sanctuary for human remains it creates tensions and contradictions with most African practices of memorialisation and commemoration of the dead. Certainly, the incompatibility between museum

practice and ways of doing things makes its function, role and purpose alien to the diverse burial rites of the African people. (Shigwedha, 2018: 76).

Shigwedha's critique points us to Namibia's nation state and its non-inclusive and selective memorialisation (Stonehouse, 2018). *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* thus became an institutional critique, a way of 'speaking back' to the unfinished work of restorative justice between Namibia and its former colonisers. The work also goes beyond merely speaking back in the sense that it suggests a cleansing ritual that invites audiences participate. The poetic text sets this up by announcing the performers' arrival and presence as descendants of colonised people. When recited during the performance, it establishes an intimacy between the performance and the site by acknowledging the presence of historically looted bodies and objects.

Artistic interventions and the affective labour necessary in interrogating these cultural institutions requires one to recognise these spaces as representing toxic encounters, acknowledging their noxious histories and how they are sustained in contemporary structures. Therefore, this violence is particularly marked in the concentrationality of the institution's racism, capitalism, sexism, ableism, and heteronormativity. This concentration manifesting as epistemological violence is embedded in the architectures, histories, collections, and structural processes of these institutions. To name these continued injustices and claim space for dialogic action is held to be 'undisciplined' because it uncovers affective knowledges and rehumanises the conversation.

Concentrationality is therefore a feature of colonial knowledge production that is sustained in nationalism. It is interrupted through split-focus and undisciplined acts of transgressing the boundaries of the sites, for example by bringing fire into the institutions (as discussed in earlier sections of this paper). *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* thus became a trans-national project, directing our attention to the limits of African nation states and their implications for colonial heritage. *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime*'s ritualised behaviour of pouring and handing out salt and flowers, making of fire, and orating the call for restorative justice was repeated in a procession at sites such as the Independence Square (Place de l'indépendance), a memorial monument in central Yaoundé, Cameroon. Similar events included a walking procession from the workshop in the basement of the National Theatre of Namibia to its stage and all the way out onto Robert

Mugabe Avenue,¹⁹ ending up in front of Windhoek’s colonial and Christian landmark, the Christuskirche.



Figure 19: 'Performing Ondaanisa yo pOmdhime at the Palace de l'indépendance in November 2019', Yaoundé, Cameroon. Photograph: Yvan Yamsi.

The harsh violence meted out at concentration camps during the Namibian genocide was aimed at “punishing the interned for ‘rebellious’, ‘pacifying’ the colony by controlling former fighters, and using the camps as a reservoir of forced labour” (Kreienbaum, 2012: 83). But the concentration camp cannot be understood separately from the extermination order announced by German General Lothar von Trotha on 2 October 1904, aimed at completely eradicating the Ovaherero. Many bodies of those that perished in the war and the concentration camps were sent to Germany in the pursuit of racism-based science, such as eugenics. This legacy of scientific racism is still deeply embedded in the contemporary fabric of cultural and educational institutions across Africa and Europe. Today, there is a growing culture of trans-national

¹⁹ Robert Mugabe Avenue in Windhoek city centre is a site of concentrationality as it is home to institutions such as the Christuskirche, the Bank of Namibia, the Independence Memorial Museum, the Tintenpalast (parliament building), the Alte Feste Museum (previously the site of a German concentration camp), the old State House, the Owela Museum, the National Theatre of Namibia, the National Art Gallery of Namibia, the Namibia Scientific Society, and the National Archives. Most of these institutions were established during the colonial period.

collaborative practices by academics, artists and activists intervening in German museum collections, working towards the repatriation of these human remains and cultural objects.²⁰

To write about place and spatiality in Namibia without referencing landscape as a historically contested aspect of Namibian society would be a significant oversight. Landscape has been a central aspect of cultural production, as is evident in visual culture and literature across history (Krishnamurthy, 2018; Hoffman, 2005; Förster, 2005). Krishnamurthy (2018) suggests that contemporary Namibian poetry offers a range of commentaries about land and landscapes. She notes that landscape in Namibian literature can be read in four mega-metaphors namely, “landscape as female; landscape as ancient time; city (Windhoek) is a negative place whilst a township (Katutura) is a positive place; road is a journey of life” (Krishnamurthy, 2018: 149 - 150). This commentary refers to notions of nurturing, survival, desire, environmental care, and ownership while strongly recalling ancestral, mystical as well as mythical pasts (Krishnamurthy, 2018).

Site-relatedness is a universal tradition in performance cultures, revealing the archival potential of place and site. Place and site are significant in local performance practices such as *omitandu*, an Otjiherero form of praise poetry, that are “sung at festivities, but lines of them may be also recited in conversations, as part of stories, and in political speeches.” (Hoffmann, 2007: 44). *Omitandu vyo virongo* (praises of the land/nation) refers to the form of orature that historicises places and landscapes by referring not only to the loss of lives and land due to colonialism but by articulating the resilience and resistance of Ovaherero as well (Hoffmann, 2007). Kavari and Bleckmann, (2009); Hoffman (2005); and Förster (2005) offer detailed studies that look at how land and landscape is referenced in Otjiherero literature as part of memorialising through ritualised performances of shared traumatic and heroic pasts. These studies analyse cultural performances such *Omuhiva*, *Outjina*, and *Omitandu* and how they preserve indigenous knowledge about the 1904 to 1908 genocide, as well as that concerning natural resources and ancestors prior to colonial contact.

Baas (2019) questions the notion of an empty landscape in his study by looking at how space is produced in local fiction written during the colonial period. His critique builds on Palumbo’s (2005) historicisation regarding how the Namibian landscape has been romanticised by colonial scientists and artists as empty and undiscovered because of its wide open and arid

²⁰ Un-doing post-colonial knowledges: Perspectives from academia-arts-activism Workshop Report, 2019). 19.07.2019–21.07.2019, Bayreuth, in: H-Soz-Kult 29.08.2019.

spaces. Baas (2019) discusses a range of fictional literature that destabilises some of these historically racist assumptions, explicating that space is never entirely empty. Found spaces generally contain memories and knowledge that are not immediately visible and tangible – for example, oral histories.

The work of being undisciplined in sites of concentrationality is in announcing and taking up space as reflected in the poetic text.

Let us burn the museum
Let us burn the books, the art, the walls of toxicity
Let us disrupt white monopoly capital
Let us go to the funeral of the curators
Let us go and occupy the land
Let us play the revolution again
Let us have tea and sing love songs
Let us make love to nationalist and white men
Let us drink their wine and eat their food
Let us take back our land
Let us breathe again
Let us do the ritual of homework
Let us return to the Dance of the Rubber Tree
(Mushaandja, 2018)

In this piece, fire is connected to ‘walls of toxicity’ that keep concentrationality in place. Walls refer to literal and symbolic devices such as fences in the Namibian landscapes, gatekeepers and bureaucracies of institutions, as well as practices of alienation. Again, I evoke finding love in the colonial archive by suggesting *Let us make love to nationalist and white men*. This portion of the poetic text has usually been placed at the end of a live performance, when I asked the members of the audience to repeat each line after I recite it. In most performances, most members of the audiences were so immersed in the ritual that they would collectively repeat each line out loud, as if at church or a political rally. In certain cases, some people would refuse to repeat a phrase and instead ask questions or make comments such as, ‘I only make love to people that I love’, ‘to repeat after you would be a form of indoctrination’, ‘burning books and buildings is Nazi culture’, ‘who is curating the funeral of the curator’? It is this critical engagement from audience members and some colleagues on projects such as *Ovizire-Somgu: From Where Do We Speak?* that made *Ondaanisa yo pOmu dhime* a generative event of critical dialogue. While the performance was transgressing boundaries of an institutions and mobilising its audience to follow suit, some audience members also transgressed some of the rules of the ritual performance.

In this paper, I have theorised my process of imagining and making *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime*, a body of work that has manifested itself in the forms of performance art, museum theatre, and radio listening events. I have explored Oudano's methodological usefulness in archivality, particularly through my method of archival frictions, which interfaces embodied, spatial, and institutional knowledges. This paper thus delivers an approach of addressing erasure in a colonial archive to highlight that presence and absence are not mutually exclusive but instead constitute intertwined processes of historical production. *Ondaansia yo pOmudhime* represents a playing with colonial photography and recordings of Namibian orature stored in European museums and archives, as well as with material culture such as salt, fire, spears, flowers, and marula seed-stones. It is through listening and playing that this performance project enabled queer imagination and speculative practice to emerge in Namibian archival studies.

PAPER THREE: AUDIOTOPIA OF KGALA!NAMIB JAZZ AND RELATED STRUGGLE MUSIC

Introduction

Everywhere I turn, Africa is present. No matter what kind of music I touch, the only way I can do it -- I can make sense of it -- is if I come back to my roots. Music connect us directly back to Africa. Angelique Kidjo (2015)²¹.

This paper sets out to **map migrations, mobilities and movements** of jazz and related forms of struggle music, to show how artists in Namibia have used music to mobilise radical imaginations about places and their politics. I engage with songs, practices, and oral histories by artists which I translate in terms of Oudano, to demonstrate how play and playing was shaped by the socio-political conditions during and after apartheid. I am interested in the global geo-political discourse around jazz and struggle music and what their histories in Namibia can teach us about critical consciousness. I theorise an area of Namibian popular music that has hardly received any scholarly attention. I write about this music in the context of migration and mobility to show how they have been shaped by internationalist exchanges in processes of colonial modernity and globalisation. This is purposefully done to situate them in this thesis' question of how Oudano mobilises transgression and tradition as a practice of cultural and historic work. The material discussed in this paper is archived in both national and individual archives that contribute to the rich heritage of popular music in Namibia.

The term *Kgala!Namib* is a title of a song by Namibian musician Elemotho and Jackson Kaujeua Jnr. who combine the indigenous names of Namibia's two deserts- !Namib and Kgalagadi- to describe Namibia's vast and arid landscape. The song was recorded for Elemotho 2003 album, *The System is a Joke*. Sung in Setswana, Otjiherero, Oshiwambo and English, Elemotho recounts that this song was written after his experience of travelling widely across Namibia during the 1990s, which gave him the opportunity to experience the rich cultural heritage and diverse landscape. This experience was life changing for Elemotho who grew up in apartheid Namibia in which freedom of movement was heavily restricted. He described

²¹ Angelique Kidjo in interview titled 'Angelique Kidjo: 'Why can't people see the beauty of my Africa?' with Eliza Anyangwe, published December 11, 2015 on <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/11/africa/angelique-kidjo-grammy-africa-batonga/index.html>

writing *Kgala!Namib* as an expression of patriotism and an identity though exploring the Namibian sound. His Setswana verses sings;

Go lewapi mu le lewatle mono mo lefatsi lena
Re iketlile re mamile mono mo Namibia.
Tla kwano ba gaetso mo no mo lefatsheng
Barui le balimi mono mo Namibia
O tswa kae o ya kae, mono go monate fela
(Elemotho, 2003).

Here, Elemotho sings that there is ‘sky, earth and sea in this land’ (*Go lewapi mu le lewatle mono mo lefatsi lena*), showing the relaxation and easy-going nature of Namibian people. He extends an invitation to people of the world to visit and experience the land that is *Kgala!Namib* while pointing them to the agrarian practices of crop farming and cattle herding that are practiced widely in Namibia. Elemotho plays with the beauty of the Namibian landscape that has been a source of life for many generations. This song, like many of Elemotho’s earlier works, was composed during a time after independence when a lot of cultural production was focused on defining and forging the spirit of the Namibian nation. While it is a post-colonial ode of nation building, I find the *Kgala!Namib* notion to offer an interesting conceptual framework to think about a local spatial identity. This is because the !Namib and Kgalagadi deserts are shared and extend towards other desert ecosystems of Botswana, South Africa and Angola. My reading is that *Kgala!Namib* does not only refer to desert ecosystems but also inherently includes the semi-forest such as north-eastern Namibia.

Research on music and dance practices in Namibia has predominantly focused on traditional and indigenous vocabularies through an ethnomusicology gaze. In contrast, I study a range of historic and contemporary jazz and other musicalities localised in the Namibian context. I center contemporary and historic jazz practices because Namibian musicology and choreology has ignored the development of urban popular music since the 20th century. I also center jazz because it has been a musical practice that is not dominant in the Namibian terrain of popular music and yet it is marked in other popular genres or practices of urban music. Popular music implies the range of hybridised musical practices that are marked by indigenous and cosmopolitan influences. This paper discusses life stories, songs and musical practices of Ben Molatzi, The Dakotas (Original Jazz Masters), Outjo Singers, Erna Chimu and Carlos Kambaekwa. I also discuss Hidipo Nangolo’s 2008 documentary film *Skymaster: Township Jazz Pioneers*, which traces the development of township jazz in Windhoek’s Old Location as

early as the 1940s. All these cases of musical migrations and movements offer valuable histories of struggle and audiotopic imaginaries. I draw on Josh Kun's (2005) concept of Audiotopia which considers music and sound as inherently spatial practices. The above-mentioned artists' cultural work and orality are situated in practices of place making, map making, migration, land struggles as well as imagining landscapes.

Musical migrations

I make use of Aparicio and Jáquez's (2003) notion of musical migrations which they define as an idea that "...foregrounds the processes of dislocation, transformation and mediation that characterize musical structures, production and performances as they cross national and cultural borders and transform their meanings from one historical period to another" (Aparicio and Jáquez, 2003: 3). This definition is offered in Aparicio and Jáquez's discussion of Latino and Caribbean popular music's role in trans-nationalism and cultural hybridism in the Americas. Historically, there was a mutual influence and relationship between Latin American, Caribbean, and African musics as early as the 16th century (Escribano and Neisa, 2012). This movement of music through the exchange of instrumentation and live performance was centred on the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Escribano and Neisa (2012) discuss this mobility of music by giving various examples of how music migrated from and to different parts of the West Coast such as, Abidjan Conakry, Dakar, and Cotonou, which were major ports of these musical migrations. The Kru, an ethnic group from Liberia many of whom worked as sailors, are credited for introducing the guitar in West and Central Africa (Escribano and Neisa, 2012). The Kru also have a notable role into Namibian labour histories in the 1920s as I discuss below.

This study recognises jazz and related struggle music as a mode that register place and spatial dynamics in general. This echoes Romanna's (2004) discussion of how South African Jazz is a marker of place and its politics. Romanna's study looks at contemporary jazz practice in Durban as a register of "demographic, political, economic, and environmental specificities" (Romanna, 2004: 112). On the other hand, Deja (2016) expands on the thinking of music and place by foregrounding the notion of placelessness. Deja's (2016) work on Malawian musicians and their role in the Southern African community conceptualises placelessness as follows;

"I would argue that placelessness, as representing something unmarked by local conditions, is a sonic ideal toward which musicians strive as a means to

distinguish themselves as exceptional within their own local market and/or as being competent in a broader international one. Since even a single piece of recorded music contains a plethora of sonic cues whose interpretation is dependent on the background of the individual listener, the complete absence of a reference to place is unlikely” (Deja, 2016: 118).

This notion of placelessness also invites us to think about music beyond its immediate and tangible registers of place. Resonance is an element of the musical process that reveals the borderlessness of sonic production. This is also reflected in Josh Kun’s text, *The Aural Border* which offers a dynamic perspective on Latin American popular music, sound and performance addressing the United States and Mexican border “... as an audio-spatial territory of performance” (Kun, 2000: 6). This text suggests reading and listening to this music to trace sonic references and representations that mark the spatial politics of the border and beyond its territory. Kun suggests that “By listening to the border’s audiotopias, we are able to hear these spaces that the music itself make possible, the spaces that music maps, evokes and imagine” (Kun, 2000: 7).

Welbeck (2017) has written about the evolution and mobility of American Hip-Hop music as a continuity of African indigenous music that was brought to America through the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This demonstrates that music and sound has always accompanied historic migrations and human mobilities. Although these histories points us to spaces and identities that were became aspirational and transformative, they also reveal the contradictory nature of musical migrations. Apart from producing spaces and places, Deja (2016) reminds us that musical migrations are also characterised by the notion of ‘placelessness’. Deja (2016) writes about Malawian musicians, commercial music and cultural worlds in Southern Africa, and he notes the following challenge of placelessness.

Unfortunately, some contributions made by individual Malawian artists are absorbed in the larger markets in which they participate. Thus, another aspect to placelessness is the silencing of one place through some sort of socio-geographic quantization. Put simply, Malawian musicians have contributed to popular music in the southern African region more broadly, but the music of Malawi is unrecognized by many outside of Malawi, and even within Malawi is seen as lacking an identity of its own compared to Zimbabwe, DRC, and South Africa. (Deja, 2016: 133).

The point that Deja makes above also speaks to Namibian artists who participate in larger markets such as South Africa. This has been the case with the production and circulation of

musical works from different Southern African countries for many decades given South Africa's dominant cultural position in the region. What we have come to know as South African music can therefore never just be reduced to the geographic borders of South Africa as it is marked with fragments of sounds and practices that are derived from distinct musical vocabularies from other parts of the region, the African continent, and the world. South Africa has been able to do this because it has the cultural infrastructure and capital. Hence, when discussing popular cultures and their genealogies, we must consider the late Namibian cultural worker Andre Strauss' notion of mutual influence, as referenced in Becker's (2020) paper on social movements and popular struggles in urban Namibia during apartheid. Contrary to the generalisation that South Africa has been a major influencer of popular culture in the region, the notion of mutual influence is essential for us to understand that cultural production has always been a process of circulation and exchange. This reminds us that even notions of 'Namibian music' or 'South African music' are rather limiting if not superficial. I employ these terms to signify specific geo-political localities.

By reading historic and contemporary live musical practices in the following sections, I wish to demonstrate how they constitute a border crossing praxis through their imaginative, political, and playful modalities. I do this by highlighting how they historicise migrations and movements. These selected sonic works (recorded during and after apartheid) are influenced by African indigenous musical traditions as well as other global musical practices. They also constitute as struggle musics in their own rights.

Jazz and related struggle music

How am I using Jazz in this paper? This paper situates jazz as a popular tradition of the African American slaves' religious and indigenous performances in Congo Square, New Orleans, United States of America in the early 19th century. Congo Square is a notable site in jazz history as it is a place where enslaved people would congregate on Sundays to perform their indigenous rituals signified by song and dance (Kmen, 1972). Jazz historians such as Kmen (1972) have argued that these ritualised performances can be traced back to the Congo, from where the enslaved people had brought them with. The music consisted of drumming, string instruments, banjos, tom-toms and singing collectively performed by enslaved men, women and children as part of their leisurely and spiritual practice (Gioia, 1997). Jazz is a plural musical practice that has been influenced by other practices, including older practices such as Blues and African

indigenous music. The main characteristics of jazz as musical practice includes its complex chords, polyrhythms, swing and blue notes, call and response vocals, and improvisation. This thesis employs the term jazz as an expansive musical practice with elements that can be identified in a range of popular music.

Scholars such as David Coplan (1982) credit the development of jazz in Southern Africa as a musical practice that signified continuity, adaptation, aspiration, and social organisation between various African urban peoples. Coplan's studies looked at musical practices such as Marabi which were already being practiced in South African urban contexts such as Johannesburg from the 1920s (Coplan, 1980). Jazz and a range of African indigenous music are referenced and registered in Marabi. These musical practices enabled what Coplan referred to as culture-contact which reflected performance as an enabler of solidarity and social transformation in contexts of extreme oppression, segregation, and change. Another notable study that demonstrates jazz's development between America and Africa in particular is Robin Kelley's book titled *Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times*, offers insights into the work of musicians in Lagos, Chicago, New York and Cape Town during the 1950s and 60s. Documenting musical icons such as pianist Randy Weston (USA), bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik (USA), drummer Guy Warren (Ghana) and vocalist Sathima Bea Benjamin (South Africa), Kelley shows how these four of hundreds of other artists' internationalist musical fusions and exchanges reshaped African musical identities of their time (Kelley, 2012). These artists identified with Africa's liberation struggle, emphasizing the demands for Africa's independence and self-determination (Kelley, 2012). Their collective musical practices were understood as highly innovative that was multilingual and indigenous, notably transgressing boundaries of what was referred to as modern jazz.

Feld (2018) unpacks the emergence and continued manifestation of jazz cosmopolitanism in West Africa. Feld writes about the lives and musical work of Ghanaian pioneers such as Ghanaba/Guy Warren, Nii Noi Nortey and Nii Otoo Annan, highlighting how their experimental, pan-Africanist and avant-garde influences and practices reflected this cosmopolitanism. All these African examples demonstrate that jazz is not a purist musical form because it is always circulating by interacting, borrowing from ancient and contemporary localised musical practices. This means that jazz was not just a hybrid and synthesised musical practice but also that it has always been interacting with other music, for example Basotho migrant labourer's music in the Johannesburg metropolitan during apartheid (Coplan, 2006).

This paper is also an attempt to re-think the notion of struggle music in Namibia to include localised practices that were historically censored and continue to be inaccessible to different publics. Scholarship on the heritage of struggle music of countries like Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania tends to affiliate this musical practice to liberation struggle and African nationalist movements (Mbenzi, 2015; Nkoala, 2013; Vembe, 2004). However, Vembe (2004) argues for a nuanced understanding of struggle music such as Zimbabwe's Chimurenga music to recognise its rural-urban dynamics, the limits of nationalism and its ideological contradictions. Vembe (2004), argues for definitions of struggle music that move beyond the *for* and *against* as well as resistance and containment dichotomies. Nkoala (2013) writes on struggle music as liberation music or protest music which was developed in the context of the 1960s anti-war movement in the United States. Hence, these songs as they have manifested over time at different geographies, are not just songs that overtly speak back to the oppression of people in each context, they also enable a sense of hope, love and persuasion to see beyond struggle and oppression.

In this thesis, I use the notion of related struggle music to refer to the musical practices that were historically censored. I also use it to imply musical practices such as Ombimbi or Chimurenga which both reflect on popular struggles in historic and contemporary terms. Even though this paper predominantly focuses on music and musicians based in urban areas, I do not assume that struggle music is only an urban or 'modern' practice.

This paper was partly inspired by encounters with *Stolen Moments: Namibian Music History Untold Namibian*, an archival and exhibition project curating Namibian live music that was predominantly performed and recorded during apartheid. It includes what were modern live musical practices between 1950s and 1980s. Most of this music is not widely known and celebrated in Namibia because it was censored by the apartheid regime, and it remains inaccessible to many contemporary publics. *Stolen Moments: Namibian Music History Untold Namibian* is an ongoing project that was established in 2010 and has collected huge volumes of music that were recorded by the Suidwes-Afrikaanse Uitsaaikorporasie (SWAUK), the South-West Africa broadcaster in the 70s and 80s. Part of the project's collection also includes oral histories of musicians, music enthusiasts and historians about these musical practices. These stories are recorded in newspaper articles and in-depth interviews.

With the engagement of veteran jazz musicians such as Carlos Kambaekwa and leadership of veteran musician Baby Doeseb, the project references and exhibits the work of bands such as

The Dead Wood, The Rocking Kwela Boys, Children of Pluto, #Kharixurob, Outjo Singers, Ben Molatzi, Otto Kampari, Strike Vilakazi, Warmgaat, Leyden Naftali, Lexington, Ugly Creatures, Bee Bob Brothers, Barons, Locomotion, Baronages, Gypsies, Osibisa (Luderitz) 5th Wheel, Co-Bees, Chicittos, Purple Haze and Weekend Band. Kambaekwa, whose work I discuss in a section of this paper, plays a significant role in the history of Namibian music and his regular writings in local newspapers provide insight into many of these bands and solo musicians' musical practices during apartheid. Conceptually, *Stolen Moments: Namibian Music History Untold* combines musical collections and curatorial research. It is a multi-layered project that is both necessary and timely however, it is mostly exhibited in Europe, limiting its accessibility at home.

A lot of the music archived and curated in the *Stolen Moments: Namibian Music History Untold* Namibian resembles and represents sounds of migration and resistance culture. It is also important to note that this was not just jazz but also pop, funk, soul, disco, and rock music. In fact, according to Carlos Kambaekwa, jazz music has always been one of the least popular compared to other musical practices, and continues to be even after apartheid (Kambaekwa, personal communication, 21 January 2021). It is essential to note that the history of jazz, live and popular music in Namibia does not only date back to the 1950s (considering the various oral accounts) or the 1970s/1980s (recordings currently housed at the NBC). It is important to go back to the early 20th century to trace how colonial modernity (not exclusively) influenced musical practices such as jazz. As argued in earlier parts of this paper, this is important because it demonstrates how musical exchanges and circulations have been central to the making of international solidarities and cultural change. One has to go back to as far as 19th and early 20th centuries to also see what the missionaries and explorers brought with in terms of instrumentation and how Africans used these instruments to develop their brands of live music.

Lyon's (2021) labour history on the Kru, as West African labour elites between 1892 and 1925 in German South West Africa provides traces of how modern musical practices developed in Namibia. Lyon refers to archival evidence of the cosmopolitan materiality that the Kru brought with them to German South West Africa (GSWA). This included "...multiple pairs of suits in various fabrics and colours, Panama hats, musical instruments, gramophones, football jerseys and photographs" (Lyon, 2021: 44). The Kru are also credited with bringing the Marcus Garvey movement and its ideology to GSWA, through their newspapers facilitating a pan-Africanist consciousness and engagement with local African workers. During this period, the Kru were labourers for the German colonial economy. They are known for their labour as sailors who

worked for the German shipping and maritime company, Woermann-Linie, along the ports of Swakopmund and Lüderitzbucht (Lyon, 2021). According to Escribano, P and Neisa, (2012), the Kru are also credited for the introduction of guitar in West Africa. Collins (1987) notes that the Kru are also credited for partly popularised palm wine music through their upward and downwards migration along the West African Coast.

“Their technique of plucking cross-rhythms with thumb and forefinger is similar to the way in which the local hand piano (*korlah*) and lute (e.g., the *luu* of the Dan people) are played. One such guitar style was *dagomba* music, and another was "fireman"; the latter probably took its name from the job of fireman aboard steamships” (Collins, 1987: 180).

Because of their migratory dynamics across West African coastal towns such as Monrovia (Liberia), Freetown (Sierra Leone), Accra (Ghana), Lagos (Nigeria), and as far south as Cape Town (South Africa), these musical vocabularies were continuously interacting with other black musicians’ practices from West India, the Caribbean, Afro-America and Latin-America (Collins, 1987). More so, at the turn of the 19th century, the Euro-Americanisation of African musical instruments and practices was already happening through missionaries, and colonial militaries and state formations. While this period is largely erased and unrecorded in Namibian music historiography, these continental exchanges are essential for one to imagine, trace and narrate the emergence of popular music in Namibia. In the following sections of this paper, I discuss selected new and old musical items and associated oral histories that reflect various mobilities, migrations and movements during apartheid and post-apartheid Namibia.

Ben Tukumasan Molatzi

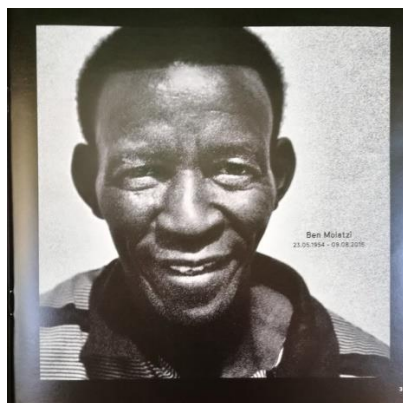


Figure 20: Ben Molatzi, Photograph: Stolen Moments

“In music, if you are too selective, then it is not good. Music is a language where all people can come in and any music which you can hear is relevant. You listen to something and the next day something wonderful can come from

there. Any musician is an inspiration to me. Music is a language where you can close your eyes and hear and build upon it”. (Ben Molatzi, in an interview with Thorsten Schütte in album sleeve, page 9, August 2013).

Ben Tukumazan Molatzi (1954 -2016) was a self-taught guitarist, singer songwriter and teacher from Tsumeb, Namibia. He was born in 1954 in the Alexandra township of Johannesburg, South Africa to a Sotho mother and Damara father. His father was a migrant worker in South Africa who was from Gobabis, Namibia.

In collaboration with the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, the *Stolen Moments: Namibian Music History Untold Namibian* project released a record (CD and Vinyl) of Ben Molatzi music as a collection titled *No Way To Go*²². This is a 20-track album of solo vocal and guitar work, original Ben Molatzi compositions recorded by the SWAUK through its recording Windhoek studios and on field trips. His work is described in the production note of the record that was released by Cree Records in 2019 as, “timeless, beautiful ballads drawing on the distinctive melodies and harmonies of his Damara and Sotho heritage...²³” Prior to these recordings, Ben Molatzi had also been recorded as a learner at Cornelious Goraseb High School in Khorixas, where he was recorded in a classroom²⁴. Molatzi references his family as a major source of musical influence, citing figures such as his father who was also a music maker. In his interview with Thorsten Schütte, Molatzi narrates how he and his sisters would sit close to their father at home just to hear him sing, together with their mother who was also a vocalist. Molatzi, like many other musicians of his time, did not receive any royalties for their work that was recorded by the national broadcaster over the years. The recent record facilitates the payment of his royalties to his family considering as his music is now available on CD, vinyl, and in most digital stores. Molatzi passed away just a few years before the production facilitated by the *Stolen Moments: Namibian Music History Untold Namibian* initiative was completed. The *No Way To Go* record was produced by Thorsten Schütte whom had taken the initiative of doing a search for Ben Molatzi in Tsumeb prior to interviewing him.

Apart from being censored and violated, Molatzi’s musical recordings, remained in the broadcaster’s music archives, restricting them from being widely appreciated. Even after

²² Titled after John Muafangejo’s print “*No Way To Go, What Can I Do? No Place to Stay*’ (1972). A copy of this print is used as the design of the record cover.

²³ Product Info (Vinyl), September 6, 2019. Bear Family Records. Germany. https://www.bear-family.com/dealer_pdf/clp1219_e.pdf

²⁴ Product Info (Vinyl), September 6, 2019. Bear Family Records.. Germany. https://www.bear-family.com/dealer_pdf/clp1219_e.pdf

independence, his music is still unheard by different Namibian publics, although it would be occasionally played on the national broadcaster. His music is classified as African folk in these various archives although it is also read along the lines of !hudans and Damara Blues. Molatzi states that he sings about people, animals, and the broader spectrum of nature to share his outlook on his immediate environment and the country at large. He particularly referenced the musicality of bird sounds and how they inspire his kind of musicality. Soundscapes of birds in their environment is a generative space that enables his imaginative prowess to emerge.

The first song on this collection is *Sida !Hu*, which translates as our land. By repeatedly singing this line, Molatzi expresses a collective claim to land, ‘Damaraland’. Damaraland is the name used by colonial and apartheid administration to demarcate north-central as a Bantustan which would be supposedly administered as a homeland for the Daman²⁵, also known as the ≠Nūkhoen (Boois, 2017). Prior to colonialism, the Daman had occupied most of central Namibia in which they lived practicing agriculture and pastoralism with sheep and cattle. The Daman were dispossessed of their land as a result of both colonialism and local ethnic domination. For Molatzi to repeatedly sing ‘*Sida !hu, Dama !hutse sida !hu*’ is to appreciate the beauty of the landscape, while evoking this long history of land dispossession as well its politics. *Sida !Hu* expresses a vision of the oppressed returning to the land. Molatzi Sings;

Sida !hu, Dama !hutse sida !hu, sida !hu²⁶
 Dama !hutse sida !hu, Dama
 !hutse sida !hu.

|Guitse ta ni oa |guitse
 ta ni oa hmm Dama !huitse,
 |Guitse ta ni oa, |guitse ta ni
 Oa ae Dama !hutse.
 Sida !hu, Dama !hutse sida !hu
 Sida !hu, Dama !hutse sida !hu.
 |Guitse ta ni oa |guitse ta ni oa
 Ae Dama !hutse,
 |Guitse ta ni oa |guitse ta ni oa
 Ae Dama !hutse,
 Sida !hu, Dama !hutse sida !hu
 Sida !hu, Dama !hutse sida !hu
 |Guitse ta ni oa |khi, |guitse
 oa ae Dama !hutse
 Sida !hu, Dama !huste sida !hu Sida !hu Dama
 !hutse sida !hu, Sida !hu, Dama !hutse sida !hu
 |Guitse ta ni oa

²⁵ Plural of ≠Nūkhoen/ Damara people.

²⁶ The following lines are repeatedly used, translated as: ‘Our land, Damara Land’.

ae Dama !hutse

Sida !hu, Dama !hustse sida !hu.

(Ben Molatzi originally recorded in 1981/ Album sleeve produced 2019: 15).

Molatzi's 'Damaraness' is not just a marker of ethnic identity but rather points to his positionality and ideology as a songwriter who sings in Khoekhoegowab, his mother tongue. Here, I recall the late Seth Mataba Boois's (2017) historical work on the Daman and the ≠Nūkhoen philosophy of Ôae Hōxae as a form of Black Consciousness. ≠Nūkhoen is translated as Black person. The Daman philosophy of Ôae Hōxae is embodied through the ethos of communal ownership for land, wellness, self-reliance as well as living in harmony with nature (Boois, 2017). Boois referenced oral history in his writing about Ôae Hōxae as a 16th and 17th century philosophy that was developed by |Naita |Gamaseb. It has since been an intellectual base for ≠Nūkhoen through its ethos of "I am responsible for my own thinking" (Boois, 2017: 23). The Daman Philosophy is important for Molatzi as it signifies his African roots as a source of indigenous knowledge. His other songs such as *Dama !hao* (Dama People), *Ukhaise Dama /goa* (Rise Damara Child), *Tita ge ≠Nūkhoen |goata* (I am a Damara Child) and *≠Nūkhoen /goase* (Damara Girl) show his consistency with his ≠Nūkhoen ideology and imagination. Most of his songs structured in a melodically and lyrically repetitive style in which Molatzi addresses people as he affirms his personhood and heritage. Here, ≠Nūkhoen is a fluid cultural signifier as much as it is a Pan Africanist ethos which can also be read as an act of solidarity with other Black people. This fluidity and transcendence also debunk the SWAUK's colonial production of ethnicity through these recordings.

Molatzi's radical imagination is also notable in lines such as '|Guitse ta ni oa |guitse' (One day I will return). The song becomes an act of calling the people to return to/of the land. This is loaded with varying notions of returning home and spatial agency, given the contested spatial dynamics of Namibia during apartheid. This music which was recorded at the height of apartheid, is evidence of a kind of desire and ownership of the land, hence inviting us to imagine the contested nature of home and belonging at the time.

Carlos Kambaekwa- a conversation with a jazz veteran

I met Carlos Kambaekwa at La Marmite Café in Zoo Park, Windhoek city centre. He had agreed to meet to have a conversation about histories of Namibian music, particularly live music during apartheid. I know Carlos Kambaekwa as a sports commentator in local media

platforms, but I was also impressed to learn about his wealth of knowledge and experience on live music in Namibia and beyond.

He began by stating that Black musicians during apartheid were mostly self-taught because of the lack of schools that offered music training for all “...and so, we listened by the ear and played by the ear” (Kambaekwa, personal communication, January 2021). He also commented that the music instruments that they used in the early days were sub-standard and sometimes self-made because musicians could not afford them. However, with regularly practicing, musicians were able to save some money so that they could purchase their own instruments.

Carlos Kambaekwa was born in 1944 in Okahandja and grew up in the Old Location. His family comes from the Okutupapa, a village 185 kilometers north-east of Okahandja. He recalls his first encounter with urban live music during the 1950s in the Old Location where musicians were only allowed to play on weekends as per apartheid laws. There were regular cultural festivals hosted in the Old Location in which different African indigenous music would be performed at the Rhemish School Hall. It was at these festivals and at school where Kambaekwa would encounter many musicians, mostly Damara, who played instruments such as guitar and concertina.

Kambaekwa explained that they played a lot of cover versions of popular of pop, rock, jazz and Mbaqanga songs. He observed that they were heavily influenced by South African and international music. Local influences included bands such as The Rocking Kwela Boys (a band that was made up of South African migrant workers) and Deadwood, Children From Pluto (CFP) both from Walvis Bay. Kambaekwa highlighted that local bands from the coast such as CFP were very influential because of their international exposure to imported modern musical practices. They looked up to these musicians and equally learned a lot from them. Although most bands performed in many places around the country, they were still heavily restricted as they required permits to move between various towns and urban areas.

Kambaekwa played for bands such as *Baronages* and *Telephone*. Kambaekwa narrates that he was the first person to play in an inter-racial band in Namibia. This was the *Telephone* band which was made up of black and white musicians. One of his notable experiences of practicing music under apartheid was a show they did at Mweshipandeka High School Hall, Ongwediva in 1984. Kambaekwa narrates that they played until 2am that evening, beyond the curfew 00:00 curfew. Over a 100 Koevoet soldiers had joined to watch and enjoy the show. A bomb exploded two hours after the show when they had already left. Kambaekwa narrated this story to

highlight the contradiction between the power of music to unify people and apartheid military state violence. Even though music could defy the boundaries of racial segregation, the situation was always risky, and one was continuously exposed to apartheid violence.

For Kambaekwa, music is a non-racial space and he overtly expressed that it has been one space in which he finds anti-racial experiences as someone who grew up in a deeply racist society. His reflections on these inter-racial dynamics are narrated as comradeship and solidarity from white musicians. He spoke of the 1970s and 1980s as an intense and heavily politicised period of live music in Namibia because it was at the height of apartheid. This generally made it risky for bands with political messages to perform anywhere in the country. Bands were being invited to perform at SWAPO and SWANU rallies for fundraising and political mobilisation. Cases of police invasion during these rallies and concerts were common during this time. For example, the Ugly Creatures band lost valuables such as music instruments and vehicles during the raids and attack by the SADF/Koevoet during a SWAPO Rally in Oluno in 1977. Ugly Creatures was originally started at Martin Luther High School, Omaruru in 1970 by players (learners) originally from Okahandja (Kambaekwa, 2014). The 1970s and 1980s being a period of political turmoil in Southwest Africa, many musicians dropped out of school to play music or go into exile.

One thing that stood out for me during our conversation was how he spoke about genealogies of post-apartheid musical practices such as Oviritje, Shambo and Ma|gaisa. He strongly contends that these are not necessarily new forms because they were already being played during apartheid, for example Nanghili Nashima, Tate Kwela and Buti Simon had already popularised Shambo music. This is contrary to the popular notion that Shambo music only emerged in the 1990s as an urban Oshiwambo musical practice. He referenced and spoke very highly of veteran and late musicians such as Willie Mbuende, Jackson Kaujeua and the late Axue as exceptional Namibian guitarists. He particularly pointed out Axue's unique guitar playing style. Carlos Kambaekwa also pointed to the role of churches and schools in music training. Schools such as Martin Luther High School, St. Josephs, in Dobra, and St. Thereza in Tses were some of the notable schools that trained Black musicians. He also highlighted the role of teachers who took on activist mantle to mobilise students through musical and sports encounters.

Outjo Singers

The Outjo Singers was an ensemble of woman vocalists whose music was also recorded by the SWAUK. Their sound was a combination of Damara>Nama traditional music complemented by string and horn instruments played by the Rocking Kwela Boys who were migrant labourers from South Africa. I accessed a 2013 interview recording and transcript titled *Outjo Singers by Stolen Moments: Namibian Music History Untold Namibian* with four elderly women in the town of Outjo. This was one of the many interviews that the project conducted around the country. The interviews were conducted through the project's outreach method of publishing short stories and photographs of historic musical practices in newspapers and requesting the public to respond if they recognised and knew the whereabouts of the musicians. The four women who were interviewed were Theresia Gamases, Justine /Hases, Emma /Hoaes and Lautha /Hoaes who performed Konsert as early as the 1960s in Outjo and other urban centers such as Otjiwarongo and Khorixas.

The 62-page (translated) interview transcript and audio recording provide interesting insight into the collective musical practices of these four singers and the socio-political landscape in which they grew up. The interview focused on their musical practice of taking part in Konsert and negotiating their way into evening dances. Konsert is a form of popular choral music that merged religious and traditional songs that was performed widely across Namibia. Carlos Kambaekwa posits that Konsert also was influenced by the numerous South African choral ensembles that would tour and perform across many towns of Southwest Africa. In the first part of the interview the singers recount their experiences of attending and participating in Konsert events as teenagers which inspired them to join the business of performance. They described how several performers would come from other towns to perform Konsert at soccer tournaments and other social events. Although Konsert was also taught and practiced at school, they also learned it from their South African peers (Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho speaking people), many of whom worked as migrant labourers in western, central and southern Namibia. What is evident in this interview is that Konsert was a trans-cultural practice despite the segregation policies and containment by the apartheid regime.

The singers highlighted the social and political restrictions involved in being raised during the apartheid era. Apart from the racist system, they had to negotiate their access to Konsert and other urban dance events that were hosted on Friday and Saturday evenings. Particularly when they were around the ages of 17 – 20, they had to strategise their access to these spaces that were mostly catered for adults. They highlighted that they had to ask for permission from their parents to attend the Konsert and dances. They spoke about sometimes having to 'sneak out of

their homes' and landing into trouble resulting in being embarrassingly 'dragged out of the Konsert venues' by their elders. This had a lot to do with the fact that they were young women who were being raised in a strict and heavily controlled environments. Panashe Chigumadzi (2019) reflects this colonial containment in her reflections on Dorothy Masuku's Pan-Africanist resistance.

“As industrialising colonial societies drew African men into the modern wage economy of the mines and urban centres, they by implication drew African men into ‘modernity’ or ‘the future’, colloquially understood as chimanjemanje (literally: ‘things of the now’). This was while leaving behind African women, who formed the bulk of rural peasantry, thereby ‘pushing’ African women into ‘tradition’ or ‘the past’, colloquially understood as chinyakare (literally: ‘things of the past’). Treacherous though the white men’s towns were, men could be trusted to negotiate the risks and rewards of chimanjemanje, whereas women could not.” (Chigumadzi, 2019, <https://johannesburgreviewofbooks.com/2019/05/06/voices-as-powerful-as-guns-panashe-chigumadzi-on-dorothy-masukas-wrioting-woman-centred-pan-africanism/>).

Chigumadzi shows African women’s refusal to be left out of Oshinena (chimanjemanje in Oshiwambo) which is also known as modernity. The “...disreputable urban female figures of the prostitute and ‘Shebeen Queens’ ” (Chigumadzi, 2019) who refused this containment in many Southern African urban centres. The Outjo Singers’ narrate that access to the dances improved with time. What stands out in their negotiations to access these spaces is how they all began with hearing the music or about the music. As young women, they would hear from their peers and other elder women about how nice the dance of the previous evening was which prompted them to experience and witness the music. At times, they would only hear the music from their homes as it was played by notable figures such as Mr. Geiter and Mr. Lekri – who played instruments such as guitar and accordion. There is something profound here about this experience of hearing or hearing about the shows as an impulse to activate and embody musical practices in contexts of confinement and segregation. It is interesting how this hearing and subsequently participatory observation becomes the method of learning about and practicing Konsert and live music. The power of music was evidently a mobilising force in this case.

There were different musical practices that these singers had access to while growing up in Outjo during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Apart from hearing international artists such as Boas and Miriam Makeba on radio, there were also other local acts from Windhoek such as 'Warmgat' (Johannes Andreas Mureko) who would occasionally perform in Outjo. The singers also mentioned that their Damara traditional music practices such as /gais and !hudans centrally

influenced their repertoire. /Gais is a song-dance ritual performed by the †Nūkhoen and it often includes stories about hunting, relations to nature, spirituality and wildlife. Xoma is another trance dance that is generally performed by †Nūkhoen traditional healers. While /gais and xoma are similar in form to other Namibian performance practices such as morangane, tsutsube, omutjopa and liyala (e.g. call and response, singing and clapping of hands and playful/healing functions), the †Nūkhoen have had other musical practices like !hudans that include contemporary instruments such as the accordion and guitar. Namibian ethnomusicologists such as Ismael Sam posit that !hudans derives from /gais (Sam, 2015). The singers do note that playing a musical instrument was not an easy task to take up as young women as it was shunned and discouraged in their society. However, one or two of them took up the guitar and flute which they continued to play, especially in their domestic spaces. The guitar was called Samakura.

The interview also reveals that performing Konsert was not sustainable because they did not earn any money from singing and dancing. Like many musicians of their time practicing in Namibia, they had to take up other jobs such as domestic work, community work and teaching kindergarten to make a living. Most of them also got married and their time was consumed by taking care of their families. The Outjo Singers' recordings archived in the NBC music library is an 11-track collection of vocally-led songs that are accompanied by string and horn instrumentation by the Rocking Kwela Boys. All these contributing musicians are unnamed as it is the case with many other recordings of ensembles in this archive.

One of the songs in this Outjo Singers' collection sings, 'ti mama sa ta ge Geise ra mu †gao, tschuku tschuku tis ge †nu gunisa ra mi' which is translated as 'I miss my mother, let me take the train and go home'. This is a widely sung Khoekhoegowab classic. We sang it in our school choirs and cultural performances in post-apartheid Namibian societies. One of my recent and fondest memories of performing this song led by Ida Hoffman was during a protest for restorative justice in Hamburg, Germany in April 2018. Ida Hoffman is a Namibian politician and at this protest, she was part of the delegation of Nama and Ovaherero leaders spearheading the movement that is demanding Germany recognises and takes responsibility for the 1904 – 1908 genocide in GSWA. Until then, I had not made a connection between the song *Ti mama* and this genocide of Nama, Ovaherero and San people. *Ti mama* is loaded with historical nuances that mark notions of nostalgia, home, loss, displacement/exile, motherhood/motherland, migration, and colonialism. The 'tschuku tschuku' is a phonetic

expression of the train that has been a mode of transport for many decades, especially in western, central, and southern Namibia.

The train is also understood as part of the regional infrastructure of the colonial economy. This is widely expressed in many popular Southern African jazz songs such as Hugh Masekela's *Stimela* (1974), Miriam Makeba's *Mbombela* (1965), and Dorothy Masuku's *Hamba Nontsokolo* (1952) which she wrote on a train to Johannesburg. These musical migrations offer a Southern African sound that expresses mobility rooted in systemic exploitation and the aspirations of the oppressed. Jazz writer Percy Mabandu (2019) discusses these politics of mobility and musical heritage, although only in the South African context. These songs of migration which are rhythmically and conceptually derived music indigenous to the Southern African region have been performed widely by musicians in post-colonial contexts. This is how they have been sustained and transferred from one generation to another. This sustainability can also be read in the minimal and repetitive structure of songs such as *Ti mama*. Its lyrics are only made up of these three phrases 'ti mama sa ta ge Geise ra mu ɿgao, tshuku tshuku tis ge ɿnu gunisa ra mi'. This repetition must not only be read as minimalist but rather loaded with a context-specific emotional and spatial meanings.

Skymaster: Township Jazz Pioneers

Skymaster: Township Jazz Pioneers (2008) is a 56-minute documentary about the emergence of township jazz in the Old Location, produced and directed by Hidipo Nangolo. This film results from Nangolo's extensive research of archives and oral histories of Namibian music. Through research and making of this documentary Nangolo facilitated the reunion of veteran Black performers in 2003 who were part of this generation of musicians. This reunion came after being musically separated for about 35 years. The film traces township jazz practices from as early as the 1940s up until 1965, when people were forcefully moved to Katutura. It features archival videos and photographs of live performances, songs, interviews with people who witnessed and experienced this township culture.

The film introduces the township jazz icon Andreas Johannes Moreko in its opening narration, impersonated by actor and musician Panduleni Hailundu, who describes Moreko's sound in the local landscape at the time. Hailundu recites:

From grass, mud and dung huts

From wood shafts and tin houses
Down the hillside of the Auas Mountains
Echoes the tenor saxophone
(Written as part of the script by Hidipo Nangolo, 2008).



Figure 21: Andreas Johannes Moreko (Warmgat). Photograph screenshot from the YouTube version of 'Skymaster: Township Jazz Pioneers'.

The film centres on the story of Moreko, also known as Warmgat, remembered as a 'multi-musical maestro' who popularised township jazz and was instrumental in training 'the first generation of professional musicians' in Namibia (Nangolo, 2008). Moreko was already a practicing artist when he returned from Cape Town and Upington (South Africa) where he had been studying and working. He joined the South African Police Force in 1936 and returned to Southwest Africa in 1942. He began organising music events in Okongova²⁷ while working as a policeman for the apartheid security force. Warmgat soon became a household name in the Old Location's cultural scene, hosting regular performances with his band in his hall in Okongova as well as the Bowker Hall in the Old Location.

The film uses a mixture of close-ups and wide shots to move between different times in history. On one hand it uses black, white, brown and grey archival photographs and film footage of life social and cultural life in the Old Location's 'make-shift bars and beer halls', on the other hand it shows footage from rehearsals and concerts of the recently united Original Jazz Masters as well as the all-woman group the Old Location Choir. There are also photographs of key figures such as Warmgat and his son Boesman who was also a musician. Some photographs show the Old Location and other Namibian landscapes.

Skymaster: Township Jazz Pioneers takes us into Nangolo's research journey which resulted in the formation of the Jazz Masters and the Old Location Choir, which included

²⁷ A township, an extension of Windhoek's Old Location that was in what is currently known as Klein Windhoek.

instrumentalists who had either played with or been trained by Moreko as well as those who knew and had experienced the musical work of his band that was also named Warmgat. The Original Jazz Masters who attributed their musicianship to Moreko included Rudolf Kasita (guitar & saxophone) Frederick Kambrude (second saxophone) Josef Kaupangwa (drums) Immanuel Shivute (rhythm guitar) and Andreas Kavandje (bass). Interviews in the film with musicians such as Kavandje, Kambrude and Shivute accounted how they began playing with a band called The Dakotas, which was an offspring band of Warmgat. They narrated that they played a range of music such as Kwela, Rumba, Rock & Roll and Boy Masaka, and played in most of Namibia's urban centres. The Dakotas whose roots can be traced back to the Old Location, started out as a pennywhistle band. Archival records show that the band was in existence from 1960 – 1976²⁸. The Dakotas was predominantly made up of Oshiwambo speaking musicians and was, originally founded by Josef Kapupu Kaupangwa.

During apartheid, The Dakotas were contracted by public personalities and local football clubs such as Orlando Pirates and Tigers for whom they would regularly play. Their music is largely read as mbaqanga and jive, with touches of Langarm (ballroom), Boere musiek, Waltz and Rock²⁹. With the 1959 apartheid formation of Katutura, The Dakotas (like other local bands and football clubs were formed along ethnic lines), became the representative of Aawambo. Their counterparts were bands such as #Kharixurob, Aleb and Leyden Naftali representing the Nama/Damara; Bee Bop Bothers pop band representing Ovaherero; as well as The Falcon 5 representing Coloureds and Bastards. Although contained to these ethnic lines, competition amongst them was rife and there were many performance moments of cross-cultural exchange. In an interview with me, Carlos Kambaekwa who narrates that he was the first black musician to play in a multi-racial band called Telephone, shared several experiences of these cross-cultural moments, which he credits to the borderlessness of music (Kambaekwa, personal communication, 22 January 2021). These band names such as *Bee Bop Brothers* and *The Dakotas* signal that there was a dialogue across the sea, transoceanic reaches both of sound and identity. For example, musician Beau Ipinge is quoted in an article about Children From Pluto, one of the most popular bands that toured Namibia widely during the 1970s and 1980s. “It is true that we mostly played songs from popular overseas bands, mostly American and English bands, we also re-composed some of those songs and sang them in Oshiwambo, the language

²⁸ Carlos Kambaekwa. Undated. Bad Profiles. Unpublished.

²⁹ Carlos Kambaekwa. n.d. Bad Profiles. Unpublished.

which was vastly understood by the majority of our fans” (Ipinge, 2023)³⁰. *Skymaster: Township Jazz Pioneers* resonates with this musical conversation across the sea in its referencing of regional and international sounds.

Background music in *Skymaster: Township Jazz Pioneers* also includes songs from the recently recorded albums *Dakota* (2006) and *Benguela Breeze* (2009)³¹ which were the first commercially recorded work of these musicians. Two other re-occurring songs in this documentary are San’s *Migrant Workers* (undated) and Franco & le TP OK Jazz’s *Cheri Lovy* (1967). Like the distinct ‘Kgala!Namib jazz’ that we hear in this documentary, these two songs add to the creation of nostalgia of a time defined by both difficult yet joyous times. They evoke a feeling of solidarity, reminding us that the cultural movement against colonialism and apartheid in the Old Location was always connected to social and cultural movements in other countries. Music and sound have been ways in which the oppressed across different geopolitical spaces have been in relation with each other.

In the film, we also see interviews with Katutura-based oral historian and cultural worker Ouma Paulina Hangara whose oral history is discussed in the next paper. In this film, Ouma Hangara is in her lounge making a list of the many musicians she remembers from the Old Location. She also shows the kind of dresses women wore and how they danced at halls and other social spaces. *Skymaster: Township Jazz Pioneers* is a film that tells a story of Black popular culture that had somehow disappeared following the forceful removals from the Old Location. The displacement of being moved to Katutura also meant that township jazz disappeared, went underground and was silenced because musicians and people were separated. Although other revolutionary musical practices emerged, jazz was transformed and sustained as it continued to be played in churches, schools and other social events across the country.

Erna Chimu

³⁰ Angula, C. 2023. CFP: The Magnificent Band From The Bay. <https://www.namibian.com.na/121005/read/CFP-The-Magnificent-Band-From-The-Bay> [2023, March, 27].

³¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lgyh4Zim2nc>



Figure 22: Erna Chimu's album cover of *Uprising* (2019).

Erna Chimu is one of the most notable and consistent jazz musicians in post-apartheid Namibia. Her rich musical practice signifies continuities of Namibian jazz traditions that are deeply rooted in indigenous musical traditions while taking from a range of other global musicalities. She joined the live music industry when she first performed with the reggae band *Shemyetu* in the early 2000s. Her first studio album *Imamakunguwe* (2009) was awarded two awards including Best Khoe-Jazz at the Ma/Gaisa awards and Best Traditional Song at the Namibian Annual Music Awards (NAMAs) in 2009 and 2010, respectively. She released her second studio album *Hai Serute* (2014) which was eventually awarded Best Instrumental (Jazz), Best Traditional Song and Female Artist of the Year at the 2014 NAMAs. Her latest studio project is *Uprising* (2020).

She grew up in a musical family in which her mother (a singer and guitarist) was also a leader of the family choir. Her father was also a singer, bassist and accordionist. Chimu is of Damara, Otjiherero and Oshiwambo descent and recalls that in her upbringing, there were always music instruments in her home and community. She credits her early exposure to live musical practice to one of her teachers Willem Hoebel who also took her afterschool events where she sang pop music covers by popular artists like Brenda Fassie. This exposure would soon cause her to lose interest in choral music because of its restrictive and colonial nature. She would soon move from choral music into this popular strand of live music in Katutura. The first time she encountered a full band was when she and a friend decided to secretly 'peep' through a small hole on the yard of a Dolam house where a band was rehearsing. With regular practicing, she would end up performing as a back-up singer in her brothers' reggae band called *Shemyetu*. Her self-determination to become a lead singer manifested when she first auditioned and was selected to perform at the *Ae //Gams Arts and Cultural Festival* in 2005. It was through this project where she met Congolese musicians such as Sam Batola, Guichont Bokoumou and

Jean-Pierre Ntsika who would join the ensemble that would eventually make up the Erna Chimu sound. She would subsequently perform at other local live music gigs such as *Afro-Fusion*, a regular jazz and live music session at the Warehouse Theatre in Windhoek.

She also credits these early developments in her music career to a woman called Getrud Baisako who funded her first studio album *Imamakunguwe* (2009). By this time, Erna Chimu had already developed her repertoire of original compositions. She had established her sound as a jazz fusion with a distinct vocabulary of African traditional and reggae music. She sings predominantly in Khoekhoegowab, establishing her brand of music as a unique sound in the Namibian music industry. Her influences include artists such as Peter Tosh, Bob Marley, Angeliqe Kidjo, Baba Maal, Salif Keita, and Miriam Makeba. In addition to this, she notes that she is a great lover of African traditional music, highlighting that she appreciates the sound produced by contemporary musicians such as Axue as well as Setson and the Mighty Dreads. *Imamakunguwe* is an ode to Chimu's late mother in which she praises her for all the life lessons and continued guidance even in her death. This ancestral recognition is also reflected on other tracks on *Imamakunguwe* such as *Telewaniba* which is derived from a chant she used to perform with a San healer called Oupa Dassie. The chant came to her one day while she was walking, and she developed a jazz version by arranging it together with her band. In this song Chimu performs a song about self-determination and deep focus, repeatedly highlighting that nothing is impossible, one just needs faith and not lose focus. Chimu sings to remind herself about her roots using praise and chant to pave a way for herself in the world.

Telewaniba creates an atmosphere of possibility and being/becoming grounded in one's indigeneity. Chimu reminds her listener that her roots are in her ancestral land where the !Gowanin of the #Nukhoen, inhabitants of Kalahari Desert. Her description of herself as the daughter of the soil) is how she is able to identify with the land and landscape, in a way making claims to it considering that there has still not been successful land redistribution in post-apartheid Namibia. Chimu is performing an intimacy between her body and the land, while still transporting her listeners into other realms beyond the material world. The call-and-response chants '*Helele, hoo ai-iye, helele, hi, ai i ye helele*' are derived from various rituals from musical performances such as xoma, |gais and tsutsube of the San, Batswana and the #Nukhoen. It is by chanting, dancing and hearing these chants that one can be transported into the spiritual dimension. This singing style can also be heard in the song *!Garisab* which is also on the *Uprising* record. This song is originally composed by another notable Namibian

guitarist, the late Sebulon Gomachab, also known as Axue, whom she sings with on *Uprising*. Like Molatzi, Chimu's entire discography is not just about land and ancestry, she also sings about a range of social issues.

This paper reflects on a process of listening to songs, a documentary film, as well as recorded and face-to-face interviews about musical practices, aimed at understanding how musicians developed audiotopic imaginaries through their musical migrations. The paper focuses on jazz and related struggle music, offering historic and contemporary insights on how these musicalities forged self-determination, indigeneity and critical spatial identities during the apartheid and independence eras. For example, Ben Molatzi singing about Damara identity in relation to the idea of returning to the land, or Erna Chimu using an indigenous chant to self-actualise. These experiences relate to the historic struggles against forced removal, land dispossession and containment enforced by the apartheid regime, as reflected in the narrative of Carlos Kambaekwa and Hidipo Nangolo's 2008 documentary film *Skymaster: Township Jazz Pioneers*. These cases remind us that music was used by Black artists to create and hold spaces as well as cross racial, ethnic and gender lines. The journeys of bands such as *Warmgat*, *The Dakotas* and *Outjo Singers* offer traces of the kind trans-local spaces that their music mobilised as it moved through different Namibian urban centres. These musical practices have not received enough scholarly attention in Namibia. This paper therefore offers a scholarly analysis that foregrounds these musical practices and their histories in indigenous concepts of performance such as Oudano.

THE SECOND MOVEMENT

PAPER FOUR: *ONS DALA DIE DING BY ODALATE NAITEKE*: PUBLICNESS, PERFORMANCE AND CURATIVE WORK IN KATUTURA

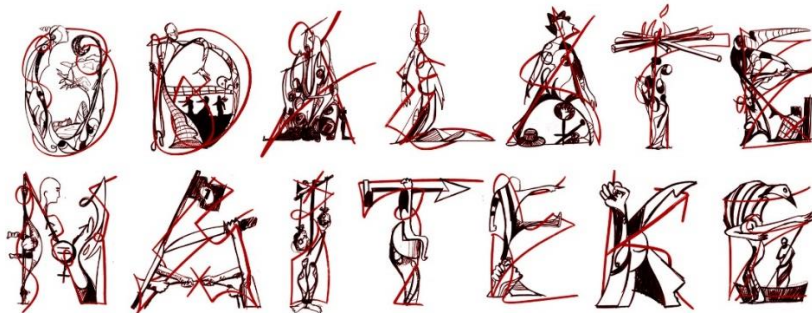


Figure 23: *Odalate Naiteke*, digital illustration by Nambowa Malua (2018).

Introduction: The emergence of Odalate Naiteke Practice-as-Research programme

This paper is situated in curative work as a critical and creative framework of organising and facilitating radical learning and culture through a community project initially titled *Operation Odalate Naiteke* that predominantly takes place in my home township of Katutura. I take from art historian Dr. Temi Odumosu's deliberate choice to use the word curative in relation to curatorial when working through colonial archives in museums³². Here, the curative function does more than the curatorial function which often implies caring for and organising cultural objects for collection and exhibition purposes. The curative function directly implies notions of heightened care, curing, remedial, healing, therapeutic and holistic/embodied learning.

³² Odumosu, T. 2019. Who is the Subject? On portraiture in the colonial archive. Keynote address for the workshop titled, *Un-doing post-colonial knowledges: Perspectives from academia-arts-activism*. 19.07.2019, University of Bayreuth.

Operation Odalate Naitoke is an art and performance programme with interests in radical histories, social justice and healing. I make use of my applied theatre background to inform my curative role as a facilitator of community engagement. By thinking of the work of curating as care work for different publics, we begin to blur the lines that divide theatre/performance and applied theatre praxis. The latter is reduced to commercial theatre and the former often implies theatre for community, educational and social contexts. This binary is very common in Namibian and South African theatre and performance education curricula, given their western orientations. But because theatre is subversive, there are many historic and contemporary examples of theatre and performance works that blur these lines forming interventionist activities.

I would like to think about my curative work in relation to my theatre making and applied theatre background to see what these areas of work can learn from each other. Applied theatre is a branch in the discipline of theatre and drama studies, a praxis that uses various methods in social, community and educational contexts to facilitate social transformation. My applied theatre praxis is rooted in my training at the Dama for Life (DFL) department in the Wits School of Arts at the University of Witwatersrand. DFL's inter-disciplinary training is grounded in a Pan-African and internationalist creative pedagogies that mobilise social justice and healing. This has largely shaped my ideological stances and pedagogical approaches as an artist-activist-academic in my experience of working at civil society organisations such as Sister Namibia and the John Muafangejo Art Centre. Applied theatre praxis has a long history as a global tradition of enabling social change through its methodologies such as Community Theatre, Theatre for Development (TfD) and Theatre of the Oppressed.

I recognise the need for African scholars to build on to African theoretical foundations of applied theatre such as the work of Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), and Chinyowa (2005). This paper is therefore interested in the ways in which Oudano might work as a way of organising public culture framed as curating-facilitating. I pose the following question in reflecting on how Oudano as a performance and performative paradigm might be useful for framing the curative function. How does facilitating/directing as an (applied) theatre making skill relate to curating as a practice of visual culture? What is the potential of blurring the lines between artist-curator/performance-curation? How does *Odalate Naitoke* employ features of Oudano (relationship, openness, land, desire, passion, embodiment, plotting³³) to mobilise public

³³ Read: vulnerability, holding, embodiment, mapping, intimacy, love, prayer, playing as key signifiers and elements of Oudano.

culture in Katutura? These are some of my guiding questions in undertaking the curative work in *Operation Odalate Naiteke*. In this paper, I will discuss some of the artistic interventions that were co-curated by myself with artists, and activists in October 2018 and January 2020.

Operation Odalate Naiteke as part of this larger PhD research was conceptualised to respond to a lack of social, pedagogical and technical infrastructure for public art practices in the city, particularly in Katutura. Central to this infrastructure is the need to curate alternative spaces for artists, activists and cultural workers doing a range of interventions aimed at social justice and social change. *Operation Odalate Naiteke* began with two meetings with young local visual and performing artists, mostly from Katutura. The first meeting was in September 2018 on a Sunday morning at a park in UN Plaza, a recreational and multi-purpose venue. We sat under a tree and read pieces of critical texts that I had been reading for the research and as part of my attempt to conceptualise Oudano as a generative way of thinking about art and performance, historical and contemporary issues. The time of our meeting coincided with two church sermons taking place in two separate halls in the same complex. Our meetings enabled critical reflective dialogues about the colonial nature of cultural pedagogy in Namibia and the static and restrictive nature of national culture. One of the main discussions was around how the making of public history and culture in post-apartheid Namibia has not included adequate youth participation. This youth exclusion speaks to Namibia's struggle to hold space for intergenerational dialogue as a post-colonial society.

Artists who attended this meeting included Fellipus Negodhi, Zindri Swartz, Lavinia Kapewasha, Veronique Mensah, West Uarije, Gift Uzera, Tuli Mekondjo, Fellemon Ndongo who all created performances or contributed to the performance programme by co-organising. The initial meeting was followed by another meeting that took place the following Sunday at the Katutura Community Art Centre. Our dialogues focused on the urgent need to mobilise public art that is transgressive to the normative artistic traditions in urban spaces, by performing and curating in historic and imagined sites. This was necessitated by the need to explore alternative forms and publics in which cultural work, particularly performance could manifest, outside of national and corporate institutions. Our discussion at the two *Odalate Naiteke* meetings had also explored the possibilities of working with indigenous concepts of performance such as Oudano.

Hence, this initial group of artists and activists which is predominantly made up of actors, dancers, performance artists, and theatre makers organised performances at the UN Plaza Park

and playground area. These performances formed part of the 1st – 7th October 2018 programme which also included activities at the Katutura Community Art Centre (KCAC) and the Old Location Memorial site. This programme also included work by visual artist Elrico Gawanab, Zimbabwean multi-disciplinary artist Kresiah Mukwazhi, Mozambican visual artist Antonio Muhambe. It also included two South African musicians, Sibusiso Gladwin Chiloane and Molefi Phuroe as well as Congolese musician Samuel Batola. A listening event curated by local deejay J+ (Joonas Leskelä) as well as two popular education sessions co-organised and facilitated by Asher Gamedze, Koni Benson and myself at KCAC and Jakob Marengo Technical College were also part of this 2018 programme.

This paper therefore mostly discusses works performed at the second *Operation Odalate Naiteke* programme which took place in January 2020 as well as one of the sonic interventions from the 2018 programme. I focus on the on the 2020 programme because by then, *Operation Odalate Naiteke* had developed a foundation as an informal and mobile programme of organising art, popular education and public culture to achieve radical imagination. The *Operation Odalate Naiteke* performances that I discuss in this paper as well as the sixth paper of this thesis suggest an interplay between traditions and transgressions, as well as decoloniality and indigeneity of performance cultures. In my curating and theorising of these performance works, which include performance art, oral histories, Pantsula, Shambo, Hip-Hop and other sonic experimentations; I rely on Oudano, and a related concept called Dala as modes of organising public culture, particularly performance. This curative process of doing curatorial work values gestures of ‘holding’ and ‘letting go’, which means making space for engaged practice by transgressing boundaries such as ‘cutting fences’ as suggested in the historic slogan, ‘Odalate Naiteke’.

‘Dala what you must because life goes on’ : breaking walls and cutting fences

Windhoek city is characterised by countless grey walls bordering and bridging the architecture of residential, business and industrial areas of the city. These walls are clear boundaries established through the city’s urban planning. The walls serve the purpose of securitisation and privatisation which have historically characterised the nature of Windhoek’s spatial planning. Apart from walls, fencing is another prominent way in which privatisation of land and space are marked throughout Namibia. As Namibian urban sociologist Ellison Tjirera (2019) writes in his PhD, Windhoek is increasingly becoming securitised as a sign of its neo-liberal order.

Walls in the city are used to demarcate both public and private properties. What remains unexplored about these walls are the ways in which they could be used to break down the social divisions they enable and hold space for cultural work. I therefore think of these grey walls as liminal walls because they are not only markers of divide and control, but they can also be sites of radical imagination, in the literal and symbolic sense. This to say that they are not just empty and grey, they are also sites of immense possibility.

In my critical observation of grey walls as liminal spaces of generating public culture and history, a slogan *Life Goes On* came to my attention. In a curatorial conversation titled '*Life Goes On*' with Namibian curator Helen Harris (2020), I discuss how this was one of the immediate and noticeable texts in the public spaces of the city which I had been curious about. This slogan is commonly found on many walls in the city, particularly Katutura and can be read as a possibility of resistance and resilience. The reoccurrence and repetition of this slogan on back and side walls of schools, sports stadiums, public toilets, markets, graveyards, and parks (including metal boards of traffic signs, bus stations and taxi ranks) shows a shared and collective morale of surviving township or what is locally referred to as ghetto life.

This slogan is taken from the song *Life Goes On* by the late American rapper Tupac Shakur. This title of a song from his album *All eyes on me* (1996) is about loss and mourning those that he has lost on the streets. Tupac is a world-known artist and his work has been widely appreciated by young people in Katutura and Namibia at large. Tupac's influence in Namibia shows the transoceanic reach of Black expression as constituted in Oudano. His rap music still circulates widely via popular media and consequently inspires a new Namibian generation of Hip Hop artists such as Lamek Ndjaba. Like in other parts of the world, Tupac's musical legacy and image represents a globalised repertoire of oppositional resistance that people use to find strength and esteem (Dziewanski, 2020). In Cape Town for example, "There are also ways that Tupac, as the globalised ghetto prophet, serves as a cultural resource for those trying to resist the streets and participation in gangs." (Dziewanski, 2020: 204). Namibian popular Hip Hop artist Jericho who performed a tribute for Tupac at the 2020 Namibian Annual Music Awards has been listening to Tupac since the 1990s. "He inspired not only rappers but people in general, who he touched through his music and I happen to be one of them" (Jericho, 2020).³⁴

³⁴ Kaure, A. 2020. *2PAC honoured by NAMAS as Jericho Wows*. . <https://www.erongo.com.na/news/2pac-honoured-by-namas-as-gericho-wows2020-10-10> [Available: 2023, March, 27].

Namibian Rap as a street culture is one practice in which concepts and dreams of disenfranchised people are expressed.

While the slogan *Life Goes On* serves as an everyday therapeutic note of dealing with loss in Katutura as a historic site of dislocation and dispossession, it also serves a reminder that the streets are complex public spaces that forge both relation and betrayal. The streets are sites of Zula³⁵ as theorised by Boulton (2021) in his anthropological study of men, intimacy, and relatedness in Swakopmund. Boulton posits that Zula is a practice of the informal economy and kinship amongst Black men in the coastal town of Swakopmund (Boulton, 2021).



Figure 24: 'Scars of a Coerced Civilization' (2015), Vilho Nuumbala.

The photographic work (Figure 24) above titled *Scars of a Coerced Civilization* (2015) by the Katutura-based artist Vilho Nuumbala shows this same slogan as it was once written on the wall of Immanuel Shifidi Secondary School in the heart of Katutura. In reading this photographic work, we must look at the historical context of Katutura township. The word Katutura is translated as a place where we do not belong. This name was given following the forceful removal of Black people from the Old Location in 1959 which was in the Windhoek

³⁵ Zula is township slang that refers to practices of economic survival. It is used to refer to practices of 'hustling', mobility, and the struggle such as selling vegetables at the street corner, busking, borrowing money, hitch-hiking, kindly asking someone for food, begging, stealing, going to work or exchanging commodities. In Nguni languages, ukuzula refers to going around places and wondering.

Southern suburbs currently known as Hochland Park (Melber, 2016). Katutura was spatially planned by the apartheid administration in form of low-cost housing in locations divided along the lines of ethnic and tribal categorisation of black people (Pendleton, 1996). In independent Namibia, Katutura has changed socially and economically. Windhoek as a post-apartheid city maintained its spatial segregation through its neo-liberal policies which have not transformed to adequately respond to the issues of increased rural-urban migration and the housing crisis e.g., informal settlements (Tjirera, 2021).

Nuumbala's *Scars of a Coerced Civilization* raises many questions about the state of economic inequalities in post-apartheid Namibia and the legacies responsible for these injustices. More so, it invites us to think about working with the potential of the historic walls, fences or borders that keep these legacies of racial and economic segregation in place. To write a statement like 'Life Goes On' on a wall is considered in the city's policy frameworks as vandalism of private or public property. Due to an absence of a public art policy and sustainable programming, the city is not likely to read this slogan as cultural expression. The writers of these slogan are anonymous, we only know that they are residents of Katutura who are reminding us that 'even though we live in a place that we do not belong, life still goes on'. This is one of the lessons that we have had to learn as young people growing up in Katutura. I read this in the embodied expression of the young woman in this photograph. As she poses and looks directly at the camera, she communicates her lived experience of Katutura as a site of dispossession. Her facial and bodily expression shows her own resistance and resilience in this place. However, I not only view resistance and resilience in the moment that Nuumbala's photograph captures. I am also aware of other possibilities that are marked in it. These possibilities that exceed the idea of Katutura as a site a struggle, could be the everyday healing and curative work.

How does one cure the scars of a coerced civilization? I turn to the slogan *Odalate Naitেকে* to engage with this question as an attempt to intervene through a curative process. *Odalate Naitেকে* was a slogan used by workers protesting the contract labour system in 1971. This nation-wide strike was successful and led to changes in the labour system after many years of exploitation and inhumane conditions (Hayes, 2015). *Odalate Naitেকে* is translated as 'the fence must break' which at the time symbolically spoke to getting rid of the necklace wire that held the old metal ID disk worn around the neck of the migrant labourers. The breaking of the fence also referred to the fencing around the compound area where the workers were kept and which restricted their movement (Hayes, 2015). This is the complex where the Teacher's Resource Centre, Katutura Shoprite and Katutura Community Art Centre are currently based.

The slogan offers a practical and radical suggestion of how to go about working with historical remnants while generating a range of playful forms of public culture for social justice. Hence, *Odalate Naiteke* as a historic reference is critically and creatively useful for a movement that is particularly interested in transgression and subversion. The fence is seen as metaphor of different kinds of borders that govern and divide knowledge systems.

The title of this paper *Ons Dala die Ding by Odalate Naiteke* is Afrikaans for ‘we do the thing at *Odalate Naiteke*’. The expression *Dala die Ding* is widely used across Namibian and South African contexts and it generally refers to notions of making do and performativity in everyday life. For example, it can be read as an expression that signifies acts of self-determination, pleasure, joy, change and continuity beyond the survival and resilience expression of *Life Goes On*. Like Zula, Dala is also a nuanced practice that can be both generative and violent. In a conversation on Twitter with Kadhila (2020), he explained that *dala* is a nuanced word with multiple meanings. He tweets two definitions “1. To hit forcibly and deliberately. Assault. E.g Die gatas wil die laanies dala³⁶. 2. To execute (any action) efficiently and with style, especially in play. E.g., Ek dala die vosho”³⁷ (Kadhila, 2020). These two definitions speak to the polar attitudes imbedded in everyday performativity.

The word *dala* is therefore another instance of township slang related to siNtu words that imply play such as *dlala* (isiZulu for play) and *dana* (Oshiwambo for play). The project at hand is more interested in the second definition as one that immediately speaks to Oudano. In curating *Odalate Naiteke*, I was interested in concepts such as Dala that rely on play and playfulness as methods of organising and facilitating public culture.

Holding and letting go: locating the curative in Oudano

Hamilton and Skotnes (2014) write that the curators’ work of caring (managing, ordering and organising) for collected objects in both archival and museum contexts is challenged because of how much authority is involved. They see this as a central paradox to the work of curatorship and curating that requires continuous active and critical reflection in facilitating transformation. This tells us a lot about the power dynamics that have historically defined the work of curating

³⁶ Translated as: The police wants to attack/arrest the guys.

³⁷ Translated as: I am playing/dancing the vosho. Vosho is a “South African dance that involves squatting and kicking at the same time” (Powell, 2020). This dance has been popularized South African dancer and socialite Zodwa Wabantu.

and curatorship. Curatorial practices outside cultural institutions seem to offer fluid ways of caring for art that challenge curatorial authority. In his chapter on ‘The Impossibility of Curating Live Art’, Pather (2019), drawing on his experience of curating live art in South Africa, writes about the need for new vocabularies of curating live art. He acknowledges that there will always be a need for a curator’s guidance and vision in creating platforms. However, the authoritative curatorial traits will have to dissolve (Pather, 2019). Furthermore, he suggests that the invisibility or disappearance of the curator may be a useful strategy in re-defining the terms of engagement in facilitating a platform for live art (Pather, 2019). Live art as a radically transgressive field combining visual and performance art forms clearly offers an administrative challenge to curating and curatorship.

Live artists seem to be asking to be left alone, or at the least not to be curated in conventional frames and according to the old strictures. The best way ‘to take care of’ may then be to let loose the inclination for control and frames of reference, and instead expand the platform that brings a work of live art into being, creating an open-ended programme as well as a fluid conceptual space. (Pather, 2019: 97).

I found the strategy of an invisible curator very useful for organising *Operation Odalate Naiteke*. While using it to challenge power dynamics in the process, I found that it is almost impossible for the curator to be completely invisible. This is to say that even in a context of curating public art and activism, there were always moments of realising that the facilitator/educator role continues to be caught up in authority because the curator’s role requires holding space. What matters in these moments of acknowledging and recognising the power is what one can do with it, such as letting go by refining the collaborative effort. It is in these moments of the research that I kept turning to my applied theatre skills, including the principles of critical performative pedagogy such as agency, authorship, border crossing, participation and embodiment.

Although formal curatorial education in Africa is relatively young and underdeveloped (Silva, 2017 and Ntombela, 2017), we cannot assume that curatorship and curating is a modern import to Africa through the practices of museums, galleries, art fairs and festivals. Curating and curatorship, alike facilitation, is a universal skill that is socially constructed as part of the public work of learning and culture. Indigenous practices of pottery, masks making, weaving, jewellery and basketry in Africa and other parts of the global south involve delicate and careful processes of production, storing and usage. What is often different about these curatorial processes is that the usefulness of the cultural objects exceeds their aesthetic pleasure and

exhibitionism. More so, the curator is most likely to be the artist. The life of these objects also exceeds the personal usage as their function includes community and collaborative work found in secular and sacred rituals.

One historic local example of curatorship which speaks well to the idea of curatorial practice as curative work is the role of Namunganga³⁸ or mwene gwohango. This role is often embodied by a senior member of the community who might be a traditional healer or diviner. In fact, the name Namunganga is embodied broadly and beyond the context of Olufuko as it also refers to other community roles of healing, divinity and shamanism (Mans, 2017). The contemporary practice of Olufuko as a traditional form of Oudano is probably not the best example to discuss curative work as social justice work given its hetero-patriarchal structure. However, the Namunganga role beyond the Olufuko context is one that is fundamentally characterised by queerness and the work of holding space which includes facilitating third spaces as trans-temporal, transformative and transit sites.

Oudano as a curative framework is critically useful in putting together a public programme of predominantly performance-based work. From an applied theatre perspective, this is particularly ideal because of play and playfulness' ability to enable an embodied and active involvement (Chinyowa, 2005) between artists, curators and publics. This encounter is what Nontobeko Ntombela refers to as the triangulation of curating. Ntombela writes:

...where you are negotiating the artist, the institution and the public, and how in negotiating these three elements your role is to create an encounter, and a meeting place that allows for a very fruitful engagement, that allows for asking questions that are not always obvious in the everyday. Then, of course, that in a way becomes a taking care of how – how do we take care of these spaces that enable us to ask these questions? (Ntombela, 2020: 11).

Ntombela's notion of triangulation of curating speaks to Gayatri Spivak's notion of critical intimacy in the sense that curatorial practice inherently establishes an intimate encounter between the artist, the host institution and the public. These forms of intimacy become critical by being invested in the work of deconstructing knowledge and relationality. In a way, critical intimacy opposes the notion of objective distance as a fundamentally disembodied practice. According to Feminist Marxist scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "That's what deconstruction is about, right? It's not just destruction. It's also construction. It's critical

³⁸ Oshiwambo term for a healer and in some cases, the person who hosts and initiates women during olufuko, which is a rite of passage into womanhood. *Mwene gwohango* literally translated as the owner (organiser) of the wedding.

intimacy, not critical distance. So you actually speak from inside. That's deconstruction.” (Spivak, 2016: <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/critical-intimacy-interview-gayatri-chakravorty-spivak/>). In framing the curative as a curatorial ethos, I rely on Oudano's potential of critical intimacy as a way of being in relation and solidarity with others in the process of organising public culture.

Although *Operation Odalate Naiteke* works outside formal institutions, it still has had to engage with institutions such as the City of Windhoek municipality, National Theatre of Namibia, National Art Gallery of Namibia and College of the Arts. Maintaining a fluid and playful approach to organising has been essential in keeping *Operation Odalate Naiteke* as an organic and enabling space of questioning, imagining, and knowledge production. The following sections of this paper will discuss some of the performances curated as part of *Operation Odalate Naiteke* in both 2018 and 2020. The discussion addresses research questions which have to do with Oudano's generative potential of care, trans-historic work and spatial justice.

The 2018 season was curated around imagining the idea of #UniversityofKatutura as an alternative to existing arts and culture educational set up which remain largely obsessed with traditional and conventional pedagogies. *Operation Odalate Naiteke* would thus be an informal approach of learning and culture that facilitates creative agency and critical participation. The 2020 season was guided by the following curative question; *how does one curate love in a place that they do not belong?* This question emerged as a curatorial question in the process of organising the performances and interventions most of which evoked love as a tool for social justice. This curatorial question was framed thinking about Katutura as a site of displacements and dispossession while imagining healing and social justice through these unpopular and intimate encounters.

Playing for the dead in *What is the Sound of Katutura in 1971?*

What is the Sound of Katutura in 1971? is a sonic archival experiment which includes listening and playing historic music records from Namibia and other parts of Southern Africa. This involves a range of artistic and ethnographic recordings. This event invited local musicians to reinterpret, replay and reimagine some of these recordings. The curative intention behind this sonic experiment is to unearth and explore the wealth of Namibian and Southern African music

archives. Conceptually, it is open to a range of archives from, before and after 1971. The year 1971 was central as a turbulent time in Namibian history in which *Odalate Naiteke* as a slogan and political strategy emerged. The title of this sonic experiment is taken from *Live Arkive* (2017) which was a collaborative exchange between four cross-disciplinary (Namibian and South African) artists during the second *John Muafangejo Season* organised by JMAC. This work explored what is invisible in the archive, playing with different forms of documentation and liveness through interdisciplinary practices. The project was conceptualised by Ndinomholo Ndilula, Lavinia Kapewasha, Coila-Leah Enderstein and Nicola van Straaten in partnership with the National Art Gallery of Namibia and Any Body Zine.

The question posed in the *Live Arkive* workshop was, what is the sound of Katutura in 1972? This enabled an interesting intergenerational dialogue between the participants made up of a few elders and predominantly youth from the local creative communities. Most of the young creatives in the space were not yet born by the 1970s, so some of the elders had suspicions about how ‘born frees’³⁹ would answer a question like this. This pushback was immediately challenged by the young participants in the workshop who claimed that they did not have to have lived in the time to speak back to this question. This also brought up questions of the role of critical imaginations, multivocality and intergenerational dialogue in the archive. As a curator of *Operation Odalate Naiteke*, I returned to this experience and question as a guide to explore the conceptual potential of sound and music archives in contemporary performance and curating.

This live experiment with sound recordings is Oudano in action on multiple levels. On the one hand, it implies listening closely, in this case, to predominantly vocal music, dance, poetry and stories recorded in different Namibian contexts between 1950 and 2019. On the other hand, it involves singing or dancing, playing another musical instrument to the found sounds while exhibiting them. I see this as potentially what composer and sound artist Neo Muyanga refers to as embodied translation in his reading of multivalence and fluidity in the vocal work of Miriam Makeba (Muyanga, 2019). The free re-interpretation and imagination happens through the body which relies on its impulse and intimacy with the found sound. Embodied translation is therefore an approach of artistic and archival work which must be read as a trans-temporal happening. This is also to say that embodied translation is always happening through ways in which human beings re-use and make meaning of the bodies and objects from the past which

³⁹ The term Born Frees refers to the generation(s) of post-apartheid young people that are born in the years after or a few years preceding to independence.

they encounter in the everyday performances. In the context of *Operation Odalate Naiteke*, the translation was in the re-playing as well as re-imagining of Namibian orature as cultural work that is historically transferred. In this kind of process, our bodies rely on what Akmpa (2010)⁴⁰ terms ‘the Matter of the Body’ – which is embodied knowledge.

In 2018, this sonic experiment began as a listening party to a collection of Namibian music by veteran and popular Namibian musicians like Jackson Kaujeua, Axue, Willie Mbuende, Nanghili Nashima, Erna Chimu, Ras Sheehama and Tate Kwela. This listening party at the Katutura Community Art Centre was organised as an informal event of appreciating and reflecting on the rich history of Namibian music. Shortly after this performance, there was a tour and performance to the Old Location Memorial site in Hochland Park. We organised a band of three musicians made up of South African bassist Sibusiso Gladwin Chiloane, South African drummer Molefi Phuroe and Congolese guitarist Samuel Batola. They played an improvised set of township and experimental jazz under a tree next to the graveyard. The purpose of this curative and performative gesture was aimed at literally playing for the dead in this historic site. This practice of playing for the dead asserts that ‘life goes on’, not only as a sign of resilience but it also as an approach of remembrance and memorialisation.

The curative gesture of playing for the dead was inspired by learning about the social and cultural life in the Old Location as captured in the photographic collection by Otilie Nitzsche-Reiter titled *Social Life in the Old Location in the 1950s* currently housed at the National Archives of Namibia. This collection captures striking photography of people at fashion shows, dances, parties in the township hall, and everyday life at homes in the Old Location. This archive is an earlier articulation of *Life Goes On*, visualising joy and pleasure during a difficult time of forced removals and land dispossession. I read this joy as a practice of refusal to be contained to apartheid’s cultural imaginary. The elders in Katutura who lived in the Old Location as children still tell stories about the dynamic and vibrant culture life in the Old Location. One example of these elders is cultural worker Paulina Hangara whose work and collaboration with *Operation Odalate Naiteke* I discuss below. Hangara’s oral history is part of the Namibian heritage which includes the history of resistance music from the Old Location that I have discussed in the previous paper. This heritage has not been widely accessible to

⁴⁰ Awam Akmpa. 2010. A State of Perpetual Becoming: African Bodies as Texts, Methods, and Archives. *Dance Research Journal*, Volume 42:1.

different publics in post-apartheid Namibia, a consequence of its historic censorship by the apartheid regime.

Melber (2019) discusses this censorship in his article on restoring the forgotten resistance music of Namibia. He writes about the work of *Stolen Moments - Namibian Music History Untold*, an archival project archiving and exhibiting Namibian musical recordings and photography between the 1950s to the late 1980s. The project also includes Dieter Hinrichs' photographs of live music by jazz bands and locals dancing in night clubs. Melber (2019) quotes one of the project's curator's Aino Moongo who gives a bit of insight in how this music was suppressed.

There are many reasons why you've never heard this music before. It was censored, suppressed, prohibited and made almost impossible to listen to. Its creators are either long gone or have given up on music making for reasons of adversity, death and despair. And yet this beautiful music exists with a liveliness, as if it never stopped playing. (Moongo in Melber, 2019).

Playing both old and new, familiar and unfamiliar, sounds next to a graveyard, to an audience of made up predominantly of the dead, is in a way to demonstrate the living nature of music that might have been considered as 'long lost'. To listen to and play sounds that relate to or come from this tradition of popular music in the Old Location is to show how sound is a bond between the new and old generations of cultural work.

The 2018 sonic experiment at the Old Location site was therefore an intimate encounter made up of eight people playing and witnessing the freestyled and improvisational Southern African jazz under this tree. It was an embodied translation that communicated to the ancestry that sound is still the through which we use to dream about freedom and being free. It required a lot of vulnerability from the musicians, organisers as well as audiences because it was not set up as a show, the idea of playing for the dead was rather haunting and unsettling. For example, one of musicians did not understand why we chose to perform at the graveyard, in fact, this suggestion was not well received upon arrival the performance site. What is however interesting is that he did not hesitate to express that he had understood the gesture immediately after doing the performance. This experience is a testimony to the embodied learning. Intimacy, in this case as both a performance and curative approach, is valuable in the sense that these moments of live performance do not necessarily need a 'live' mass spectatorship.

The critical intimacies in the sonic experiment at the graveyard are signified by the vulnerability of curator-artists as well as the invisible, relatively small and immersive

spectatorship. These critical intimacies were also a way of establishing and setting up the archival frictions, as the methodological choice for this thesis. By listening to or playing Jackson Kaujeua's *Winds of Change* (which is one of his iconic songs from his repertoire of liberation struggle music) at a historic site like the Old Location memorial site is to evoke memories and other presences, in this case ancestral presence. This is what made this experience a trans-temporal one as it transported us (as players and listeners) between past times and future futures. This intimate encounter took place from the late afternoon (at sunset) all the way into the deep night.

The 2020 sonic experiment was a performance by Reggae and Shambo⁴¹ musician and educator Ten Ten who played an electric guitar instrumental to a 32-minute sound clip made up of Namibian orature. The compilation consists of traditional and religious songs, stories, instrumentals and dance material recorded in early 1950s by Ernst and Ruth Dammann. This range of sounds composed a soundscape, a historic backdrop on which Ten Ten could play and experiment with his guitar exploring its melodic, rhythmic and percussive potential. The found material on the soundscape is curated with abrupt endings and pregnant pauses without smooth transitions. These interruptions are meant to disrupt the flow and add to the transgressive potential of the soundscape. In this experiment, the guitar accompaniments to the soundscape supported the aesthetic pleasure of the found material. They also disrupted and created split-focus in this soundscape of ethnographic recordings, some of which were aurally distorted. This way, the guitar played the role of an interventionist instrument which heightens and holds the indigenous musical and storytelling sounds while occasionally transgressing and playing out of rhythm with the found material in the soundscape. Hence, this soundscape opened the historic soundscape to other dimensions and vocabularies of sound.

One of the songs on the soundscape is !Ūsa!khōs, a Khoekhoe classic about !Ūsa!khōs, a town in central Namibia that hardly receives rain. This version was recorded on 30th January 1954 in Okombahe. This recording of voices and guitar points us to the openness and freedom of multivocality that is not confined to the rules and arrangements of western choral music. The song is a communal effort as we hear children, women and men singing together, each singer joining the song with their natural voice(s) accompanied by a guitar instrumentation. Colonial

⁴¹ Shambo is an Oshiwambo contemporary music that was popularized as a post-apartheid music genre in the mid-90s played by urban musicians exploring reggae and traditional musical forms such as Iiyimbo, Eenghama, Etenda, and Ongovela. Prior to this, Shambo was played by guitarists and singers during apartheid by such as Tate Kwela, and Kakuya Kembale. Shambo originates from Iiyimbo yaAwambo such as the ones performed by Nanghili Nashima, whose work is discussed in the next paper.

tonality is disrupted. The music-makers move freely between different voices, between singing and speaking as well as rehearsing and performing. Ten Ten's guitar accompaniment to this song sounded like a Shambo melody. This meeting of a Namibian classic and a contemporary genre is what points to sonic intimacies and migrations. We experienced a relationship between two homegrown musical genres from different times. In that moment, our ethnic and geographic associations of these sounds were challenged as we witnessed a merging and communing of different music.

This 2020 sonic experiment took place at the KCAC in the corridor on the first floor surrounded by student's artworks exhibited on the walls, art studios, offices, a gallery, classrooms and storerooms. The acoustics in this space challenge the production of the sound as the compound is built in such a way that its concrete walls compress the sound. This creates echoes and feedback, producing a challenging sound to manage and transmit. This is largely part of KCAC's 'hauntedness' as a site that still reflects a lot of intergenerational trauma from its history as a repressive and restrictive place. Intergenerational cultural work happens in these experimental moments when young creatives and activists carry out these archival experiments, by listening and playing. This is part of making and holding space for learning to happen.

Okapana mobility between homes and streets

The 2020 season also included the *Okapana Mobile Concert* which was a pop-up concert that began at a traffic circle and car wash situated right behind the Oshetu Market in Single Quarters. The Single Quarters which is also situated in central Katutura is made up of hostel-like housing which originally built for contract labourers who lived in single apartments. Oshetu Market in Single Quarters has been a popular space for local traders selling a range of local products such as crafts, clothes, drinks and food. The market is also popularly known as Kapana, named after a local delicacy of grilled beef sold at the market. This attracts a lot of locals, visitors and different demographics from all over the city.

Okapana also has a long history as urban inexpensive fast food originally prepared and sold by women although today it is a male-dominated trade, particularly at Oshetu Market. At Kapana as it is popularly known in the contemporary public domain, young men standing behind their grill-stands compete for customers and serving the meat in small pieces for negotiable prices. At Oshetu Market, women and more men can be spotted in the background selling pot-cooked

meat and other complementary products such as ontaku⁴², cool drinks, spices, bread, and vetkoek⁴³. They also selling indigenous products such as groundnuts, dry mopani worms, beans, Omahangu⁴⁴, Omakaka⁴⁵, and a range of medicinal goods that are produced in the rural areas. Okapana is a very mobile term. My first memory of Okapana is from Ombili, Okuryangava and Hakahana locations of Katutura where I grew up. Women would move between houses, markets, and shebeens carrying and selling pieces of cooked beef, pork, chicken or lamb in a pot. This still happens in other contexts beyond Single Quarters as women in Katutura and other informal areas continue to do this business. Today, we see women selling uupana⁴⁶ at construction sites and on street corners joining other informal traders. The word Okapana tells us a lot about this history as it refers to a pan or pot. In fact, its direct translation would be ‘a small pan’.

We turned up at the car wash site on a Saturday morning and occupied the space to host the *Okapana Mobile Concert*. This car wash is part of an open transit area which includes an informal bus station, parking space with one road that passes through to other roads and surrounding homes, shebeens, *cuca shops*⁴⁷, barbershops and the market. The concert featured Maspara Panstula, a Kwaito dance troupe; Hip-Hop artist Lamek Ndjaba; guitarist and singer Lovisa the Superstar; and painter Trianus Nakale.

⁴² Ontaku or Oshikundu is an Oshiwambo non-alcoholic homebrewed staple drink made of millet, sorghum and water.

⁴³ Vetkoek is round bread fried in oil.

⁴⁴ Omahangu is millet cultivated by Aawambo and VaKavango in northern Namibia.

⁴⁵ Omakaka is dry spinach harvested by Aawambo.

⁴⁶ Plural of Okapana

⁴⁷ Cuca Shop refers to a small and informal shop or shebeen found in Namibian urban streets. Cuca shops is also a term used in Southern African to refer to shebeens.



Figure 25: 'Maspara Pantsula's opening performance at Operation Odalate Naiteke (2020)'. Photograph: Vilho Nuumbala.

It took us less than an hour to set up the sound equipment and do brief sound checks before Maspara Panstula cleared the space to open with one of their signature choreographies. This attracted passing children and adults who joined the audience that had come for the performance. People would continue to watch and leave, creating a temporary performance space witnessed by an audience in transit. This incidental audience included children who would usually play around this space, bus and taxi drivers, Okapana customers, street vendors and more everyday people doing their weekend chores. The *Okapana Mobile Concert* in this first site depicted Oudano as a practice of leisure. The mood, which was easy-going, light, fun and playful, was co-enabled by the performing artists' creative offerings. This required improvisation and a sense of holding to negotiate an egalitarian space. Township streets, like many other public spaces in the city, are overtly male-dominated spaces. This domination is embedded in the language and cultural dimensions of the given place. Hence, *Okapana Mobile Concert* offers alternative potentials of occupying and holding space on the streets. What we learned here is that, it is everyone's responsibility to co-create and hold space in order to make space for Oudano to happen. This is the communal ethos in African performance discussed by Agawu (2007) as performing and organising cultural production together.

Maspara Pantsula was founded in 2014 and is made up of Zacharia Gariseb, Justrodia Lampard and Jesaya Afrikaaner. In 2018, Maspara Panstula also performed at *Operation Odalate Naitেকে*. They come from Soweto, another Katutura neighbourhood. Soweto, is one of Katutura's oldest neighbourhoods named after one of Johannesburg's largest townships whose history can be dated to the 1930s but shares similar characteristics to Katutura's spatial planning (Müller-Friedman, 2008). These spatial characteristics are described by Müller-Friedman as follows:

Namibian townships were planned and built by the South African Administration in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They were located several kilometres outside of what were considered the white towns and often replaced former blacks-only locations which had become designated for 'white' development due to their relatively central position. In the planning of these new townships, buffer zones consisting of highways, 'green belts' and industrial zones were located deliberately between white town and black and coloured townships to provide an additional boundary between the two areas. Additional design features, such as single access roads to the townships, a tarred perimeter road, the absence of culs-de-sac, and flood-lighting, aided policing and control in cases of unrest. (Müller -Friedman, 2008: 33).

Müller-Friedman's spatial description of the historic form of Katutura speaks to that of Soweto in Johannesburg as a township that was planned under the Urban Areas Act of 1923. Soweto was known as the Western Bantu Townships Until the early 1963 when it was officially named Soweto, an acronym for South-western Townships. All these urban centres were a product of apartheid administration's racial segregation policies. The naming of places that recall one another (Soweto in Katutura and in Johannesburg) can also be read as a form of trans-national solidarity in the shared fight against apartheid. Soweto in Katutura came into formation as an ethnically mixed locale of Africans during the zeitgeist of 1976 uprisings and the murder of Hector Peterson in Soweto, South Africa. Soweto in Windhoek as a 'namesake' of Soweto in Johannesburg is an act of critical intimacy in its form of spatial solidarity amongst Black people in different African geographic locations under the same oppressive regime. These were the results of 1971/72 worker uprisings against the contract labour system. Soweto then emerged as this Katutura neighbourhood of the African working class in the apartheid urban economy.

Maspara Panstula's set is made up of a 15-minute soundscape of Kwaito and House music to which they perform a Pantsula and choreography that is both rehearsed and improvisational. Studies situate Kwaito culture in South African townships as a sub-culture that emerged and became a popular culture from the early 1990s (Ndabeni and Mthembu, 2018). South Africa

and Namibia's intertwined cultural and political history is useful in understanding why and how Kwaito culture also emerged in Namibian townships like Katutura and Mondesa during the same time and how it continues to evolve into other contemporary performance genres. Ndabeni's writing points us to the power of sonic production to transgress cultural and national borders. She writes, "The sound of home can be informed by a collaboration with influences from outside of home." (Ndabeni, 2018: 19). This point relates to Kun's framing of the notion of audiotopia, in the sense that sound is both a place making and mobile force (Kun, 2005).

I would like to re-emphasise Ndabeni's argument that Kwaito is not a purist culture and that it will always be mobile and have external influences, like other cultures characterised by a multiplicity of origins. In this sense, the history of Kwaito as a form of cultural production can also be traced back to the long cultural work in black locations under apartheid such as Sophiatown and Old Location. Kwaito culture manifests multiple influences from religious and indigenous performative cultures. Over the years, many Namibian, South African and Zimbabwean Kwaito artists have written and performed songs which sample and reinterpret Christian hymns and traditional African songs. Like with *Toyi-toyi*, this reminds us that Kwaito as a shared practice that points to entangled post-colonial histories of Southern African. While thinking of *Pantsula* as a dance practice in which Kwaito comes from, I argue that the footwork in *Pantsula* dance is partly influenced by dances such as *Tsutsube Nama Stap* and (*San* and *Tswana*). *Nama Stap* is the traditional dance of Nama people of southern Namibia and Northern Cape, South Africa. *Nama Stap* includes "bending, side-stepping, heels lifting from the ground, polyrhythmic gyration" by "...gliding and quick-stepping bodies..." (Biwa, 2012: 193). Some elements of these indigenous performance cultures can be seen in *Pantsula* dance.

Ndabeni references Professor Nyamnjoh in the discussion of mobility and genealogy of Kwaito culture to remind us that culture is not static (Nyamnjoh, 2017). "Bodies and forms are never complete; they are open-ended vessels to be appropriated by consciousness in its multiplicity." (Nyamnjoh, 2017: 257). *Maspara Pantsula* wears traditional Kwaito outfits such as Converse All Stars shoes, floppy hats, Dikkies pants and long-sleeved shirts (sometimes a t-shirt) with earrings. This is the signature look across different contexts of Kwaito culture. It is a clear combination of modern costumes derived from different parts of the world.

The choreographic vocabulary of *Maspara Panstula* speaks of self-determination and self-expression. This language shifts between being overtly political and seeming to be merely having fun and free dancing. Ndabeni insists that Kwaito was always a political culture even if

it is not always overtly performed as such (Ndabeni and Mthembu, 2018). Ndabeni also sees Kwaito as a culture that symbolised a post-apartheid relation. Although Maspara Pantsula was founded 24 years after Namibia's independence, it is a continuity of the of many Kwaito practices that were popular in the 90s and early 2000s in as much as the group express dreams and aspirations of the black youth in Namibia. In fact, the trio keeps this practice alive even as it is slowly disappearing in public culture. Maspara Pantsula gives credit to their older siblings who trained them on the streets for their Pantsula dance education. Maspara Panstula demonstrate their critical consciousness when asked to speak about their work. They present an Oudano praxis which is grounded in Kwaito as historical work, community activism and social change. In their artistic statement to their performance set at *Operation Odalate Naiteke* 2020 they write:

We do not dance to impress people, but we dance to make a change and inspire the young generation to stay away from drugs and alcohol abuse... We dream and we won't stop dreaming, our dreams must be answered. Words from a black child. (Maspara Panstula, 2020).

What became apparent in their cheerful and enticing act is that their work is essentially about their desire to be free from the Katutura experience of displacement and dispossession. This is them in their practices of Zula ad Dala as ways of facilitating social change. This is visible when they clear and use the space by doing jumps, splits, rolls and fast-paced footwork covering on wide, concrete and rocky tard surface that makes up the car wash area. Occupying space in this style is not new for Maspara Panstula considering that the streets have been their space for rehearsing, teaching and learning consciousness. Here, occupying space becomes a tricky strategy of holding space in a township street which is a site for political education.

Maspara Pantsula's performance was received by the public as a familiar cultural expression that is jovial and lively. This resonance of the audience is expressed by whistling, shouting and other ways of cheering on while stopping to momentarily observe the performance. The audience recognized Maspara's work of 'zularing' through enjoyment and sharing social messages against violence by using their bodies and signage. This is the cultural pedagogy that the work of Maspara Pantsula facilitates. Maspara Pantsula remind us that Katutura's streets are already activated sites in their everyday informal and colloquial practices of Dala and Zula. Maspara Pantsula demonstrates that Zula and Dala are not only criminalised and exclusively economic practices, they are also concepts of knowledge production. Maspara Pantsula's pedagogical method is in their miming and use of posters to impart socio-cultural messages aimed at uplifting and promoting self-determination in their community.

The second act at the mobile concert was Lovisa the Superstar who performed an acoustic set of Shambo adaptations and original compositions. Lovisa performed as a guitarist and singer, and she was accompanied by Mutsa Lairdman on a keyboard. She performs a set of Oshiwambo popular and traditional songs inspired by the late guitarist and singer Tate Kwela. Kwela was a self-taught guitarist born 1943 in Akweenyaga village, Oshana Region who passed away in 2005. Tate Kwela's music has provided great socio-political commentary across rural and urban communities. His music was popularised through the Oshiwambo national broadcaster.

Lovisa's performance is unusual in this context because she takes up space on the street to sing liberation songs predominantly performed by men. Both the street and stage are male-dominated spaces in the Namibian cultural spheres. Lovisa is one of the women who play an instrument and sing in the Namibian music industry. Part of Namibia's musical heritage is that it has been men who have predominantly played modern musical instruments as discussed in paper three of this thesis titled *'Kgala! Namib Jazz and related struggle music'*. This can be seen in most bands which are often made up solely of men. This marginalisation stems from the socio-political context which denies opportunities for women to fully participate in the creative economy. Women in contemporary Namibian bands are often lead singers or back-up singers. In recent years, we have seen more young women singers taking up instruments such as guitar, keyboard/piano, flute, mbira, brass and saxophone.



Figure 26: 'Lovisa the Superstar and Mutsa performing at the Okapana Mobile Concert' (2020). Photograph: Vilho Nuumbala.

Lovisa's repertoire is made up of songs that are traditionally known as Oudano or Iiyimbo yaAwambo⁴⁸. Her work also draws on other Oudano musical genres such as Ongovela⁴⁹ and Etenda translating into the contemporary genre of Shambo. Lovisa performed *Etenda lyaAmati yaAndonga*, an Oshindonga⁵⁰ call and response song that celebrates Ondonga legacy and heritage. This song is often accompanied by a dance initiated by men inviting collective participation. Lovisa sings this song in Oshikwambi⁵¹ taking the freedom by changing some of its lyrical content. Her acoustic vocal, keyboard and guitar accompaniment travels through the streets of Single Quarters, creating a nostalgic and unique sound of struggle music. People recognise the music which they sing along to as they witness a young woman making use of her voice to do cultural and historical work on the street. When she sings Tate Kwela's '*Mpanda popi mpa ndalili*' she narrates the story of armed struggle as he originally performed it. This song reflects on the road travelled by anti-apartheid guerrillas, looking back from a post-apartheid perspective. This music has always been audible in the everyday soundscape of Single Quarters and Katutura at large, as it can be heard playing from shebeens and homes.



Figure 27: 'Lamek Ndjaba performing at the Okapana Mobile Concert' (2020). Photograph: Vilho Nuumbala.

Lamek Ndjaba's performance was signified by the conscious lyrical content that typifies his musical practice. He sings and raps predominantly in Oshiwambo, in Oshikwanyama to be specific. Ndjaba began his performance by sharing a memory of the site where the concert took

⁴⁸ Songs of Aawambo.

⁴⁹ Ongovela is an Oshiwambo music genre that translated as melody. It is predominantly performed vocally and at times it is accompanied by a drum, bow, or handclapping.

⁵⁰ Oshindonga is a dialect of Oshiwambo. Uudhano is Oshindonga for Oudano, which is in Oshikwanyama.

⁵¹ Oshikwambi is a dialect of Oshiwambo.

place. He remembered this as a site where he and some of his school-mates used to hang out when they stayed out of school. He noted that there was something deeply profound about coming back to this site to perform his music to the local public. Ndjaba also sees himself as a poet and describes his work as a series of socially conscious messages which he uses to influence new trains of thought. In his artistic statement, he says that his sound is based on the musical influences of old school Hip Hop and Kwaito which he attributes to other Namibian artists such as Tesh, Shikololo, Mark Mushiva and Tate Kwela. What makes Ndjaba's work unique is its overt self-reflexivity, vulnerability and self-determination. Listening closely to his work reveals that his process of music-making is one that begins internally, taking from his lived experience as a young black man from Katutura. This makes his brand of Hip Hop refreshing in an industry in which a lot of musical works rely on external influences offering very little self-awareness or commentary on the socio-political circumstances.



Figure 28: 'Lamek Ndjaba performing at the Okapan Mobile concert (2020).' Photograph: Vilho Nuumbala.

Lamek Ndjaba is critical about the burden of representation and the limits of the political in contemporary performance. The first song he performed was titled *Oye Lye* which speaks directly to these problems. This is a song about Black identity protesting at notions and social expectations of black art. Ndjaba insists that "...we are expected to make a statement based on our socio-political stance but still people or the world still try to change our statement so that they can fit into the moulds of whiteness" (Ndjaba, personal communication 2020, 28 March). *Oye Lye* draws on Oshiwambo praise songs which respond to the call, 'omumati oye lye'? (who is this young man?). The opening chant sings 'aame mwene omukwaita, ekondobolo, omukwaita' (I am a soldier, a cock, a soldier). In doing his praise song in the form of Hip-Hop, Ndjaba's chorus sings, 'oye lye? adiilila molukanda oye lye? (who is he? he comes from the township, who is he?). In his recital, Ndjaba repeatedly refers to himself as Kavandje (jackal), drawing on Oshiwambo folktales such as Shimbungu na Kavandje (Hyena and Jackal) which are about survival and self-preservation. Ndjaba calls in the jackal's intelligence when he repeatedly praises himself by reciting '*Kavandje sa!*'.

In another song titled *Ahawe*, Ndjaba makes use of the feminist principle, 'the personal is political' to reflect on his lived experience of poverty. The track is suggestive in the sense that it mobilises the listener to reject the poverty mindset. Ndjaba says that he wrote this song thinking about one million dollars, expressing his desire to self-actualise and mobilise the self-determination of his community. He is aware of the kind of work that is needed for a project of redistribution and social justice. The last song he performed was *Eedula* which is the first song he wrote in 2009 while in the 8th grade. This song was inspired by moments of self-realisation and self-acceptance as embodiments of growth. I noticed the lightness in the Ndjaba's sound compared to a lot of Hip Hop, Kwaito and House music. The artist performs with amicable stillness and mindfulness giving the audience breathing space to receive and process the music in their own ways. This intimate approach to performing makes his practice grounded and relevant to his audience.



Figure 29: 'Ouma Hangara's Oral History performance at her home on Shanghai Street' (2020). Photograph: Vilho Nuumbala

The second site of the concert was a visit to Ouma⁵² Paulina Hangara's house which is located on another side of Oshetu market, on Shanghai Street. Ouma Hangara is an artist, traditional healer and historian. The aim of the visit to her house was to have an intimate encounter listening to her historical narrations of the Old Location and Katutura, particularly the Single Quarters. Her historical narrations were not just verbal, they also included enrolling audience members in her dramatic enactments of life in the Old Location where she was born and raised. This included stories about the forceful removals and the resistance by the local people. She also showed us her collection of photographs as she narrated these various histories. She welcomed us to her house by playing the popular hymn *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* on her harmonica. In addition to *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, Ouma Hangara also said a prayer in Khoekhoegowab at the beginning of her storytelling performance. Ouma Hangara playing this popular African hymn *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* was both a way of welcoming us into the space but it was also a way of setting the tone which was about learning about African anti-colonial solidarities. She was using prayer (as a device of religion) to hold space to 'perform history' through orality.

⁵² Ouma is Afrikaans for grand-mother or elderly woman.



Figure 30: 'Ouma Hangara performing her Oral History'. Photograph Vilho Nuumbala.

Ouma Paulina Nandjila Hangara was born in 1947 in the Old Location, where she grew up before her family was forcibly moved to Katutura. During her storytelling session, Ouma Hangara told many stories about life in the Old Location. She reminisced about how Black people lived in a unified and diverse manner at the Old Location. Ouma Hangara related that, even though they lived under the repressive conditions of the apartheid regime, their sense of community which was reflected in their cultural, religious and political activities made life exciting. She gave several familiar accounts of the difficult power dynamics between the African and white communities. These dynamics were marked and maintained by racialised geographic and cultural boundaries.

Ouma Hangara's orality also included dramatisation and employed play to do this historical work. In her account of how white people treated black domestic workers, she used a replica of a house (made from cardboard) representing how houses looked in the Old Location and she enrolled some audience members to re-enact a scenario of this kind. Ouma Hangara played the 'Baas' (the white man) and 'Miesies' (the white madam) subjugating black workers (performed by children and other young people in the audience). Arts writer, Martha Mukaiwa who attended this storytelling session, noted the fragmentedness and disjunctiveness of Ouma

Hangara's historicising. This resembles the trans-temporal nature of orality as it is not linear or one dimensional. Mukaiwa writes:

Ouma's stories don't go the way you expect. Forward or from point A to B. They zigzag. They skip things. They make her laugh. They overestimate our grasp of history and sometimes they evolve into spontaneous skits illustrating the dynamics of working for a white family. (Mukaiwa, 2020, <https://www.namibian.com.na/197521/archive-read/History-with-Ouma-Hangara>).

Ouma Hangara used these scenarios to make connections to the rise of the African people's resistance in the Old Location. This is what led to her political consciousness. She recited stories about the meetings in their home between her father and other political activists, such as David Meroro and Sam Nujoma. Ouma Hangara recalled the people's resistance to the evictions notifications as planned by the Windhoek municipality and the South African colonial administration in the 1950s. "I thought, why must I move? We had gardens, there was good water, no illness, we had graves there"⁵³. The local people of the Old Location consequently started organising against this forced re-location to Katutura. This organising included boycotts and demonstrations.

On 10 December 1959, apartheid police shot at local people during one of these demonstrations leaving 11 people dead and 59 others injured (Heuva, 1996). This event is known in contemporary Namibian national memory as the Old Location Massacre. Ouma Hangara's account of this day highlights her sister Kamusuko ǀEichas' activism. She described her sister's defiance and how this inspired her own political activity. Ouma Hangara noted that her sister was a close friend of Anna Kakurukaze Mungunda, who was murdered during apartheid police violence on that fateful day. Although Ouma Hangara's version leaned towards the mainstream nationalist narrative of the Old Location Massacre, her account was refreshing as it gave an insight into the role of Black women during period, which is typically historicised in favour of men. This history told by her as a Black woman, in which she also recounts experiences and narratives of other black women such as her sister, gives alternative insights into the history of political work in Old Location. Today, Ouma Hangara's narrative remains in the terrain of orality which means it is one of the many oral histories that have not been centred in the making of the Namibian national memory.

⁵³ Ouma Hangara as quoted in Martha Mukaiwa's article.

At the end of this history lesson, we feasted on some *Vetkoek* and *Oros* that Ouma Hangara had prepared for us. The session began with a prayer and was coupled with questions from the young people who had made up most of the audience. Throughout the session, the young people asked questions regarding the circumstances, experiences, and events in Ouma Hangara's historical work. This session created space for this intergenerational dialogue to happen and showed how it can be enhanced in *Operation Odalate Naiteke curative work*.

In summary, this paper shows that there is a lot that performance and curation can learn from one another, and that Oudano is a critical and expansive container that can facilitate this relationship. This paper has discussed the performance work of Namibian artists and cultural workers Maspara Pantsula, Ouma Paulina Hangara, Lovisa the Superstar, and Lamek Ndjaba as curated in the *Operation Odalate Naiteke* programme in Katutura. It unpacks Katutura's historic spatial production as one that is rooted in historic oppressive structures as well as local and trans-national solidarities. The paper leans on concepts practices such as *Zula*, *Life Goes On*, *Dala*, and holding as mobilisers of critical intimacies required for radical imagination

Operation Odalate Naiteke as initiated through Oudano demonstrates a praxis, an experimentation of public culture and 'publicness' (homes, parks and streets) in Katutura. Hence, the curative as a gesture and operative of cultural work suggests interventions that are restorative at their core. *Operation Odalate Naiteke* as a curative intervention is radical education because it is one of many local cultural activities of this nature that are hardly studied and mobilised in local public culture.

PAPER FIVE: ‘VAKWATI VETEMO TU LIMENI’:⁵⁴ HOEING THROUGH THE SONICGRAPHY OF ONGHILI YA NASHIMA

Introduction



Figure 31: A screen shot from the video recording of Meekulu Nanghili Nashima in an interview and performance. This interview is conducted by filmmakers Botelle and Kowalski (1998).

This paper reflects on a close and deep listening of scattered audio-visual recordings of the late performing artist Nanghili Nashima. Nanghili Nashima (Monika Haimene) was born in 1926 at Omukwiyugwemanya in Ondonga and grew up at Ongali, Ombadja and passed away in 2003 (Shivute, 2003). In a 1998 interview and performance archived on YouTube, Nanghili Nashima narrates her life story through autobiographical stories about living widely across Owambo in both northern Namibia and southern Angola. She re-accounts that her mobility can be traced back to Ongandjera where her ancestors came from. Nashima also remembers that she has lived in villages such as Onandova, Eenghango, Enghandja, Okwalondo, Ekaka laNamudenga and Oshimbyu shaHishosholwa in Ohangwena region of northern Namibia. She had also lived in Angolan villages such as Embulunganga Ondjiva, Omusheshe and Oukwangali waHanyangha. Nanghili Meekulu⁵⁵ Nanghili Nashima’s mobility which she sings

⁵⁴ Literally translated as: ‘holders of the hoes, let us plough’. This phrase is recited by Nanghili Nashima in the Botelle and Kowalski (1998) recording of her performing praise poetry.

⁵⁵ Meekulu is a title used for elderly women. Its literal meaning is grandmother.

about in many of her songs shows that she was a trans-local figure. Her performances marked her relations to different places as well as people in her life. Although there is very little biographic information readily available about her artistic influences, ensembles and family, Meme Nanghili Nashima sang openly about her migrations, kinships, and public life at large.

Nanghili Nashima grew up in the milieu of dominant missionary and colonial influences but her musical practice remained largely influenced by her Oshiwambo traditional musicality expressed in *iiyimbo yAawambo* and social plays such as *Oudano wokoluvanda* (moonlight dances). This is one of the practices that can be attributed to her early learning and practising performance. These *Oudano* traditions form basis of her musical compositions and performance practice at large. Nanghili Nashima's performances were ensemble work. She was a lead singer for a group of women singers. These women repeatedly echoed a chant and sometimes Nanghili's lyrics by singing, handclapping and dancing. It is not clear how her musical ensemble(s) were formed but their formation could be attributed to her spontaneous music making processes which happen in both mediated and unmediated public spaces. What is clear is that she was the lead singer and she explicitly stated this in one of her songs in which she sings '*aame mwene wo ngudu*' (I am owner of the group). She was the lead singer who composed original material as much as she adapted existing *iiyimbo yAawambo*. Nanghili Nashima and her ensembles of women performers became a distinguishable performance group whose repertoire was widely played on the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation's *Oshiwambo* service as well as receiving invitations to perform at homesteads of *Ovakwanyama* headmen. Nashima's other performance spaces included social events at *eekamba/eendingosho*⁵⁶ or at home, while ploughing or pounding *Omahangu* as it can be seen in the Botelle and Kowalski (1998) video interview.

My attempt to focus on Nanghili Nashima's work is inspired by the absence of contemporary scholarly reflections on her work and that of other women artists in Namibian art history. In this paper, I propose that Meme Nanghili Nashima be read as an African queer-feminist intellectual in Namibian historiography. I argue that her musical production is what African performance theorists such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2007) and Micere Githae-Mugo (1994 and 2012) have theorised as African orature. When we look at the work of Nanghili Nashima, there is song, dance, poetry, storytelling, historicising, healing, place making and intellectualising.

⁵⁶ *Cuca shops*, which are Southern African *shebeens*. In the Botelle and Kowalski (1998) video, Nanghili Nashima cites her own experience and history with *cuca shops* when she sings, "*Eekamba adishe nadi ufanwe, eendingosho adishe na di ongelwe u pule kwali Nashima*". This is literally translated as, 'may all be *cuca shops* be called, may all *shebeens* be collected so that you can ask about Nashima'.

This cultural practice takes place in everyday contexts of labour and leisure. Nanghili Nashima's Oudano repertoire includes oitevo (poetry), oyiimbo (songs), omalitango (praise songs). While Nanghili Nashima sings in the personal and includes traces of her own biography, it is still tricky to figure out which of her songs and parts of them were fiction and which were non-fiction. This is usually the case with omalitango for example, which often blurs the lines between fiction and non-fiction. In elitango (singular of omalitango), the praise singer recites their familial, totemic, biographic including their imagined information. Nanghili's musical work was autobiographic given its focus on her intimate relationships, places and 'imagined self'.

I also draw on Seti-Sonamzi's (2019) study of Black feminist public intellectualism in post-apartheid South Africa, which is positioned as speaking truth to power and as a continuity of anti-apartheid struggle and decolonisation. Seti-Sonamzi argues that "the concept and function of intellectualism must undergo a complete overhaul, beginning with the accommodation of more voices, particularly those of oppressed Black women." (Seti-Sonamzi (2019: iii). I recognise a similar argument in Micere Mugo's (2012) theorisation on the role of artists in flowering of Pan-Africana liberated zones. Mugo asserts that for Black people in Africa and its diaspora to fully experience those liberated zones, we must turn to orature because of its intellectual power to facilitate Amilcar Cabral's (1973) notion of 'returning to the source' which he defines as a political process of cultural renaissance rather than a cultural event. One of the elements of orature as a vehicle of returning to the source is that it is practised communally, meaning it depends on the participation and engagement of its public. In orature, the artist sets out "...to educate, enlighten, politicise, conscientize and even urge people to action" (Githae-Mugo, 2012: 12). This perspective provides insight into the work of the public intellectual through orature as a shared and collective practice of knowledge production.

For this paper, I work with the 13-minute video footage of Nanghili Nashima's performance that I accessed on Namibian musician Jackson Wahengo's YouTube channel. This footage was initially shot for Andrew Botelle and Kelly Kowalski's film *The Power Stone/ Emanyala lOmundilo woShilongo* (1999) at her homestead in Onhuno in 1998. I also listen to the collection of Nanghili Nashima's orature currently archived at the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation's Music Library. This includes mostly sound recordings of her songs some of which are accompanied with poetry and dance. This material was mostly recorded by the

Suidwes-Afrikaanse Uitsaaikorporasie⁵⁷ (SWAUK) and are not dated. The digitalised versions currently archived on CD format are labelled 'Ukwanyama Vroue' (Oukwanyama women) and catalogued together with other women performance groups from other parts of Owambo. This collection combines a range of scattered, fragmented and poorly catalogued Oudano recordings by the broadcaster during the 70s, 80s and after apartheid. Although this paper does not unpack all Nanghili Nashima's songs, it attempts to bring together pieces of what I refer to as her sonicgraphy. Here sonicgraphy refers to Nanghili Nashima's repertoire (recorded and non-recorded) as captured in the national cultural memory.

Minette Mans' (2002) notes on identity and change in the making of Namibian musical identities reminds us of the social, economic, and political histories of music-driven knowledge production. Music and sound in general have been some of the ways in which history has been practised and preserved. Mans (2002) notes that music has historically signified change and survival for Namibian societies. She refers to indigenous ritual practices, missionary influences, apartheid and cultural isolation, contract labour, resistance, urbanisation and postcolonialism as contexts of how music influenced social change. The music of Nanghili Nashima reflects some of these cultural and historic politics as it always orating, transferring, and inquiring about history. One example of this is the effects of Christian and colonial music education which forced a lot of indigenous African music to go underground (Mans, 2002). Despite the major cultural changes, Nanghili Nashima continued drawing inspiration from her Oshiwambo indigenous frame of reference for her performance practice. Hence, the musical and poetic performance remnants discussed in this paper do not only mobilise transgression of dominant political ideology, but they also draw from and speak back to a range of archives of Oudano (orature), as a praxis of cultural work.

Listening and hoeing

By listening closely to Nanghili Nashima's songs, I find that the hoe is one of the objects that she references widely. While she sings literally about her own hoe in her community's labour relations, she also uses the hoe in a symbolic and metaphoric sense to sing about sexuality and migration. The way Nanghili Nashima sings about etemo (a hoe) as a significant cultural object in Oshiwambo agrarian and marital life. There is a relationship between etemo and Oudano in the sense that there are songs that are specifically performed during ploughing such as the one

⁵⁷ South-West Africa Broadcasting Corporation.

performed by Nashima and her co-singers in the Botelle and Kowalski (1998) recording. She expresses this more explicitly in one of her songs titled *Ame onghedi yo kohombo nghi ishi* ('I do not know the marriage code'). In the excerpt below, she praises her hoe's impeccable abilities.

Nda Nangobe shaa nda ning'onghulungu⁵⁸
Nda Nangobe shaa nda ninga ndi nyakwa
Ondi nghulungu netemo waHamunyela
Ndinyakwa nekukweyo waHamukwaya
Temo lange latema la twa eefola ngondoongi
Ekuku la lima la fa oshipululo
Temo lange ngomwili yaHamulungu
Ndi n'ekuku ngonghambe yaShingunguma

(Nanghili Nashima, n.d).

This text demonstrates Nanghili Nashima's ingenious use of metaphor to highlight and sing proudly about her own ploughing and artistic abilities. In this text, she uses the hoe to make a connection between her artistic and agrarian work. She begins with self-recognition of her artistic and creative gift by positioning herself 'as one of Nangobe', Nangobe being her father. She posits that she is 'artistic with the hoe', again referring to herself as 'one of Hamunyela'. Hamunyela is someone she was married to. To emphasise this, she uses another word for a hoe and then again references herself as one of Hamukwaya. In essence, what Nanghili Nashima is doing is praising her work ethic as a member of a community that values agricultural production. In Aawambo societies, owning several *omatemo*⁵⁹ in the homestead signifies the possibility of a productive agricultural life. Nanghili Nashima singing about her hoe in this rich manner also invites the listener to imagine and inquire about what other forms of labour are being implied here. The rest of *Ame onghedi yo kohombo nghi ishi* is discussed in the last section of this paper on labour.

To immerse myself into Nanghili Nashima's rich archive of impulsive and stylised Oudano praxis, I adopt her metaphor of a hoe and hoeing to describe my process of listening (hearing, reading, resonating, and translating) her 'sonicgraphy'. This means working through the scattered remnants of Nanghili Nashima's work to make sense of her performance practice as

⁵⁸ I of Nangobe when I become an artist/ I of Nangobe when I become a creative/ I am artistic with the hoe me of Hamunyela/ My hoe makes lines like a donkey/ It is so old it ploughs like a ploughing machine/ I have an old hoe and Shingunguma's horse.

⁵⁹ Plural of etemo.

an intellectual tradition. My listening approach is conceptual and queer-sensitive in the sense that it resonates with queer and conceptual features in this sonicgraphy.

I am aware that I am listening and writing about Nanghili Nashima from my limited command of Oshikwanyama, an Oshiwambo dialect that Nanghili Nashima sang in. My Oshiwambo knowledge is limited to my experience of it as my mother tongue and cultural background. I have not studied Oshiwambo languages and culture in my formal schooling while growing up in Katutura. Nonetheless, I argue that Oshikwanyama as a spoken language is also not enough to help us grasp Nanghili Nashima's sonicgraphy. This is because her text was often heightened and metaphoric and therefore requires listeners to translate and even imagine the meanings for themselves. The quality of her work requires multiple ears and hearts to make sense of this complex sonicgraphy. In my listening process, I have hence collaborated with other Namibian academics Martha Akawa and Ndapewa Fenny Nakanyete in this research process of studying the work of Nanghili Nashima. Akawa is a historian and Nakanyete is a geographer, and they are both scholars at the University of Namibia. We worked together for a period of two years engaging various sources that would inform our writing on Nanghili Nashima's music.

'Mwene wo kino'

It is essential to understand the communal nature of Nanghili Nashima's Oudano. Nanghili Nashima's work shifts across various Oshiwambo genres of Oudano such as outevo (poetry), oshidano (dance), and omaitango (praise poetry) which are all performed collectively. However, the communality is not merely about harmony, it also requires negotiation, fluidity and flexibility for transgression, change or adaptation to occur. It is significant to be aware of this dynamic to avoid romanticising communality as a tension-free ethos in African performance. The work of Nanghili Nashima demonstrates and performs communality exposing its harmony, fluidity and tensions through her radical tradition. One of her popular songs, *Mwene wo kino* embodies the communality of Oudano, amongst other aspects. For example, in most of her songs, she is the lead singer with an ensemble of women often repeating in response to her calls. *Mwene wo kino* begins with the following lines:

Na'a dje po ohatu kande⁶⁰

⁶⁰ "Let them leave, we are milking; let them go we are enough, let them leave those of Nangobe; they say we are insulting them; I am the owner of the cinema, the bearer of this nation..." (Translated by Akawa, Nakanyete and Mushaandja, forthcoming).

Nava ye ohatu waneke
Taa ti hatu va tuku
Na'a djepo vaNangobe
Aame mwene wo kino
Mwene woshiwana shile
(Nanghili Nashima, undated)

Mwene wo kino is loosely translated as the owner of the cinema or the lead character in a film. The word kino is German for cinema. This song is loaded with overt socio-political messages in the sense that it exemplifies how Oudano is a way of organising both cultural and activist practices. Nanghili Nashima uses Oudano as method of mobilising public engagement. In this exposition of *Mwene wo kino*, Nanghili Nashima announces her arrival, including that of her group of women singers. Here, the lyrical content is instructing 'others' to make way for her and the group to perform. I read her use of the metaphor of milking in announcing this arrival as an expression of readiness for political discourse. It is evident that this song is about clearing and claiming of space which signifies arriving, occupying, leading, holding and availability. This clearing of space as it manifests in oshidano often takes form of a half or full circle known as ondabo (the stage), as a way of organising space, holding symbolic significance, one of which is the communal ethos.

Although the *Mwene wo kino* introduction comes across as cheeky and taking up space, it is an invitation for the 'others' to be aware of the (half) circle and participate in it. Ukaegbu (2013) states that spatial construct in indigenous African performance is immersive and multi-modal, and hence should not be mistaken for a single form or structure when we say that African performance is communal. Ukaegbu emphasises that the ways in which space is produced facilitates and underpins cosmological unity, including its socio-sacral, archaeological, and metaphysical components (Ukaegbu, 2013). This is evident in much of Nanghili Nashima's work which are often overtly about deep personal experiences yet connected and shared with the community of singers. While committed to the group effort of music making, she is also able to freely express her individual voice and style in the process. Agawu (2007) unpacks Ewe solo and chorus dynamics in a call-response principle, which is the basis of Nanghili Nashima's song structures.

When a soloist steps forward to 'speak', her utterances are conceived in relation to the chorus. Nothing she does is ever exclusively her own. A touching embellishment is expected to enhance her message because it is sanctioned by the community as a whole; it does not merely represent fanciful display. Spontaneously improvised words are designed to speak to particular experiences, and for this to be effective the singer must understand the lives,

cares and concerns of the people and be able to capture them in poetic language. (Agawu, 2007: 8 – 9).

Mwene wo kino resembles and reflects this relatedness and presence. Nanghili Nashima as the lead singer is not only singing about herself but she is also singing about the ‘we’, which her co-singers respond to with her lyrics. This relatedness is evident when she sings positioning herself as the ‘leader of the group, kino and the nation’. This should not be mistaken as demonstrating an individualised determination, but rather as a what Agawu (2007) refers to as speaking for the group. For her to step forward and embody her role as facilitator and orator is her demonstrating her arrival and availability to initiate Oudano. This dynamic demonstrates that her role is more than just that of an artist but also reflects as activist and cultural leader. This embodiment could also be read as placing her body on the frontline and hence constitutes as a gesture of vulnerability. This nature of Oudano praxis as a mobiliser is reflected in the following part of *Mwene wo kino*. Nashima sings:

Aame mwene wongudu⁶¹
Nda pewa ndi na omutumbo
Weexwingi waNangobe
Ndi popile mowayela
Membako lo koushimba

Ndi ka lombwele oilumbu
I li ko uniona
Ta ku ti kwa li Nashima
Ta ku ya mwene wo kino
(Nanghili Nashima, n.d)

Nanghili Nashima comments on the importance of her role when she sings ‘Nda pewa ndi na omutumbo’. The word omutumbo comes from the Oshikwanyama word which refers to any kind of social role of great importance. She is aware that this is a role of cultural work that she inherited and was passed on to her. While Nanghili Nashima recognises her role as being of great importance, she also acknowledges her distinct physical appearance when she describes herself ‘weexwingi waNangobe’ (the one with the hair, of Nangobe). Her hair becomes a distinct political marker that makes her stand out as a cultural worker in the role of leadership. Here, she is referring to her hair which, as a listener, I imagine is unconventional and deviant in some way. This is a signal of hairstyle as a political statement which can also be attached to

⁶¹ “...The leader of the gathered; I have been given a task of great importance; The one of the hair of Nangobe; let me speak in the broadcast, the mic of Oushimba, to tell the whites at the union that Nashima was there (at the union); mwene wo kino will go there.” Translation by Akawa, Nakanyete and Mushaandja.

woman's social status. As a listener, I imagine that the immediate link that it is being made here is her critical opinion towards Christianity and as an institution that also policed local fashion and hairstyling practices.

Nanghili Nashima then asserts that she wishes to '...speak through a radio aerial; via the (radio) speaker of oushimba⁶²; to go and tell the white people at the union'. This assertiveness gives more insight into how she perceived the performance space as a site of political organising. Nanghili Nashima's request to address 'white people at the union' is a suggestion of radical imagination. She is citing the long historic work of unionising and labour movements which were particularly intensified and popularised in the 1970s in apartheid Namibia (Jauch, 2018). When she sings 'ta ku ti kwa li Nashima' (they say Nashima was there), she is citing that history but also self-writing herself into it as a Black woman. Nanghili Nashima grew up in an era when it was popular for Aawambo women to remain in Owambo domestic sphere while men would go and work under the exploitative conditions of contract labour system. There is not enough historiography about how women continued mobilising and organising in their local communities during these moments of labour struggles. When she demands airtime on radio for her to unionise, she is intervening in a male-dominated space of negotiating power. She is imagining and embodying agency, this is perceived to be an insult (as she sings in her opening lines of *Mwene wo kino*) to patriarchal structures.

In *Mwene wo kino*, sometimes she sings 'wa Nangobe' and sometimes she sings 'va Nangobe' as plural of 'wa Nangobe'. This is interesting because it raises the question whether she was referring to another Nangobe. I wonder if she is using Nangobe as a familial reference or a marker of kinship in the broader cultural sense. Nangobe⁶³ is also the name of a great ancestor of Aawambo. This ancestral reference serves as a reminder of the shared and communal nature of Oshiwambo or Uuntu⁶⁴, as a point of departure for Nanghili Nashima's Oudano. This is a source through which she draws her inspiration for her role of great importance in her community. She is not only a representative of her community and nation; she also represents her ancestors, whom she depends on for guidance and advise, as a public intellectual and

⁶² Oushimba refers to what was referred to as the Police Zone during apartheid, which is central and southern Namibia.

⁶³ Someone named Nangobe refers and relates to a cow.

⁶⁴ African philosophy and practice of humanity translated as humanity towards others or a person is a person through others. Also known as Ubuntu.

activist. These are some ways in which Nanghili Nashima embodies communality. Nanghili Nashima ends *Mwene wo kino* with the following lyrics;

Mwene woshiwana shile⁶⁵
Nda pewa kuShingunguma
A ila nge okaumbo
Ke li kepya levaya
Ke li kepya Nekwaya
Ke li komisha natango
Nda fa ndi li komumbanda
(Nanghili Nashima, undated)

Nanghili Nashima recognises her power as a cultural producer while deeply aware that she is a marginalised and colonised subject. In the excerpt above, she acknowledges Shingunguma whom she credits as one of the people that entrusted her with the role of great importance. She continues singing about hosting and housewarming a ‘small house that is at a (crops) field of a coward’. She locates the small house on the margins of the community and then likens this marginal position to royal status. This excerpt of *Mwene wo kino* is telling about her thought process which is deeply self-reflexive and politically conscious. Nanghili Nashima was known for her very subversive and disruptive opinions which she blatantly expressed in her music. For her to sing about a small house owned by a ‘cowardly man’ is to turn the patriarchal gaze to itself. The word okaumbo (small house) is generally gendered terminology that is used to refer to homes owned and run by single or widowed women or an emasculated man. The term okaumbo is a times used to shame and even point to indicate a lower social class. While she might be speaking directly to patriarchal control in this text, she is also singing about herself and other women as marginalised subjects. The productive tension in *Mwene wo kino* is therefore visible between her ‘role of great importance’ and being socio-economically marginalised in her society. Nanghili Nashima used performance to negotiate this tension. This is apparent in most of her performance material, discussed in the following sections of this paper.

Mwene wo kino as a cultural text is an embodiment of what Barber (2019) discusses as ‘vocative and allusive’ nature of praise forms of performance poetry in Sub-Saharan Africa. Moraes Farias (2019) writes about a range of praise specialist performances generally known

⁶⁵ “...Bearer of the nation, I was given a small house by Shingunguma, in the farming land of a coward man, Nekwaya, still on the margins, as if I was the wife of a king” (Akawa, Nakanyete and Mushaandja, forthcoming).

as Griots/Griottes practiced in contemporary Mande cultures found in west-African countries such as Mali, Guinea-Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, and the Gambia. Griotism is a rich intellectual tradition in the sense that is highly revered and valued for its imaginative and literary power. In Oshiwambo, the words *enyakwa* and *onghulungu* are the immediate names that refer to an artist or creative individual, Nanghili herself uses these words to describe and position herself in her cultural work. Nanghili Nashima's role of great importance was widely acknowledged as her ensemble was often invited to perform at weddings and royal events in Oukwanyama. *Mwene wo kino* highlights the significance of the cultural worker's space in her society for historical, literary, educational and political work.

Oudano as a performance tradition like many other African musical practices values communal production of musicality. African music scholar Kofi Agawu (2007), specifically referencing ritual, narrative and music of the Northern Ewe people of Ghana, discusses this communality as an ethos in African performance. Agawu's discussion refers to several communal impulses such as everyday greetings, proverbs, admonitions and parables that are meant to enable and uphold social cohesion and Uuntu. Agawu unpacks Ewe shared processes of pouring libation, deceiving narratives, performing news and music making which place specific emphasis on communality. Here, communality is not just embodied interpersonally, it is also practiced in relation to the land and the ancestors. Communality implies a holistic network of community building (Agawu, 2007). Mbenzi and Ashikuti (2018) write on Oshiwambo concepts of communal labour such as Okakungungu and Ondjabi which are community efforts of supporting members of the community that are economically challenged. Members of a community organise themselves to intervene in a neighbour's fields by ploughing and harvesting together as a gesture of alleviating poverty. Mbenzi and Ashikuti (2018) discuss these varying forms of social support as acts of Uushiinda practiced in contemporary Owambo, northern Namibia. Uushiinda is not just a term that refers to neighbourliness but also refers to kinship as an essential aspect of Uuntu philosophy. Uushiinda therefore refers to multiple meanings of kinship to account for forms of relatedness that surpass the familial.

Mwene wo kino exemplifies Karin Barber's (2019) description of praise poetry as generally not linear, but rather fragmented and disjunctive. It is coded. Nanghili Nashima's content in this song shifts between cultural, activist, and domestic themes, all interwoven as personal and political struggles. For example, the connection between white people at the union and the small house is not obvious. While listening and observing these shifts in content, one might wonder what they have to do with each other. One answer to this is that they are all political

statements. It is also important to note that the song *Mwene wo kino* exemplifies Oudano as an undisciplined praxis. It combines artistic forms of poetry, song and dance, while performing radical activism, leisure and community work. *Mwene wo kino* ends with expressive chants which she uses to mimic and imitate her body movements that she makes when dancing to this song. The chants are particularly meant to instil confidence and courage in the group work. She continues chanting “*Tala, tala, tala*⁶⁶...” while. Tala means look, an exhibitiv and demonstrative gesture of enjoyment, cheek and aesthetic pleasure.

In another song, *Ndiba waAron*, Nanghili Nashima sings about being in a difficult negotiation with men and women of her community. This negotiation reveals that there were moments in her life when she felt othered and marginalised by her community. She sings, pleading as follows;

Oli waVeliho natu li kundeni
Ndiba waAron natu li kundeni
Tulimo Shekuna natu li popife
Maria wamushashi na tulipe ombili
Natu li pe ombili yetu oukadona
Paife ola toka, hai dulamo ondjeva
Handi shindwa koomeme aveshe nootate
Aveshe nootate taa ti ndi fukale
Onda li ku sha’anya va dika nge elende
Ondi na omhatela ndee onda limbililwa
Osho vem’hole shaashi una ondjeva
Wa ninga nge nayi una ondjeva poshi
 (Nanghili Nashima, n.d)

She begins this song by pleading with Oli waVeliho and Ndiba waArona, asking them to engage with her in a dignified manner. She proceeds to ask Maria wamushashi to exchange forgiveness. There has been a disagreement which has resulted in a confrontation of some sort, that might have been personal. It is also sounds as if Nanghili is on the one end of this disagreement and possibly alone. These expressions of aloneness are also echoed and expressed in response by the women who sing with her. She sings, ‘Natu li pe ombili yetu oukadona’ performing her pursuit of forgiveness that is firstly directed at fellow women. When she sings ‘Paife ola toka, hai dulamo ondjeva’, she is reminding her subjects that it is late, and she is about to go to bed. This shows that this confrontation affects and relates to her intimate space and personal beliefs. She uses the metaphor of undressing ondjeva to remind her subjects

⁶⁶ ‘Look, look, look...’

that they are crossing boundaries into her intimate space at this late hour. Ondjeva are oyster-shelled waist beads that are worn by children and women as a practice of Oshiwambo culture. These waist beads are also known as oshindjendje, and their cultural uses differ amongst Aawambo groups. ondjeva is worn for physiological reasons such as straightening the back as well as a symbol of totemic and familial identity. This cultural materiality is coded with abilities to strengthen ones back and providing spiritual protection. ondjeva as cultural materiality is a symbol of belonging in terms of clan and family relations. The way in which Nanghili Nashima references ondjeva in this song indicates to the listener that this confrontation had to do with her sexuality and womanhood. She also refers to ondjeva of those that that are provoking her.

Nanghili Nashima expresses that she is being provoked by both men and women who are telling her to initiate for Olufuko. This seems to be one of the many matters in this confrontation. Nanghili claims that she has had to go to Oshaahanya where they dressed her elende. Nanghili Nashima is expressing her displeasure at her experience of what sounds like was forced participation in the Olufuko initiation. Shigwedha's (2004) research of Aawambo fashion in pre-colonial times show elende (in Ombalantu) as very long braids that young women wore when going for Olufuko initiation. elende is made from fibres that are taken from the barks of baobab trees and it is specifically worn by young brides to signify that they are in the process of initiation. This song is Nanghili's testimony of having experienced Olufuko and transitioned into a womanhood, as per Oshiwambo customs.

I hear her resistance to fulfilling the social expectations and pressures of being a woman who has already gone through Olufuko. She expresses her fear and vulnerability when she sings "Ondi na omhatela ndee onda limbililwa". The pressure of tradition is evident in her acknowledgement of having omhatela and hence her feeling disturbed. omhatela is a hairstyle that is developed from elende to signify that a woman has gone through Olufuko. A hairstyle like omhatela signifies and indicates a woman's integrity, dignity, social status and identity (Shigwedha, 2004). However, this custom does not seem to appeal to Nanghili Nashima. Her resistance is a critique of compulsory heterosexuality in an Oshiwambo traditional context. In the Botelle and Kowalski (1998) interview, Nashima revealed that she had been married before. She was an elderly woman at the time of this interview. In fact, in my conversation with Botelle about this interview, he recalled Nanghili Nashima living in a house only with women and children.

Nanghili Nashima's availability in both *Mwene wo kino* and *Ndiba wa Aaron* allows us to experience and connect with her music in different ways. The music touches the listener, enabling a multiple-sensorial experience of listening to her joys and fears in her life story. For example, listening to *Mwene wo kino* takes me into play and dance modes in ways that affirm the critical usefulness of Oudano. Therefore, listening to the sonicgraphy of Nanghili Nashima, I feel and hear the haptic touch as discussed by (Harney and Moten, 2013) of Nanghili Nashima's claim to space and time,

Hapticality, the capacity to feel though others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you, this feel of the shipped is not regulated, at least not successfully, by a state, a religion, a people, an empire, a piece of land, a totem. (Harney and Moten, 2013: 98).

According to Harney and Moten (2013), hapticality is a touch of the 'undercommons' and the inwardness of emotion that have historically been denied and therefore refused the oppressed "sentiment, family, nation, language, religion, place, home." (Harney and Moten, 2013:98). I read the haptic touch as one that relates to the Oshiwambo concept of Okukwata which literally means holding but implies a range of rituals sustainable learning and solidarity. In Nanghili Nashima's performance holding can be seen in the ensemble's hand clapping as gesture of communal music making. Clapping hands together is one symbolic way in which the ensemble holds this musical form, which we generally refer to as holding space in contemporary performance practice. The clapping accompanied by the singing voices often repeating and echoing Nanghili Nashima's solo utterances. To sing in response to her calls is to a certain extend to resonate and affirm her lived experiences. Nanghili Nashima's call and response song structure therefore becomes a way of holding space through play. It is through this co-holding of space that Nanghili Nashima and her co-performers can 'touch' each other through this communal sonic playing and production. It is also through us listening to this archived material in a post-colonial society that they too touch us.

Performing feminist migration and sexuality

Nanghili Nashima's song in the NBC archive, *Eendima nda ka lima koimhote*, is one of her many songs that provide insight into her lived experience of migration and sexuality. As established in the introduction of this paper, migration is a significant part of her life, like many of her contemporaries. In *Eendima nda ka lima koimhote*, she is using a range of metaphors to describe people and places she has encountered in her life travels. This song is very poetic,

loaded with multiple personal anecdotes of Nanghili Nashima practicing transgression in her sexuality as a nomadic woman. This transgression is extended by her being able to account and narrate this experience through her public performance practice as a Black woman in Owambo. At different points in her music, her text is heightened, requiring insider knowledge to grasp its full context. Her work generally invites the listener to sing along while doing the imaginary work of translating her metaphors and riddles. She sings:

Eendima nda ka lima kOimhote⁶⁷
KoNambabi yaShime shaMukonda
Onda lima ondjabi kOshilao
Ondali kUukwamundja Nekuma
OkOixwa yaShango waNamundali
oNanghili nda i le kOshiyelova

Enyakwa laNangobe nda ile kEmbulunganga
Mbulunganga nEhenge laShilungamwa
MOshiyale onda fika Ndaafita
Ondali mOkapale ndi li oupepi nOndjiva
Fye moNdjiva atushe ovayeledila
Ongula kOmusheshe hatu li indile okandongo
(Nanghili Nashima, n.d).

In this first part of the song, she posits that she went on a mission to cultivate. She is indicating that she had travelled for eendima (agrarian work). Meme Nanghili Nashima was also known for being a hard worker. In fact, she has sung widely about her remarkable ploughing and harvesting skills. In the excerpt above, she refers to places such as Oimhote, oNambabi yaShime shaMukonda, Oshilao and Uukwamundja Nekuma to show how far and wide she had travelled Owambo. For Nanghili Nashima, the hoe as an object of eendima is not only a symbol of labour relations but it also symbolises her migration in which it is a constant feature. Her usage of ondjabi to describe the kind of work she went to do once again points to the notion of communal service. In essence, she is singing about the communal labour a social and economic strategy of holding a community together. The way Nanghili Nashima names the places she has been to is performed in rhymes and is done in a way that flows poetically. She names the places, but she also plays with the metaphors imbedded in the names of these places. She uses metaphors such as a wall, a field, bushes, ‘under the mud’ and palm bush to give us a feeling

⁶⁷ “I ploughed at Oimhote, at Onambabi, I hoed ondjabi at Oshilao, I was at Uukwamundja and Ekuma, at Oixwa yaShango waNamundali; I am Nanghili that went to Oshiyelova; I am the artist of Nangobe that had gone to Embulunganga and Ehenge; me of David, I arrived at Oshiyale; I was at Okapale close to Ondjiva, and in Ondjiva we were all landing birds; in the morning we would be at Omusheshe, catching up with Syphilis...” (translated by Akawa, Nakanyete and Mushaandja).

of each place as well as how she transits between spaces and places. This is Nanghili engaging in the practice of place making.

Nanghili Nashima's practice of mapping places through song is her memory making to show that even though she grew up under containment of colonial and apartheid systems, she was still able to practice mobility. She maps her mobility having crossed the colonial border into southern Angolan places such as Ondjiva and Embulunganga. Her embodied cartographic practice is not only citing places that she has lived in, but also places that she encountered in other ways such as visiting, dreaming or literally transitioning through. This practice is embodied because it relies on the lived experience of performing as a method of mapping bodies and places. This mapping is what anthropologists also call as cultural mapping, an auto-ethnographic approach of knowledge production. *Eendima nda ka lima koimhote* establishes Nanghili Nashima as a radical border crosser, as a woman of her time. Her feminist geo-politics are continued in the following excerpts of *Eendima nda ka lima koimhote* which showing the transgressive nature of her performances.

Nda kongele oshinena no shimwali wa Nangobe⁶⁸
Okandongo nolufe waHailonga
Ame edila nghiili mwe waNanghombo
Ndakongele okandongo nghiikamwene wa Nangobe

OkoNdjiva ngha li ndi li kOshaandjala
Eee keEtunhu ngha li ndili kOmusheshe
KOMusheshe onda ama kOshimbala
KOshimbala shomauni shaShikonda

Oipala yemunyona waHamunyela
Ouxwanga we mu nyona waHamukwaya
Oipala ngeno oya li olukula
Ouxwangu wa Nashima ngeno owa li oshide
Wali oshikwangha ngeno ondi na omakonda
Omavala nda fa ndi na oimomolo
Omakonda nda fa ndina oitakaya
Oipala mu nye oukadona vange

(Nanghili Nashima, n.d).

Apart from agrarian labour, Nanghili also reveals that she was also in pursuit of sexuality. She sings “nda kongele oshinena no shimwali wa Nangobe” in which she uses oshinena and

⁶⁸ “...I searched for Gonorrhoea and Oshimwali, Syphilis and Olufi; I never caught edila of Onghombo. I seeked to get Gonorrhoea, but I never got it.” (translated by Akawa, Nakanyete and Mushaandja).

oshimwali as terms that point towards sexuality. Oshinena is known as gonorrhoea. She explicitly declares that in this journey of sexual relations, she did not contract any of these sexually transmitted diseases such as okandongo (syphilis). Again, Nanghili uses a poetic device of referring to her kins and this time adding waHailonga and waNanghombo to waNangobe as she describes herself 'in search for oshinena and oshimwali'.

However, she admits that sex has 'spoiled and damaged' her life in the following line "oipala yemunyona waHamunyela, ouxwanga we mu nyona waHamukwaya". This admission shows that Nanghili Nashima was singing this song as an expression of both pain and pleasure. Nanghili maintains that this excessiveness and enjoyment would be visible, using specific cultural objects as metaphors for her sexual relations. She pronounces that if sex was olukula⁶⁹, then her sexuality was oshide, which is another word for olukula. She states that she would have horns and stripes to signify her sexuality. The performance of transgression is exactly in this act of being able to explicitly describe her historic sexual life in relation to her migration in a context that reduces women's sexuality to politeness and patriarchal consumption. Nanghili Nashima orates with a sense of fearlessness and artistic freedom. This includes cheek and courage. The closing line in this song, she sings that she has left sex to the young women, as if announcing a handing over or retirement from that kind of labour.

Eendima nda ka lima koimhote can be read as evidence of Nanghili Nashima's resilience, free will and survival. It is always important to keep in mind the larger socio-political context in which Nanghili Nashima sang and lived in. This kind of poetic expression is transgressive for most Oshiwambo traditional contexts which are deeply influenced by localised Christian dogma that dictates and restricts how women express their gender and sexuality (Becker, 2007 and Yamakawa, 2007). Nanghili Nashima's radical openness, subjectivity and vulnerability into her politics of intimacy show that she has a poetic licence like another poet Loide Shikongo whose record of performing a poem-song in 1953 for Chief Iipumbu yaShilongo in which she challenges gender constructs in colonial Ovambo (Becker, 2005). However, the notable difference between them is that Loide was Christian and Nanghili defied Christian values altogether. Anthropologist Heike Becker poses important questions regarding gender constructs at the time.

How did people in colonial Ovamboland think about gender, if they thought in those terms at all? How was gender constructed in the "long conversation"

⁶⁹ "A dark-red *Pterocarpus angolensis* (African Teak tree) roots' scented powder mixed with *citrullus lanatus* (wild watermelon) seeds' oil extracted that is traditionally applied by Ovawambo to cleanse, moisturize and protect the body from harsh temperatures." (Akawa, Nakanyete and Mushaandja).

between missionaries, the colonial administration and the local people? Which cultural discourses on gender did Africans appropriate in specific situations, which did they appropriate piecemeal, and which did they, perhaps, reject outright? (Becker, 2005).

The dominant colonial and Christian influences were fundamental in dictating and controlling gender in colonial Namibia. These historic influences have continued to shape Namibia's post-apartheid gender constructs on a structural level (Edwards-Jauch, 2017). Hence, for Nanghili Nashima to sing in this way about her body, as a Black woman migrant, is to overtly position herself as a deviant, and ungovernable woman, as many listeners who enjoy her music would describe her. She is not necessarily polite or politically correct. It is these qualities and status that established her as both a marginalised yet intellectual subject. As she reflects in all of this, she is deeply aware that she is an artist when she sings of herself as *Enyakwa laNangobe* (the artist of Nangobe). This is a signature in many of her songs where she always described herself as an 'artist/creative/cultural worker of Nangobe'. This signature also serves to remind us of her role of great importance in her community as she shares these intimate parts of her life story.

Transgression and queer labour

As it can be seen in Meekulu Nanghili Nashima's performance texts and life writing above, she was not only iconised for playing traditional music, but she was also known for her transgressive approach in her performance practice. This transgression is marked in both her politics as a migrant and worker, refusing to be limited to the domestic sphere as a woman during colonialism. Nashima allows this transgression to shape the subject matter of her performance which becomes another way in which she enters the public sphere. In another song in the NBC archive titled *Ame onghedi yo ko hombo nghi ishi*, she sings:

Nanghili she mu nyona shimwe ashike⁷⁰
Nashima she mu nyona hapo oshiponga
oNanghili mu wa e na eemhepo
oNashima mu wa e na eendunge
Ame onghedi yo kohombo nghi ishi
Omukalo wo kohombo waNangobe
She mu nyona eeningo domaufiku

⁷⁰ "It is only one thing that damaged Nanghili; What destroyed Nashima is dangerous; It is Nanghili that is beautiful and has spirits; It is Nashima that is beautiful that is clever; I do not know the code of marriage; the way of being in marriage, me of Nangobe; What damaged her is night life; every day she brings an acacia tree; child of Nangobe beauty does not meet".

Kesh'efiku okano ta etelele
Kaan'e kaNangobe ouwa iha u shakene
(Nanghili Nashima, n.d).

She begins by acknowledging her brokenness and 'broken self'. She refers to herself in third person as she sings that the one thing that damaged her is her proximity to danger. She then points to her beauty and intelligence, emphasising that she is indeed referring to herself. She then reveals that "ame onghedi yo kohombo nghi ishi" (I do not know marriage code/protocol/lifestyle). It becomes clear that Nanghili Nashima had faced a lot of challenges in her marriage considering that she refused to be limited to domesticity. For her to admit that she does not know the traditional marriage code (*Omukalo wo kohombo*) is also to say that she was not the type of woman to settle for a normative marriage. She is essentially referring to the acceptable way of practising wifehood in the heteronormative sense.

She recalls her dangerous past, pointing out her social and night life as an attribute to her brokenness. 'Eeningo domaufiku' which refers to sociality of night life spaces such as Cuca shops. Nanghili Nashima's music generally testifies that Night life was a site of struggle as her songs move between her memory of both pain (being broken/damaged) and pleasure⁷¹. Contemporary queer studies have identified night life as a site of critical engagement, bonding, and possibility. Adeyemi, Khubchandani and Rivera-Servera (2021) write:

“...the night, does offer an alternative set of rules with which we can know ourselves and one another. But for all the ways that queer night life can provide refuge and play, they can also be sites of alienation that are circumscribed by normative modes of exclusion.” (Adeyemi, Khubchandani and Rivera-Servera, 2021: 2).

Although Performance studies scholars Adeyemi, Khubchandani and Rivera-Servera (2021) are writing about queer night life in urban contexts in the Americas, their quotation above speaks to the dynamic position that night life holds in many other contexts. Here, I am thinking about the imposed curfews during apartheid as well as the continued gender and economic inequalities in post-apartheid Namibia which all implicate night life in systemic issues. Nashima sings '*Kesh'efiku okano ta etelele*, which translates as 'everyday she is brings an

⁷¹ As she proudly recites in praise poetry discussed in the earlier section of this paper. Her popular line, "*Eekamba adishe nadi ufanwe, eendingosho adishe na di ongelwe u pule kwali Nashima*" translated as, 'may all be cuca shops be called, may all shebeens be collected so that you can ask about Nashima.' This kind of praise evokes specific memories of joyful times in which Nanghili Nashima is claiming to have experienced them, to say she was there.

acacia tree'. This is an Oshikwanyama phrase that describes somebody that is slow or late in executing a given function. It is also used to describe someone who comes home late because they would close the entrance of the homestead with a branch of an acacia tree.

The melody and rhythm of *Ame onghedi yo ko hombo nghi ishi* is the same as that of *Mwene wo kino*. It is only the lyrical content that differs. In fact, this melody is widely used for different Oshiwambo songs and dances that are context-specific to weddings and other celebrations. This shows that it is important to read her music and performances as a soundscape of instead of standalone songs. The following excerpt is the last part of *Ame onghedi yo ko hombo nghi ishi* in which she instructs her listeners how she should be buried when she dies, reminding her peers for her addiction to alcohol and work.

Ngee nda fi tu leinge moshindada
Moshipale nd'ude omundaungilo
Omundaungilo wovanhu taa ka yela
Taa ka yela taa ka ti la ketutu
Ndee kombila yange na ku kunwe epungu
O komishi omu tu la ko ekaiyena
Omudika nepapaye waNangobe
Oshikapa ta ku ti wa nda shashelwe
Itavele'inge mahewa makwetu
Ngee nda nu onda hala ekalanyana
Kalanyana ndi fe m'shitotamina
Kalanyana ndi fe m'kombamba milamba
Nda Nangobe ndi dane ha i lekula
Nda Nangobe i twal'omulo kokule
(Nanghili Nashima, n.d)

Nanghili Nashima instructs that when she dies, she be buried under oshindada (threshing floor) so that she hears omundaungilo which is the sound created of people winnowing by hitting millet on a threshing floor. She is specific about this careful winnowing process of separating grain from chaff, to describe her imagined transition into afterlife. She continues to instruct her peers about the maize, paw paw and cassava that should be planted on her grave. This includes a sweet potato to symbolise that she was baptised. This rich expression is fuelled by her futurist and eco-imagination. This shows us how she connects and identifies with the land which she evokes as a source of growth and change. This is Nanghili Nashima refusing to be erased and forgotten in both history and future. The suggestive metaphor of growing food on her grave reveals her personal insight into how valuable her own cultural work is. She is telling us indirectly that she has planted seeds that will continue to grow and nourish future generations. Those seeds being her agrarian, musical and intellectual work at large.

After singing about being buried in oshindada, as well as the fruits and vegetables to be planted on her grave, Nashima uses the line, “itavele’inge mahewa makwetu” (agree with me my peers/friends) checking in with her listeners, audience, and friends. The response is sustained and held by the co-singers who repeat the melodic chant in support of Nanghili’s call and leading verses. This recording of *Ame onghedi yo ko hombo nghi ishi* ends with Nanghili Nashima confessing and introducing another important cultural object in her sonicgraphy. She sings, “Ngee nda nu onda hala ekalanyana, kalanyana ndi fe m’shitotamina, kalanyana ndi fe m’komba milamba” which means ‘when I drink I want an overall, so that I look like a ‘mine starter’ (worker), so that I look like a sweeper of dumping sites/ river-beds’. This once again highlights her passion for her work in general which continues to be defined along the lines of agrarian and performance labour.

The performative act of dressing in an overall is loaded with a lot of meaning relating to these entangled forms of work. On one hand, it refers to the strong history of migrant contract labour and on the other, it refers to domestic work such as agrarian and home making in the Oshiwambo traditional sense. *Ekalanyana* (overall) is also a very masculine costume in both migrant labour and domestic life. It is a class symbol that was revered in colonial Owambo. For Nanghili to desire *ekalanyana* is to claim and express her ability to rescript gender expectations by subverting the performativity of dressing the overall which traditionally produce and sustain masculine and feminine gender roles. As a result of the structurally limited opportunities for her to work as miner as an Omuwambo woman, Nanghili Nashima used her imaginative power of performance to ask to be dressed in *ekalanyana*. This in turn does not only invite us, her listeners, to imagine this possibility of her wearing this gendered piece of clothing, it also evokes questions about the roots of this gender non-conforming tradition in Oudano.

Traditional practices of Oudano in different forms amongst Aawambo seems to allow this blurring of gender roles. For example, in the Botelle and Kolwaski (1998) interview, one of the women who interview asked her ‘omumati olye owu?’ (Who is this young man?). This is the question one poses to someone for them to respond with their praise poetry. Nashima responded briefly saying, ‘omumati oye Nanghili afa ostasiona’ meaning ‘the young man is Nanghili who is like a station.’ Taking on the masculine mantle of a young man and using a gender-fluid signifier of a train station is how Nashima deconstructs gender. She challenges

gender norms as inscribed by Oshiwambo tradition, religion, and apartheid systems. Her imaginative and critical claims in her work challenged heteronormative thinking and culture. Nanghili Nashima did not shy away from topics such as homosexuality and this can be heard in the 1998 interview in which she recites:

...Haipula meme wange hai ti
omu lila, nde omu lila tam'fuda po
tam' tula omwenyo mohonde
Shama toti nEnghumbi-nghumbi edila
shaKalunga naShanghana oshipahu
nOngwena ombidangolo
oushenge hawina ombado oshiima shaKalunga...
(Nanghili Nashima, 1998)

In the first two lines in this excerpt, she is pleading and comforting her mother and kin, advising them to take rest from crying. In the praise poetry that comes before these lines, Nanghili accounts her encounters with promiscuity which took her as far as Angolan cities of Moçâmedes and Lubango. Amongst some Aawambo, these cities were known for accommodating sex workers who hosted migrant contract labourers working in Angola. Therefore, Nanghili urges her kin to take it easy in that her night life experience was not as excessive as that of other women such as sex workers. She advises her people; ‘...tam' tula omwenyo mohonde...’ (putting the heart in the blood) which is an Oshiwambo reference to say that they ought to persevere. Again, Nanghili Nashima code switches by referring other living organisms to highlight her nomadic and promiscuous history is a matter of difference and diversity. When she sings “...Shama toti nEnghumbi-nghumbi edila shaKalunga naShanghana oshipahu nOngwena ombidangolo”, she is relating enghumbi-nghumbi⁷² to the bird family; shanghana (grasshopper) to oshipaxu (locust); and ongwena (couch grass) to ombidangolo (lovegrass). This is Nanghili Nashima playing with the politics of difference, inherently trying to demonstrate that despite her transgressive behaviour as an Omuwambo woman, she still belongs. To highlight this point of difference and diversity, Nashima claims that “...oushenge hawina ombado oshiima shaKalunga...” which means that homosexuality and transgenderism are not practiced on purpose but rather that they are godly creations.

Nanghili Nashima is making connections between queerness and spirituality as a universal and indigenous practice. It is also her saying that queers and homosexuals are human beings too.

⁷² Onghumbinghumbi (singular) is kind of bird, possibly a black stork, which migrates to regions on north-central Namibia during rainy season. (Akawa, Nakanyete and Mushaandja).

In this moment, she is queering her immediate context, which is largely the Oshiwambo heteronormative culture.

She is in tears when she sings in this interview which she says that her poetry brings back memories of her youth. There is a sense of nostalgia. She also laughs at some of her own verses. She is often narrating struggle, pain and suffering, but she is also remembering the joyous times she has shared with others. This is the feminist joy discussed by Abrahams (2007) as one that is carried through laughing for many generations. To be able to laugh about our personal and collective struggles, as serious as they are, is to find a way to cope and persevere through it all. Abrahams writes:

“If I have learned anything from my great-grandmother it is that they cannot stop us from laughing. They disposed us of our land, took our cattle, made us slaves and stole our language. We don’t have much left besides our sense of humour. Colonialism is a very serious matter- except when it is completely ludicrous.” (Abrahams, 2007: 434).

Meekulu Nanghili Nashima’s laughter as well as her crying both come from a place that is her source of knowledge and self-preservation. Audre Lorde’s (1978) notes on *Uses of the Erotic* as a source of power and information for women are helpful to make sense of Nanghili Nashima’s radical views. Lorde discusses the erotic as a resource that has been “vilified, abused, and devalued...” by male and colonial models of power (Lorde, 1978: 88). Lorde posits erotic as an embodiment of a womanist lifeforce, and creative energy used to reclaim their history and language. Here, the political and spiritual are not separate but rather holistically embodied in the labour of love and loving which can happen through our everyday work such as dancing and painting. Lorde’s discussion on the erotic places emphasis on feeling through the doing. The erotic has been feared and restricted to the bedroom instead of it being embraced as a valuable source of human joy, pleasure, satisfaction and fulfilment (Lorde, 1978). Here is an invitation to think about the broad relation between women’s eroticism and work:

Of course, women so empowered are dangerous. So we are taught to separate the erotic demand from most vital areas of our lives other than sex. And the lack of concern for the erotic root and satisfactions of our work is felt in our disaffection from so much of what we do. For instance, how often do we truly love our work even at its most difficult? (Lorde, 1978: 88).

Listening to many of Nanghili Nashima’s songs reveals she practiced from a place of passion and desire for both of her agrarian and performance work. Her textuality is playful often evoking laughter and excitement for herself, ensemble and audiences. Nashima deliberately and strategically used what Lorde describes as the Erotic to transgress boundaries of colonial,

Christian and African traditions. This is evident for example in Nanghili's autobiographical performances of her night life and her political activity. It is also evident in her use of Oudano to touch on subjects that were considered taboo, such as sexually transmitted diseases and homosexuality, while generating joy and pleasure at the same time.

This paper discusses how Nanghili Nashima's Oudano praxis constitutes as a historic account of public intellectual work in both colonial and independent Namibia. I engaged through close and deep listening of some of her recorded orature currently archived at the NBC and YouTube to historicise Nanghili Nashima's work as a notable example of Oudano. The paper highlights how Nanghili Nashima's Oudano or sonicgraphy can be read in terms of the three entangled themes of migration, labour and sexuality. Through the listening, reading and translating, the paper offers insights into some fragments and traces of Nanghili Nashima's lived experiences and imagination. Nanghili Nashima can be read as a queer-feminist intellectual whose Oudano was the medium of critical engagement with her immediate community and audiences across borders. Her embodiment of gender-fluidity and explicit commentary on night labour relations, life, homosexuality and bodily autonomy challenged localised patriarchal and heteronormative thinking. The following paper focuses on recent contemporary performance practices in Windhoek, which are youth-driven initiatives of Oudano.

PAPER SIX: PROTEST AND INDIGENIETY IN CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE

Introduction

This paper presents emerging Oudano practices driven by indigeneity and protest cultures. I rely on photographic remnants of recent performance art curated for *Operation Odalate Naiteke* as well as protest action of the *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* movement. This includes the public performances *What's Love Got To Do With It?* by Neige Moongo; *[theKhoest]* by Nesindano Namises; and *I AM HUMAN* by JuliART (Julia Hango), which were all performed at the 2020 *Operation Odalate Naiteke* season. The paper also discusses public activism in the *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* nationwide protest action of October 2020. I suggest these events as possible answers to a question that emerged from Olivier-Sampson's Ph.D. research: "What happened to Protest Theatre after Independence?" (Olivier-Sampson, 2016: 210). These interventions are continuations of what was termed as protest theatre in the 1980s, which became largely invisible and less influential in post-apartheid Namibia, as noted by Hillebrecht (2001). The invisibility and limited impact of protest performance and theatre in post-independence Namibia does not imply that it is not taking place but rather that it is situated in what this thesis has posit as the 'cracks and margins' of dominant public culture.

These performances are also undisciplined performances because they destabilise and disrupt the category of drama (in the western/European/Aristotelian sense) that has been the dominant discipline in Namibia's post-independence theatre spectrum. They bring together practices such as visual arts, performance, sound art, public art, resistance culture, and contemporary dance as a way of making political and spiritual claims relating to indigenous healing, futurity, embodiment, love, intimacy, gendered violence, and the process of institutional critique in post-apartheid Namibia. In addition to protest, indigenous performance practices have been equally invisible and reduced to the 'ethnic' category in contemporary Namibian performance practices and scholarship. This speaks to the problematics of the 'gender' category also, which has historically led to the erasure of feminist artistic labour. This argument is brought forward by Namibian curators Figueira and Harris (2021). They write:

The history of Namibian art is written in fragments. Various academics and artists have chipped away at the enormity of the project of writing this history, with large pockets of silence hanging over various aspects of this history. One of these largely un-narrated gaps is the history of feminism in art. (Figueira and Harris, 2021,

These emerging practices relate to those that are theorised elsewhere by Brandt (2020) and Taylor (2021) as ‘new practices of self’. In her book *Landscapes between Then and Now: Recent Histories in Southern African Photography, Performance and Video Art*, Namibian artist-scholar Nicola Brandt (2020) studies historic and contemporary artistic work that is invested in reclaiming public spaces and reimagining aesthetics. Brandt writes, “A number of these artists, often collaborating in the form of collectives, see their practice as a form of activism, placing their work at the service of political and solidarity movements. They sit ‘in-between’ genres and fields, challenging stereotypes and implicit power hierarchies embedded in certain representations and views.” (Brandt, 2020: xx). Thinking of these new practices of self through the artwork of Tuli Mekondjo and Helena Uambembe, Taylor (2021) shows us the entangled Angolan-Namibian-South African histories of the liberation struggle while reminding us of South Africa’s dominant position in these histories. Taylor “...also asks how engaging with the work of Mekondjo and Uambembe might help us address historiographic and theoretical absences about Namibia’s marginalised place in the South African imagination, and in art history in particular.” (Taylor, 2021: i). The collaborative and collective formats through which these new practices of self are organised point to the continued solidarity and commitment to Uuntu as African philosophy and decoloniality. This is not to romanticise decolonial solidarity or Uuntu, but it is to show that although the practices are framed as ‘new-’ and ‘self-’ oriented, they come from longer traditions of protest and performance.

Similarly, in response to the pervasive culture of gendered and sexual violence in Namibia, new social movements such as *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* have emerged to become part of a zeitgeist shaped by postcolonial and decolonial sensibilities. The October 2020 *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* protests offer a feminist critique of the general lack of decisive action by the Namibian government in curbing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Feminist youth movements such as *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* are undermined by a weak and shrinking civil society since they are faced with the problem of insufficient scholarship on social movements, SGBV, and protest culture in Namibia. This problem can be attributed to the dominant cultural focus on ‘nation building’, much of which was used to stifle and repress political culture through State-sanctioned patriarchy and political homophobia (Currier, 2010).

This is also highlighted by Brown (2019), who unpacks the culture of heteronormative silence and silencing on the part of Namibia's presidential discourses in the last three decades. Writing on culture in independent Namibia, André du Pisani (2001) noted that "Since colonisation was a multifarious process, decolonisation in Namibia lacks a clear focus and is characterized by a depressing absence of public discourse over its meaning." (du Pisani, 2001: 224). This has dramatically changed in the third decade of Namibia's independence as many social movements, particularly youth-led ones, have emerged, presenting a decolonial critique and calling for action on multiple fronts of social justice. Movements such as *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* rely on undisciplined performance practices and other modes of public culture, as a way of disrupting normativity.

I write this paper not only from the perspective of witnessing the performances; I also write from the practice of curating *Operation Odalate Naiteke* and being a co-organiser of *#ShutItAllDownNamibia*. Considering that protest culture has been equally neglected in Namibian performance studies and the humanities at large since Independence, this paper seeks to demonstrate how protest performance traditions such as *toyi-toyi* are continued and transformed in contemporary Namibian protest culture.

I AM HUMAN

The performance of *I AM HUMAN* took place at the corner of Robert Mugabe Avenue and John Meinert Street in the central business district of Windhoek in January 2020. *I AM HUMAN* is a nude performance work by JuliArt that speaks critically to local institutional violence endorsed through cultures of bureaucracy that dictate the form, structure, and feeling of contemporary art practice in post-apartheid Namibia. JuliArt (Julia Hango) is a Swakopmund-based nude artist who was born in 1993 in Windhoek; their artistic practice includes performance, photography, and mixed-media with particular focus on body and sex positivity. I think of JuliART's work as continuous with that of artists like the late Nanghili Nashima, with her radical tradition of African queer-feminist intellectualism. Their interventions are from two different contexts but they both point us to practices of queer-feminist imaginations as Aawambo women from two different eras. JuliART's practice is not musical – it plays between photography, performance, collage, podcasting, and drawing – and they identify as a nude and body positivist artist. JuliART has established their presence on the Namibian visual art landscape as a transgressive artist whose work has disrupted and challenged local cultural

institutions. They have also exhibited their work and participated in art residencies and art fairs in South Africa and Germany. They also strategically use social media spaces such as Instagram, Facebook and Soundcloud to exhibit their work and facilitate dialogue on sexual pleasure, sex positivity, and bodily autonomy.

When the audience arrives to watch the performance *I AM HUMAN*, JuliART is lying on a street pavement on one side of Robert Mugabe Avenue, in front of the Scientific Society of Namibia. It is evening rush-hour and the traffic is building up as dusk begins to settle on the city centre. The artist's nude body is still, looking disposable, lifeless, violated, and homeless as they lie on the pavement. As with many public art interventions in Windhoek, members of the public observe in passing and continue with their business for the day. When the audience has finally gathered for the performance, remaining on the opposite side of the road, they are uncertain whether they should cross the road to be closer to JuliART. The uncertainty and discomfort of the audience is evidence that JuliART's vulnerability is central to their performance practice. It is clear that this work requires critical intimacy for an audience member to witness, experience, and engage with it, however, so one of the audience members who is a friend of JuliART arrives and escorts them across the road to be closer to the audience. As soon as JuliART crosses the road and gets closer to the audience, they lay down close to the entrance of Pepata, the restaurant between the National Theatre of Namibia and the National Art Gallery of Namibia foyer. The audience continues to watch them, nervously giggling and chatting. The sounds of the performance at this point include the cars passing by as well the audience's whispers and conversations as they try to comprehend this live performance.



Figure 32: 'JuliArt performing I AM HUMAN', (2020). Photograph: Vilho Nuumbala.

JuliART conceptualised this work by recalling their previous experience of censorship at the National Art Gallery of Namibia. They conceptualised this dilemma as one that is influenced by the hetero-patriarchal white gaze and the fetishisation of the Black, woman, queer performer's body. The chosen historic site, incorporating both theatre and gallery, was built by the South African Association of Arts, which has had a branch in Namibia since 1947. Namibian theatre historian Suzette van der Smit (2018) writes about the construction of the Arts Theatre in 1960 and the Art Centre and Gallery in 1965 by the Arts Association as cultural institutions that aimed at catering exclusively for English, Afrikaner, and German audiences. These venues were used for local white and European cultural activities such as ballets and operas, endorsed by the apartheid regime. It is this racist history that JuliART confronts by literally 'putting their body on the line', making a connection between this racist past and nationalist modes of cultural production at the NTN and NAGN today. Much colonial heritage is obfuscated through such present-day modes since these nationalist institutions generally make a distinction between their colonial-era and post-apartheid histories. Both the NTN and NAGN productions today predominantly focus on the post-independence era, often creating the impression that their coloniality never existed, or that it has disappeared.

The first words JuliART says while still lying down are ‘*What are you looking at?*’. They yell this question, turning the consumerist gaze back to the audience, calling on the audience to reflect on how intrusive cultural consumerism is. This immediately takes the audience into a mode of critical self-reflexion. The vulnerable body in *I AM HUMAN* also translates as protest in action; this presents a similar productive tension (between being deemed disposable and yet defiant) as that reflected in the work of Nanghili Nashima. JuliArt’s oeuvre invites the audience to participate through an intimate mediation that that calls collective issues into question. Her work reflects the feminist principle that the personal is political, with a specific focus on the body, and social perceptions thereof. In *I AM HUMAN*, intimacy is not only embodied in relation to these sites of concentrationality (the NTN and NAGN), but also negotiated with members of the audience.

After getting closer to the audience, JuliART asks for a volunteer in the audience to help them put a sanitary pad in place for a few seconds, and then remove it. One member of the audience offers to help. JuliART shows the stain of menstrual blood on the pad to the audience. At this point of the performance, we are standing in circle surrounding the artist and some audience members have become tense, taken aback and in suspense about what is going to happen next. JuliART then presents their next object, a dildo, and the group atmosphere changes as we hear some giggling coming from some audience members. There is an impression that we are moving from the realm of pain to that of pleasure. JuliART once again asks for a volunteer who is willing to ‘bottom’. (A bottom is the receptive partner in penetrative sex, so “bottoming” simply refers to being sexually penetrated. The term is usually, though not exclusively, used in reference to gay sex, although it clearly applies universally). The artist is suggesting using the dildo to demonstrate what institutions do to artists, particularly those who do not fall within their neat parameters of cultural production. One (male) audience member volunteers, he lies down on the ground while JuliART repeatedly humps over his clothed buttocks.

JuliArt’s work has previously been removed from exhibitions because of the discomfort and risky conversations it engenders. There have been several occasions where their work has been and censored by arts administrators and curators at local arts institutions. This exclusion by cultural leaders has resulted in the marginalisation of JuliART’s artistic practice. Writing on JuliART’s work, Msutu (2020) notes the following about nude performance practices.

The unruly politics of naked protests depicted in Hango’s [*JuliART’s*] work are another illustration of claiming one’s humanity. The language of naked protests is outside of the established ‘appropriate’ way to hold public discourse within

hegemonic western culture. The spectacle of the protest gives authority and autonomy to bodies that have traditionally been perceived as powerless and non-human. (Msutu, 2020: <https://asai.co.za/julia-hango-techniques-of-asserting-humanity/>).

Msutu (2020) situates JuliART's work in the African or Black feminist imaginaries as ideological practices that predate colonialism. Msutu does this by reminding us of pre-colonial Aawambo matrilineal systems that gave women power and influence through their revered roles such as that of ovapitifi (healers and ritual leaders) (Msutu, 2020). This argument invites us to think of JuliART's performance practice as a counter-hegemonic to Western and colonial constructions and expectations of the Black or colonised body. It invites us to reflect on the politics of the body as contested and shifting – in *I AM HUMAN*, JuliART asserts their humanity by shapeshifting into an 'freak of nature, savage and animal', as they noted in their artistic statement. They embody animal-like gestures such as crawling with chained legs, playing with mud, and drinking from a dog's plate to liken the treatment of artists to that of non-humans. *I AM HUMAN* not only offered an institutional critique, as with many of JuliART's performances, but it also felt like a ritual. The circle that we made around JuliART created a sense of holding a space in which JuliART performed ritualised behaviour, in this case at the threshold between the gallery and theatre.

Namibian scholars of sociology Edwards-Jauch (2015) and Tjirera (2021) have argued that there is a link between institutional, spatial, gendered, and racialised forms of violence in Namibia, and that this connection is rooted in the historic project of colonial violence. JuliART's performance intervention of *I AM HUMAN* demonstrates the intersecting nature of different forms of violence that they have previously experienced through being censored and excluded from some of these national platforms. I argue that *I AM HUMAN* is a labour of love against systemic violence. This ethos of love and loving through playing can also be traced in the work of other contemporary artists in Namibia, as I demonstrate in the following sections of this paper. This is what is implied by the term 'post-Muafangejo movement', which I use in the section that follows.



Figure 33: 'JuliART performing I AM HUMAN' (2020). Photograph: Vilho Nuumbala.



Figure 34: 'JuliART performing I AM HUMAN' (2020) corner of Robert Mugabe and Join Meinert, Windhoek. Photograph: Vilho Nuumbala

What's Love Got To Do With It?

The performance *What's Love Got To Do With It?* by artist Neige Moongo, which premiered at *Operation Odalate Naiteke* in 2020, is an embodiment of the difficult work required in working towards a love ethic. '*What's Love Got To Do With It?*' is a solo live performance intervention that deals with gender-based violence and depression in Namibian society. This work was performed on two evenings in the Mirror Room at the Katutura Community Art Centre (KCAC) as part of the closing programme of the *Operation Odalate Naiteke* initiative.

The audience members arrive and are immediately told to wait in the lobby, where they are blindfolded. The performer and the production assistants usher the audience into the performance space slowly, one by one. The audience is seated in a circle, on a floor filled with flour and petals and burning candles arranged in a circular manner. There is a smell of Indian incense burning in the room. (The audience remain blindfolded and seated in their designated position until halfway through the performance). At first, there is a deep silence, followed by people whispering and footsteps in the space before Moongo plays an 11-minute soundscape she has composed. The soundscape is emanating from a small boom box, and Moongo holds a mobile speaker as she walks around the circle. This setting immediately suggests and facilitates a meditative and introspective space.

The recording is looped. The 11-minute soundscape begins with a heartbeat before we hear the sounds of a pile of wood being stacked, heavy breathing, and banging on a box. The heartbeat sound is recurring and so is the noise of someone struggling for breath. The soundscape builds up by introducing other sounds that are at times layered over the heartbeat as the backdrop. These sounds include footsteps, a closing door, an ambulance siren, a screaming woman, children laughing, women crying, a crying baby, a clock, birds, a train, horns, chants, bells, and guitar strings. We also hear a Pentecostal sermon in which a pastor calls and the congregation responds, and a church choir humming a song. This intense and delicate soundscape reflects the context that the artist wishes the work to address, which is Namibia. The soundscape is haunting; it draws us in towards a creative space for collective reflection. Intimacy is heightened in the room and we are required to listen and feel.



Figure 35: 'Neige Moongo performing *What's Love Got To Do With It?*' (2020). Photograph: Vilho Nuumbala.

After the recording fades out, Moongo invites the audience members to perform a meditation, then asks them to remove their blindfolds as she begins to walk across the room playing a tiny percussive instrument while delivering a speech. At this point, one of the production assistants hands Moongo a mirror, which she faces towards the audience. The audience is asked to repeat a set of self-affirming and optimistic phrases as Moongo presents the mirror to each one of them. This act of mirroring is also supported by the mirrors on the walls of the room, helping Moongo to remind us that this is a reflexive and meditative space.

Her careful speech raises and connects a wide range of social problems such as patriarchal violence, rape culture, corruption, economic dispossession, racism, spiritual displacement, and the lack of intergenerational dialogue in Namibian society. Moongo's performance initiates space for people to reflect on Namibia's intergenerational trauma as a post-war country and how this connects to the contemporary issue of gendered violence against women and children. Moongo relates all these issues to mental health struggles on the individual and collective level. In doing so, Moongo's speech relates to Mukufa's (2020) discussion on historic trauma in Namibia and the importance of the *#MenAreTrash* dialogic action as a radical feminist critique of patriarchal nationalism. Mukufa's M.A. thesis titled 'Interrogating the narrative

“#MenAreTrash” in Namibian women’s spoken poetry with a focus on Gender Based Violence’ unpacks contemporary spoken word poetry by young Namibian women writing on the national crisis of rape culture.



Figure 36: ‘Neige Moongo performing *What's Love Got To Do With It?*’ (2020). Photograph: Vilho Nuumbala.

Some audience members cry during the performance and spend time in the room after the performance, processing and appreciating what they have just encountered. Moongo uses this time to have one on one conversations and hug some audience members.

What’s Love Got To Do With It? was a notable performance given the limited opportunities for cultural productions in Namibia that initiate this kind of robust and raw dialogue on issues of intergenerational trauma and wellness. Moongo’s performance relied on critical intimacy and holding to open a space that was attentive to the need to restore mental health. This speaks broadly to the question of restorative justice and healing on a national level, which has been largely neglected in Namibia (Shikongo, 2019). Apart from culture-specific practices of healing and reconciling from traumatic pasts, Namibia as a country has not yet developed national programmes that have specifically addressed the question of healing collectively from our traumatic pasts.

Moongo’s *What’s Love Got To Do With It?* is thus a response to this gap in the formation of nationhood and the nation-building process. It uses discomfort and vulnerability to ask vital questions about the dysfunctional state of the nation in relation to both the past and the future.

Moongo's concerns are echoed by many other 'born frees', who are equally critical of the government's flawed 'One Namibia, One Nation' narrative of reconciliation. *What's Love Got To Do With It?* is both a critique and call to action for collective imagination beyond the struggle and suffering that oppressed people are subjected to. *What's Love Got To Do With It?* is thus another case of what I posit in this paper as part of a 'post-Muafangejo movement', because of how it challenges us to imagine and practice love and freedom in different contexts of systemic oppression.

theKhoest

Nesindano Namises' *theKhoest* is a site-related ritual performance characterised by mirrors, red lights, sonics, and somatic practices. The title of this work *theKhoest* suggests various ideas expressed across various languages. When I heard this title for the first time, I thought about the idea of a quest: searching and traveling. Reading the title suggests more. The word Khoe is Khoekhoegowab for human or person. Hence, the title can also be read as alluding towards humanness, or concerned with the human condition generally. *theKhoest* was performed at *Operation Odalate Naiteke* (2020) on two evenings at the Katutura Community Art Centre's Boiler House. Namises collaborated with dancer and choreographer Nikhita Winkler, who performed a movement piece. As it is often the case with performance artworks, *theKhoest* emerged from a 2018 experimental performance titled *Discomfort*, which was performed at the first Windhoek International Dance Festival, hosted at the College of the Arts in Windhoek. *Discomfort* was a solo performance developed through a performance art workshop as part of this festival. By 2019, Nesindano had embarked on *theKhoest*, which was premiered in Stuttgart, Germany. Namises describes it as follows in her artistic statement:

“*theKhoest* is a story and testimony of transformation and visibility. Transformations influenced by the constant shifts we experience while journeying into mutual pasts, toward future presents and beyond Afro-futures; and visibilities shaped by the reclaiming and ownership taken by black, feminine and queer bodies.” (Namises, 2019).

This performance was therefore characterised as a trans-temporal piece of live art in the way that it played with different logics and registers of time. While it took place in the present, it called in a series of pasts while investing in imagining various futures. This was activated in the journey that both Namises and Winkler took the audience on. The back entrance to the Boiler House has a 3-storey staircase that leads to several rooms used as offices and classrooms

at KCAC. The audience moved from the main building – where they had just watched Neige Moongo’s ‘*What’s Love Got To Do With It?*’ – to the staircase behind the Boiler House. The staircase then became the playground for *theKhoest*, meaning that performers took the audience on a journey of “improvisational sounds... inspired by oral histories, possible futures and gestures of sonic curiosities” (Namises, 2019). The audience was received with poetry, introducing a procession of stones and ‘our way home’. There were stones placed on the stairs as markers to guide the audience. At this point it was already clear that that audience members were on a collective mission of discovering ‘future-pasts’. The performers’ body language of calling, luring, and ushering the audience up the staircase was the compass that indicated when we should move, and when to stop. Audience members were required to listen carefully as we moved and waited between the spaces.

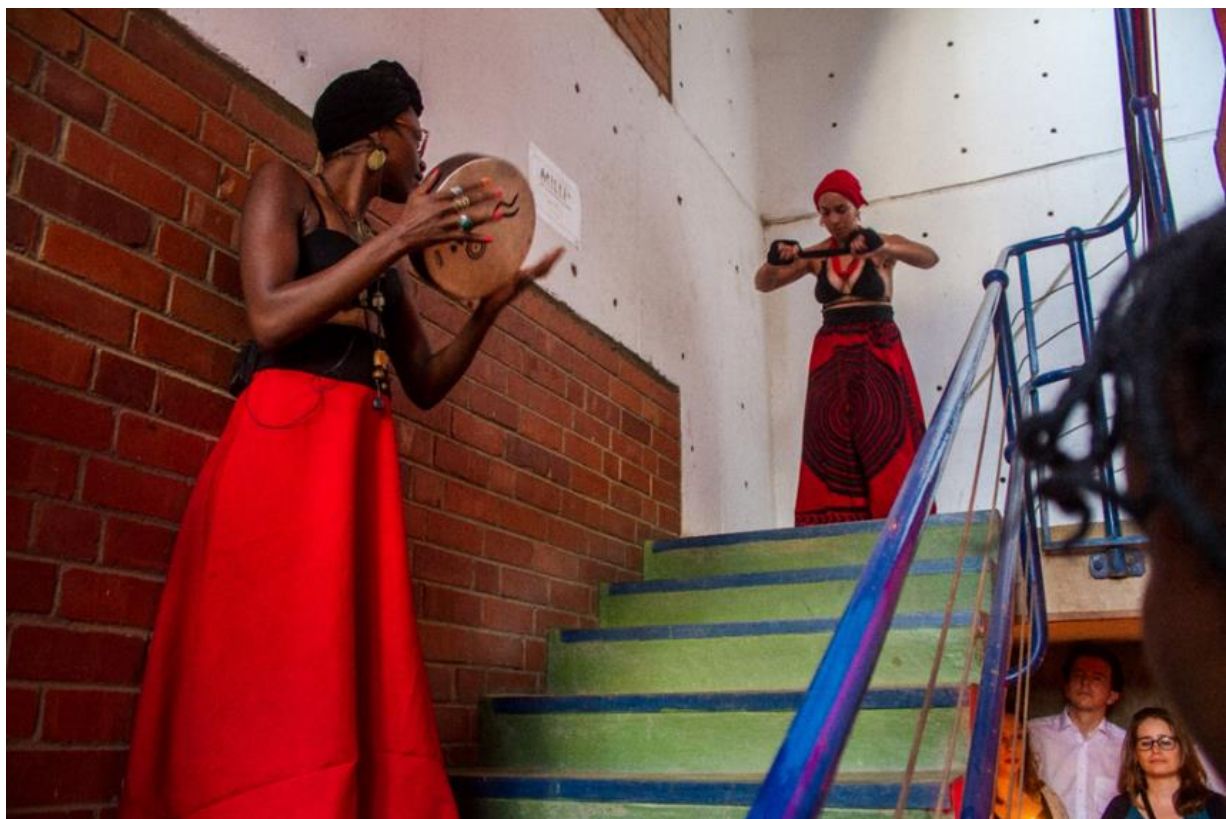


Figure 37: ‘Nesindano Namises and Nikhita Winkler performing theKhoest’ (2020), Katutura Community Art Centre. Photograph: Vilho Nuumbala.

The second space in *theKhoest* is the space of acknowledging anger and making time for self-care. Nesindano did some washing cups and plates and then picked up pieces of a broken mirror to signify the need for undertaking self-care work and recognising one’s anger. Winkler’s physical vocabulary translated these gestures in both abstract and literal movements. The

mirror and mirroring are used simultaneously – through Nesindano looking at herself in the mirror and Winkler mirroring the poetic text through her embodiments of anger. The broken pieces of the mirror were then pasted onto the wall. As in *What's Love Got To Do With It?*, the use of the mirror initiates a space for looking at ourselves, suggesting self-reflexivity and collective introspection.

The next space is called 'Into a new (outer) space' and it focused on sound. We heard the sound of water pouring from one metallic bowl into another, coupled with Khoekhoegowab phonetics as well as chants in both Khoekhoegowab and English. The water used for washing previously was poured into cups, tins, and pots and these were handed to some of the members of the audience. These audience members were asked to carry these containers as a way of holding space and participating in the ritual. The sound of pouring water into these metal containers was heightened as part of *theKhoest*'s soundscape. The poem that Nesindano recited in this space is *The Bone Collector*, which expands *theKhoest* to embrace questions around the repatriation of human remains, restorative justice, and national healing. The first part of this poem reads as follows.

Before they once again decide what happens to them
Allow us to speak for the remains
Give rise to their voice
Let our words echo their sorrows
And let those who have fallen
Who have been left out
Made to feel shame
Let them take their rightful place
As the true narrators of their stories of wandering tales
which would have rippled far enough to make change now
I am not here for many things
I am here to collect remnants of human ancestry
Remnants that have found themselves lingering in limbo
As their physical pasts have been deliberately defected
Influenced or blocked by obstructive forces
Brewed and cultivated by hate
I am not here for many things
I am here to collect remnants of human ancestry
African Ancestry
My ancestry
To guide them from those who lack the understanding.
(Namises, *The Bone Collector*).

It became evident that *theKhoest* – as a practice of self – makes broad connections, ranging from personal to collective questions of reconciling lost pasts to the collective commitment to

healing. These are questions that post-Independence Namibia has not yet fully grasped through a reckoning with its history of genocide, colonialism, and apartheid. The act of collecting bones is suggestive and deeply reflective because many bodies that perished during Namibia's colonial periods still litter the land, while more human remains are part of museum and university collections in Western countries. Namises developed this performance from the need to merge the voice and physicality. With her background in writing, performance poetry, and music making, she saw *theKhoest* to be a project that would expand her performance vocabulary and language by consciously working in and with the body. *theKhoest* is about being present. The performance became a conduit for connecting, listening, seeing, and responding to a call as well as traveling beyond to get into the space of transformation.

Namises also notes that the performance emerged during a time when African artists are rising. The performance was a referential practice that takes from old and new traditions of performance art, music, and art practices on the African continent, highlighting those that show a time of possibility. One of these traditions that is visible in *theKhoest* is xoma, the healing performance practised by Damara traditional healers in central Namibia. Elements of xoma in [*theKhoest*] are the pouring of libations, chanting, spoken word, the burning of sage, and performing shapeshifting dances as a way of summoning and calling in 'the invisibles.' The performance was thus a process of 'trance formation' that relied on a critical intimacy between the performers, audience, site, invisibles, and their respective histories. One example of this is *Nabaxa*, a poetic-chant performed in the final space of *theKhoest*, which can be translated as 'come closer' or 'arrive'. Namises called the audience closer as by repeatedly saying *Nabaxa* and the audience would respond by following the performers and being present. Namises insists that *Nabaxa* was about acknowledging other bodies and welcoming them to the space. *Nabaxa* was a playful and flirtatious whisper that was accompanied by a procession of stones as elements guiding the audience towards finding ways of arriving at the spaces that the performance created.

The site of the performance was made up of huge grey, brown and white concrete walls, as well as the blue metallic security gates that point to the restrictive nature of the KCAC complex. The restrictive architecture of the site is a stern reminder of the history of the place – as a hostel complex for contract migrant labourers during the apartheid era. It is this brutal history – still haunting the site – that *theKhoest* essentially responds to in its attempt to cleanse, heal, and

transform. For the performance, the site was transformed by a red light which illuminated the spaces to symbolise the arrival and presence of blood and a feminine energy. The red light worked well in this oppressive, intractable and overwhelming grey and blue site, where Namises and Winkler embodied resilience as they negotiated their way through the doorways, staircases and gates.

#ShutItAllDownNamibia

This section unpacks the emergence of *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* as an innovative and groundbreaking movement in the struggle against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Namibia. *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* had its genesis on the NamTwitter social media platform as public outrage against the pervasive and normalised culture of violence in Namibia escalated. However, its strategies grew to become embodied through its public performances, making it a disruptive and radically open movement calling for urgent drastic change and dialogic action from multiple public stakeholders. The *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* protests came after two other major protests namely, the silent protest (16 June 2020) and the reproductive justice march (July 2020). All these protests were organised under the national lockdown conditions given the Covid-19 global pandemic. *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* emerged as part of the internationalist movements such as the *#BlackLivesMatter*. These local and international protests were focused on issues such as spatial decolonisation, police brutality, racism, decriminalisation of abortion, as well as gender justice. The Covid-19 pandemic heightened these issues and young people in Namibia were demanding drastic action from local and national authorities.



Figure 38: '#ShutItAllDown protests at the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare office gates', October 2020. Photograph: Vivian !Nou-/Gawaseb.

One of the protest strategies of the #ShutItAllDownNamibia movement was disruption, in the form of 'shutting down the nation'. This meant making use of tactics that transgress existing traditions of protesting. For example, organisers in Windhoek made a decision not to apply for an official permit to protest from the police, thereby interrupting trade at shopping malls, occupying traffic intersections in the Central Business District (CBD), and gathering at institutions such as the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, the Tintenpalast (parliament building), the Windhoek Central Police Station, and the University of Namibia administration building, main campus. The tactics of disruption also included not furnishing the police with any details of the protest, expressing radical rudeness, and prolonging the duration of the protesting over several days. All these methods of disruption were directed at patriarchal nationalism and its tradition of systemic violence. In these protest moments, Namibian nationalist culture was stripped off all its protocol-observing and respectability politics and a critical reflexivity was called in. Protesters – of whom I was one –

had the tools to theorise and argue for the necessity of this praxis, as a mode of knowledge production that is legitimate and has been used historically in Namibia's liberation struggle.

The genesis of the *#ShutItAllDown* protests comprised a wave of public demonstrations around the country that began on 8 October 2020, in Windhoek's CBD. Similar protests also then took place in Luderitz, Walvis Bay, Otjiwarongo and Swakopmund. The initial *#ShutItAllDown* protest was initiated and conceptualised by youth activists Lebbeus Hashikutuva and Bertha Tobias on NamTwitter.⁷³ This spontaneous organising came about when news emerged that the remains of murder victim Shannon Wasserfall had been found in a shallow grave in the dunes outside the coastal town of Walvis Bay. A social media campaign, *#BringShannonHome*, had been running following her sudden disappearance in April 2020 and news that she had been found dead triggered a spontaneous protest that resulted in a week of public action on the streets and utilised social-media platforms, posters, photographs, videos, signage, and hashtags such as *#OnsIsMoeg*⁷⁴ to draw public attention to her fate. This hashtag – which is also a slogan recited during the protest performances – expressed an obvious collective rage, exhaustion, and trauma at the normalisation of SGBV in the Namibian context.

⁷³ A term used to describe the Namibian Twittersphere.

⁷⁴ Afrikaans for 'We are tired'.



Figure 39: '#ShutItAllDownNamibia protesters at the Tintenpalast (parliament building)', October 2020. Photograph: Martha Mukaiwa.

The protest action was predominantly led by young women and gender-diverse persons and would have simultaneous presences on the streets and virtual spaces. The rage expressed in the *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* movement is not new however, and can be traced through local and international social media over the last decade – for example in the social media archives of feminist activism and through the use of hashtags such as *#RURferenceList*, *#RememberKwezi* (in South Africa) and *#MyDressMyChoice* in Kenya (Gqola, 2017; Nyabola, 2018). What these recent feminist-led protests have in common is their use of social media, especially Twitter, to mobilise public consciousness and urgent action. Pumla Gqola (2021) captures this when she reflects on 2020 uprisings against racism and femicide on the African continent and the United States:

To take to the streets in record-breaking numbers during a pandemic is not reckless. It is clarity on the use of fear for control, as well as the importance of asserting the right to recognition even during a pandemic. In other words, when

Blacks in the US fall outside of who the state chooses to render safe from the pandemic, or women and queer folk take to Namibian and Nigerian streets because ‘safety’ and ‘nationalism’ are at once again used against them, this is a radical call. It is a refusal of the slippery talk of safety and an urgent claim to full recognition.” (Gqola, 2021: 203).

#ShutItAllDownNamibia was a response to the heightened fear and violence experienced by many during the months of national lockdown and restrictions on movement – regulations that were characterised as a ‘safety’ mechanism for the protection of the public. Being under lockdown in homes had resulted in an increase in reports of SGBV and femicide; therefore many young people took to the streets to interrupt everyday business-as-usual, ‘shutting it all down’ as a call for urgent attention. As protesters, we were committed to convincing President Hage Geingob to declare a state of emergency on SGBV and femicide. We were also pushing for the resignation of the Minister of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, Doreen Sioka, whom we saw as unfit to hold this position. These demands were articulated in a petition which included suggestions for strategic interventions on institutional and national policy. These demands were directed at various stakeholders in the health, social services, education, and community sectors.

The intensive week-long protest action became a ‘thirdspace’, meaning that it turned into a hybrid space of possibility. I draw from urban theorist Edward Soja’s theorisation of a thirdspace as a ‘real and imagined’ space that is lived to change the human spatial condition, a mode of critical spatial consciousness. According to Soja, in a thirdspace “everything comes together... subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body” (Soja, 1996: 57). To a certain degree, the *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* protest enabled access to, and engagement with, national leadership – including the president. Although no concrete action came from these engagements, the protests ushered a national gender discourse into a new space that has proven inclusive and refreshing. There was a heightened queering of gender in this discourse, which expanded the terms of engagement and the expectations of gender justice (Mukaiwa, 2021). As Becker (2021) reminds us, this is a result of many decades of activist work by the Namibian feminist movement, which can be traced back to the struggle against apartheid. Becker writes:

In the light of the new generation of Namibian activists forcefully asking penetrating questions and engaging in collective action over the past few years, culminating in the 2020 protests, the history of the popular urban revolt of the 1980s has become particularly significant once again. (Becker, 2021: 186).

Becker argues that Namibia's post-colonial narrative in the years since Independence is marked by silences. This can be attributed to a shrinking civil society and the silencing of grassroots organisations by the ruling party (Becker, 2021). Hence the thirdspace, which these new movements created in the third decade of Namibia's democracy, must also be understood in trans-temporal terms since they connect to popular struggles from different historical moments that were also geared towards the goal of decolonisation.

The body was a central instrument in confronting power during these engagements. As protesters, we had our voices, painted bodies, signage, loudspeakers, sage, dances, music and whistles, while our middle fingers and fists were raised in the air – all aimed at disobeying the respectability politics of Namibian nationalism. An explicitly transgressive performance in the protest was the repeated dancing and singing to the song *WAP* (short for 'wet ass pussy') by American pop star Cardi B and featuring Megan Thee Stallion. This rap song metaphorically and literally expresses women's sexual joy, pleasure, and freedom in its playfulness with notions around the power of seduction. One of the dance styles used in the video for this song is known as twerking⁷⁵ and twerking was evident amongst protesters when they blocked traffic intersections during demonstrations. Some protesters also twerked at the various police officers guarding the foyer of the Windhoek Central Police Station and the gates of government buildings, where these officers would prevent the protesters from entering. Twerking was used as a gesture of refusal to be silenced given this institutional barring of access to public officials. Twerking in front of the Tintenpalast parliament building made gender non-conforming bodies and languages visible in formal spaces. Twerking thus showed another side of the #ShutItAllDownNamibia movement's ideology, which is the right to the bodily and sexual autonomy of women and gender-diverse people. The use of *WAP* was a contested moment of the protest however, as other protesters (as well as members of the public) questioned the usefulness of this song. One of the protesters – journalist Anne Hambuda – noted how this debate circulated on both online and offline spaces as part of the movement's reflection:

Clips from the march of twerking female and male protestors soon hit the social media, however, they did not sit well with some viewers at home who felt the dancing was 'inappropriate' and took away from the movement. (Hambuda, 2020).

⁷⁵ "Twerking is dancing in a sexually provocative manner by thrusting movements of the bottom and hips while in a low, squatting stance." Oxford English Dictionary (2013).

Here, Hambuda is pointing us to how the practice of twerking defied the dominant conservative values of the Namibian public imagination. Therefore, twerking is not just a disruptive gesture, but it is a performance that stretches the public imagination by bringing ‘informal’ and ‘inappropriate’ protest strategies into the formal spaces.

The *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* moment reminded us that disruption has become a necessary tactic of local protest, activism, and movement building in the last decade of Namibian post-colonial society. Activists are increasingly relying on alternative methods to make their struggles visible. For example, we can refer to the 2020 reproductive justice marches aimed at decriminalising abortion as well as the Black Lives Matter silent protests performed at colonial monuments. We can also refer to the land occupations and protests for urban land-service delivery carried out by the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) movement since 2014. Another key protest was that of 14 unemployed youths who turned up with brooms and water buckets and started mopping floors and washing the windows of the governor’s office in Keetmanshoop, to express their dismay at the national unemployment crisis. Another instance is that of the group of young people known as the Struggle Kids,⁷⁶ who occupied a piece of land next to the SWAPO office headquarters in Windhoek. This occupation resulted in the shooting death of protester Frieda Ndatipo as a result of Namibian police brutality.

Throughout the *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* engagements, Namibian police forces were heavily armed; even during the first day of the protest, they resorted to deploying teargas at the parliament building in Windhoek. On the third day of the protest, when protesters were on their way to the Wernhill Mall in the CBD, the police responded with rubber bullets and more tear gas and arrested approximately 28 protesters, including journalists. The protesters were released that same evening and eventually acquitted of all charges on the basis that the police treatment was disproportionate and the protesters were not violent. It is this series of events that enabled a notable shift in the place of gender and feminism in Namibian public discourses. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram played a significant role in the mobilisation and advocacy work of this movement. *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* attracted international solidarity and opened up spaces for engaging with senior national leadership as well as other stakeholders.

⁷⁶ Also known as the children of the liberation struggle (born of parents who lived/died in SWAPO exile camps in Angola and Zambia). Their demands centre around a promise made at Namibian Independence that their welfare would be prioritised through support from the ruling party.

This paper is based on my practice as a co-organiser of the *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* protests and curator of *Operation Odalate Naiteke 2020*. It thus weaves together recent contemporary performances in Namibian public spaces that evoke protest and indigeneity. I analyse these performances as public events that show how artists and the youth in Namibia are playing with space and using feminist strategies of protesting, restoring, healing, and reconciling. These practices of self respond to the legacies of violence that gendered and racialised bodies have endured in Namibia. I argue that in the process of taking up space, these recent performances in various public spheres make claims to indigeneity by protesting hetero-patriarchal nationalism in post-apartheid Namibia. They range from overtly disrupting business activities in urban centres to facilitating healing rituals in historic buildings. Showing symmetries with the orature of Nanghili Nashima, these performances are feminist practices that are rooted in an ethos of love – as discussed by bell hooks (2001). Love as a principle of Oudano alludes to forging intimacy and relatedness, as well as performing desire. Theatre and activist work in the first two decades of Namibian democracy was predominantly geared towards nation-building and development; these ‘new’ performance practices now turn to internationalist and decolonial politics. This is done by actively refusing and transgressing boundaries of dominant cultural ideologies while mapping and experimenting with practices of pleasure, desire, intimacy, and love.

CONCLUSION: AN ARRIVAL

This thesis explores Oudano as a concept of performance and culture that mobilises sound, archives and social movements. The study engages with a range of performance cases through the lens of Oudano and explore how these performances mobilise critical consciousness and radical imagination across place and time. The collection of works that I engage with comprises my own critical performance practice as well as that of several artists in Namibia and Southern Africa. I use Oudano as a framework to analyse artistic practices from a range of archival sources. By listening to these cases, I situate them in the Oudano tradition of undisciplined intellectual work. In this thesis, listening is a methodological choice that is applied in embodied terms. The recorded songs, linocut prints, photographs, performances, rock art, workshops and paintings discussed in this thesis are not only located in their specific historic periods, they are also discussed through theoretical lenses of indigeneity and decoloniality. I also unpack how these remnants of public culture are a result of trans-temporal processes that transcend those historic periods. They form part of longer traditions of critical spatial practices and embodied knowledges.

I use a range of archival sources from institutional (colonial and national) archives in Namibia, Germany, and Switzerland, social media, as well as embodied and spatial sites of knowledge production. This broad method of sourcing is meant to point to the expansive nature of Oudano records- to say that they range from multi-media documentation, material culture, place and live performances. The thesis argues that the Oudano material it examines is inherently undisciplined. The objects of study are undisciplined in the sense that they are characterised as practices of transgression and border crossing.

This study demonstrates Oudano's expansive nature as it traces histories of people and their struggles through ostensibly peculiar and 'unrelated' objects of performance. These cultural objects hold capacity to forge dialogic action (Freire, 1972) that points us to hidden potentials of subverting colonial order. In other words, Oudano is a way of thinking, doing and being in the world. It has predominantly been theorised in disciplinarity and ethnic terms often ignoring how it operates as a critical lens of diverse objects and subjects. The thesis is therefore a deliberate epistemic shift from disciplinarity towards the mobilisation of performance studies as a field in Namibianist studies. The thesis is a performance-based and archival study of long existing and emerging Oudano practices that have fallen through the margins and cracks of dominant scholarship on theatre and performance in Namibia. Here, 'margins and cracks' are

not defined as fixed spaces but rather as sites of resistance and radical imagination (hooks 1989 and Musila, 2018).

Transgression is discussed in this thesis along two trajectories. The first being the socio-political imagination which Oudano makes possible as a public practice. Through the various papers, I discuss how the Oudano objects/subjects speak truth to power and generate radical imaginaries in their respective politics of anti-apartheid, decoloniality, feminism, queer, and Pan Africanism. These politics are embodied in the Oudano of practitioners' during apartheid and post-apartheid Namibia. This is demonstrated in the close listening and critical reading of audio and video recordings of Nanghili Nashima's autobiographic Oudano practices which the thesis posits as queer-feminist intellectual work. Nanghili Nashima used her communal orature to defy and subvert apartheid racist policies, African patriarchy, and Christian influences as a woman in colonial Owambo. This ethos of transgression is also discussed in the work of contemporary performance artist JuliART's protest performance *I AM HUMAN* at *Operation Odalate Naiteke* (2020). The thesis unpacks JuliART's queer-feminist playful gestures in *I AM HUMAN* as institutional critique directed to the National Art Gallery of Namibia and National Theatre of Namibia for their neo-liberal cultural programmes that are restricting to undisciplined artistic practices. These restrictions are embedded in these institutional histories of divide and rule as exclusively white centres of culture.

The second trajectory of transgression is related to the spiritual and cosmic worlds that Oudano enables. This relates to performance making as a sacred, ritualised and embodied practice. Some of the cases discussed in this thesis show transcendence and shapeshifting as features in the liminality of Oudano. Indigenous dance practices such as, Xoma and Tsutsube are some ancient examples which depict transcendence and shapeshifting depicted in rock art paintings in Dâures and #Igaingu, central Namibia. In my performance practice, I put with these ancient visualities in conversation with colonial photography and sonic archives. My ritual performance *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* (Dance of the Rubber Tree) is the first Oudano practice that this PhD project undertook. As an act of queering 'sites of concentrationality' (archives, museums, and theatres), it relies on Oudano's imaginative power of 'world making' and summoning 'invisible knowledges' by using objects such as ideas, fire, trees, salt, and marula seed-stones to confront systemic erasure. These spiritual practices of summoning, shapeshifting and 'trance formation' can also be seen in Nesindano Namises' [*theKhoest*], and Neige Moongo's *What's Love Got To Do With It?* Which were all curated as part of the 2020 *Odalate Naiteke* programme.

The thesis also posits that transgression must be understood in relation to mobility as curated in the *Odalate Naiteke* public art programme (2018 and 2020). It shows how working and shifting between multiple public sites is crucial for Oudano to circulate and mobilise radical imagination. For example, *[theKhoest]* and *What's Love Got To Do With It?* all ushered audiences to travel and move through various spaces. The thesis argues that a performance such as *[theKhoest]* are decolonial imaginaries which seek to reclaim indigenous spirituality beyond the nationalist frames of ethnicity and tradition. They do this through their site-relatedness by invoking the histories of their found sites and symbolically cleansing them for the future. Overall, the objects/subjects presented in this thesis shows that Oudano situates itself as a spatial practice that highlights positionality and the politics of place. Oudano is not fixed to place, in fact, it thrives and develops on the basis that it facilitates mobility and circulation. Oudano is a spatial practice because it offers artists modalities of (re)imagining, mapping, travelling, situating, subverting, and queering different spaces through its sonic and movement nature. Hence, Josh Kun's idea of audiotopia is central in how Oudano operates as a borderless and imaginative practice that makes different spaces possible beyond the literal and given.

The thesis also points to the trans-temporal nature of Oudano. As it is with space and place, I conceptualise Oudano a complex and multi-faceted practice in its relation to time. Hence, Oudano as a fluid archival container complicates periodisation and fixed notions of time. Its spatial and environmental considerations reveal what African philosophers such as John Mbiti (1969) have argued for in terms of African concepts of time intertwining both past and present. The thesis suggests that 'multiple embodiments of time' can be translated in John Muafangejo's lino prints *Forcible Love* (1974), *No Way To Go, What Can I Do? No Place to Stay. Lord Please Help* (1972), *An Interview of Cape Town University in 1971* (1974). Although these prints are technically produced and dated 1970s, at the height of apartheid and immense struggle, they still speak to contemporary struggles in Southern Africa and what this thesis terms as the post-Muafangejo movement. This thesis has argued for its Oudano subjects/objects as timeless because they do not only resonate across time, but they also inspire new imaginaries and embodiments of time.

By locating the Oudano cases of songs, stories, prints, live performances, fire, stone art, places, times, and people in the 'cracks and margins' of 'the normal and normativity', this thesis also suggests that Oudano is a useful method of intervening in sites of concentrationality which are marked by loss. When Oudano is happening it is already invested in recovering what is already

or likely to be lost. This restorative work is embodied through holding spaces in Oudano live archiving process which is not merely about collecting and hoarding as the normative archive. I illustrate this in the paper on '*Kgala! Namib Jazz and related Struggle Music*', showing how popular music during apartheid and independent Namibia should be understood as migrating and mobile forces that were/are responding to systemic loss. Here, loss is a result of coloniality, inherently epistemicide. Namibia-based musicians during apartheid such as Ben Molatzi, Carlos Kambaekwa, The Dakotas and Outjo Singers were responding to loss of land which in turn caused displacement, dispossession and dislocation. This loss is further marked by censorship as well as the continued inaudibility and inaccessibility of this music to the larger public as it remains in the cracks of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation's Music Library.

Oudano addresses this loss marked in sites of concentrationality through its care-driven and collective ethos of holding spaces, the self and the other. The thesis shows that holding as a feature of Oudano requires letting go as a way of developing a curative approach. I experiment with this ethos in the *Odalate Naiteke* programme, in which my curatorial function is not only characterised by heightened care work but also by practicing what Jay Pather (2019) has suggested as an anti-authoritarian strategy of curating which requires a disappearance and invisibility of the curator. This was achieved through an attempt of blurring the lines between the curatorial and artistic practices. For example, the artists whose work was curated during the *Odalate Naiteke 2020* could make curatorial choices about how they wanted their work to be presented and engaged with. Curative work became the work of co-organising and co-facilitating. The thesis thus established that holding and Oudano at large is a slippery practice. This means that although Oudano pays attention to gaps, silences, and losses, it is not a flawless method of doing cultural and historical work, in fact, its fluidity already points to incompleteness as an archival container. This is to say Oudano as a language of learning and culture is not about extracting, accumulating, or 'banking' knowledge, it is rather to say that Oudano is about exchange, reflexivity, transfer, and circulation. The thesis therefore shows that Oudano has been a useful vehicle to restore and expand the public imagination.

Oudano, as a performance-mode of archiving is a vehicle for concept making and theorising in practice. For example, Meme Nanghili Nashima's autobiographical performances work is a mode of self-writing and citing objects and other people. Oudano is translated in relation to other African concepts of performance such as Ngoma, Motshameko, |Huru, Mutambo, Zula and Dala to exemplify the entangled nature of visual and performance cultures in indigenous terms. The study is situated in the global tradition of performance studies demonstrating

Oudano's essence of play and playfulness, embodied and translated in a range of indigenous African performance vocabularies such as Tsutsube, /Gais, Xoma and Morangane. These established yet seemingly invisible performance practices are continued in contemporary performance practices of jazz, performance art, Pantsula, hip hop, sound art, painting, and printmaking that this thesis discusses widely.

These theoretical threads have been essential in framing contemporary performance practices discussed in this thesis. They have been discussed as part of what the thesis theorises as a post-Muafangejo movement. This movement is theorised as continuities of both the indigeneity and struggle for liberation, sustaining the Oudano intellectual tradition which reflects as critique of post-independence society, heteropatriarchal nationalism and systemic racism. The transnational performances of *Ondaanisa yo pOmudhime* and the Katutura-based historical reenactments by Ouma Paulina Hangara are examples of what the thesis theorises as archival frictions. Here, I lean on Awam Akmpa's notion of 'Matter of the body' and what Keguro Macharia (2015) has theorised as 'archive and method' in queer African Studies. Macharia theorises from, "...understanding this labour as provisional, as work to be undertaken by many minds and bodies engaged in ongoing conversation, attempting to listen to each other, and willing to take conceptual and methodological risks." (Macharia, 2015: 143-144). My theorisation of Oudano through these methodological perspectives' grounds the thesis in its African queer epistemologies to produce the archival contestations and frictions. These 'frictions of intimacy' as Macharia (2019) would call them, are a result of setting up encounters of Gayatri Spivak's (2016) notion of critical intimacy between various practices of archival production and use.

As a result, the thesis constitutes as an indigenous and decolonial effort towards epistemic justice. It is against this background that the thesis shows Oudano's live art, activist, archiving and epistemic labour through three main practicalities that makes its usefulness explicit. These are, a) Oudano as colloquial, b) Oudano as citational and c) Oudano as orientational. The study proposes these as key epistemic considerations of Oudano praxis. It theorises Oudano as colloquial by showing how it take place and form in everyday and public practices. At *Odalate Naitoke* 2020, Hip-hop artist Lamek Ndjaba, Kwaito ensemble Maspara Pantsula and Shambo singer-guitarist Lovisa the Superstar performed at an open area next to the Oshetu market in Single Quarters, Katutura. This space is usually used as a car wash, but we set it up for this pop-up performance which attracted a diverse audience made up of children and adults who could recognise and appreciate the temporary acts. This recognition and acknowledgement was

embodied through creating a circle surrounding the performers as a literal and symbolic way of co-holding of space between the audience, artists and production team. The thesis borrows from Parry (2015) who argues for a colloquial performance practice by posing the following questions.

How might a colloquial performance practice create holes in the very fabric of authority and knowledge in order to transform the languages of performance? How might not knowing whether something is real or fictional, formal or informal, serious or unserious, move us to understand things differently? (Parry, 2015: 108).

Alike Parry, the thesis brings into question different understandings of the term colloquial as an operative gesture that points towards the politics of difference, publicness, and centering subjectivities, that have often been subjugated and othered. These subjectivities are everyday practices that have been taken for granted and deemed vulgar, ‘vernacular’, ‘uncivilised’, informal, and playful. Oudano as colloquial is essential for disrupting disciplinarity because it challenges the dominant conceptions of academic knowledge through its expansive and generative meanings of literature and theory. The twentieth century histories of public intellectualism in present-day Namibia established under colonialism and apartheid were challenged and countered through other public intellectual practices such as Oudano. These practices drew on indigenous archives and unbordered global networks, manifesting through various forms and mediums.

The various instances of Oudano that I discuss in this thesis are constitutive of an archive of ongoing practices of Oudano in Namibia. These examples of Oudano as forms of public engagement intrinsically encourage democratic participation, in which their subjectivities are part of their processes of meaning making. I draw on Hamilton and Cowling’s (2020) conceptualisation of publicness as a capillaried network to show Oudano’s interconnectedness of public spheres and counterpublic spheres. In describing this capillaried network, Hamilton and Cowling (2020) claim that “...ideas are constantly circulating, sometimes within closed circuits, sometimes coalescing in sequestered spaces or forms, sometimes gathering enough potency to burst into wider significance and sometimes part of media that themselves constitute publics.” (Hamilton and Cowling, 2020: 22). The thesis therefore offers a detailed discussion of forms of Oudano, highlighting their relevance and significance as forms of public engagement which differ from public spheres that were produced through colonial states and currently through liberal democracy. This public engagement has always involved ordinary people such as the young undoing patriarchy and queering knowledge, unlike the formally

convened public spaces which are dominated by political elites who suppress critical engagement. As a Namibian academic, I find it crucial to explore engagements in counterpublic spheres given that Namibian post-apartheid scholarship has abandoned the subaltern as a site of knowledge. Jauch (2021) has reflected on this conundrum. He writes,

“Local elites joined global elites to produce and reproduce intellectuals who seek to justify, rationalise, and normalise the neo-colonial order at the core of the current inequalities. Such neoliberal intellectuals dominate the intellectual space inside the state, academia and civil society. They form an elite compact to maintain their hegemony and the neoliberal order.” Jauch (2021: 4).

It is on this basis that Oudano and related concepts such as Ngoma, Zula and Dala have been explored in this thesis to understand the significance of undisciplined intellectual work which is sometime situated on the streets. One example that I discuss relating to this colloquial praxis is the *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* country-wide protests against femicide and the SGBV crisis. I write from the practice of being part of the collective of youth and feminist activists who co-organised the initial *#ShutItAllDownNamibia* protests in October 2020. In the thesis, I reflect on the process of how this movement emerged as a result of this nationwide protest action. This protest action employed various performance strategies such as tweeting, twerking, toy-toying, break dancing, singing, sloganeering, marching, poster making, chanting, reading petitions and disrupting traffic intersections, government, and police offices. These overtly transgressive public performances responding to the pervasive and normalised culture of SGBV and femicide in Namibia were met with police brutality from the Namibian security forces. The thesis sees this experience as one that reveals that Oudano can be a risky and dangerous praxis.

Oudano is a citational framework that brings histories to the front, as it is discussed throughout the thesis as a fluid and live archival container. Many of the Oudano cases discussed in this thesis demonstrate Oudano’s reliance on embodied and shared memory Akmpa (2010) and Taylor (2003). Citationality is evident in the many existing performance forms and structures and how they have been historically and continue to be applied and adopted by performers. This work of citing is also reflected in the content of Oudano cases. The various papers highlight the performers and artists’ agency in ideas, the self, spirits, concepts, places, people, histories during their acts of performing. For example, the jazz singer Erna Chimu’s song *Telewaniba* is derived from a chant that she sang with a San traditional healer during her childhood. Chimu created this adaptation of an indigenous song to do self-writing in which she summons her ancestors while calling in self-determination. This approach of ancestral

summoning as citing is also seen in Namises' [*theKhoest*] as discussed above. This 'calling in' is how Oudano is a useful method of translating, mapping, and imagining. Calling in as a citational practice is enabled by intimacy and prayer which are two other features of Oudano that the thesis identifies in its cases. Another Oudano feature that points to its citationality is availability, which denotes an Oudano practitioner's commitment and openness to initiate space for transfer, exchange, and circulation.

Oudano as orientational has to do with its other features such as land, love, and desire. It is through Oudano that we come to situate ourselves in the world. The Oudano objects/subjects make claims to land and love to speak to their displacements, dispossession and gravitate towards their imagined worlds. The thesis has demonstrated this by unpacking Muafangejo's prints on love as queer subjects, offering a new reading that expands how we understand Muafangejo and his work beyond the Black Southern African artist in the struggle against apartheid. The thesis also looks at struggle and protest as sites of what Maldonado-Torres (2017) terms as decolonial love. This is also read in the protest action of the *ShutItAllDownNamibia* movement, and JuliART's *I AM HUMAN* performance, signaling that this work is done from an impulse of needing to generate love. To understand these protests as frictions of intimacy, I use Keguro Macharia's (2015) notion of hygienic love which denotes that love cannot thrive where patriarchy and racism are pervasive.

Oudano orientations point us to future possibilities and offer new directions of things. The objects and subjects in proximity to a performer often shape how they orientate themselves in the world, and Oudano is useful in negotiating and reimagining this orientation. In fact, Oudano discloses that orientation can always change given the queer nuances that Oudano itself makes possible. Oudano is an approach of doing queer orientation as proposed by Sara Ahmed's (2006) notes on queer phenomenology. This is to say that Oudano as orientational does not only refer to its reliance on background, starting points, repetition, dwelling/residing and inheriting, it is also about its power to disorientate to arrive at new places and those that have always been there or kept in rear (Ahmed, 2006). Even though the world is predominantly oriented towards heteronormative thinking, Oudano insists that it matters how one chooses to orientate themselves beyond the "...vertical and horizontal lines of conventional genealogy," (Ahmed, 2006: 564). This queer orientational nature of Oudano makes space for the messy and "slanting, or oblique" (Ahmed, 2006: 560), and it is what makes it slippery.

The three key considerations are in no way exhaustive in defining the theoretical and conceptual framework of Oudano as an African concept of performance. However, they help us make connections between performance, memory and place making as embodied in Oudano cases that this thesis brings to the front. More importantly, they guide the notion of Oudano as a border crosser.

The main argument of the thesis is that Oudano is not merely the equivalent of performance, but it is also a subaltern praxis used for public engagement about geo-political, gender and other issues. The thesis arrived at this conclusion after offering an expansive collection of conceptual and embodied approaches with which to think about historical and current situations. The thesis is therefore an art historical inquiry that is attentive to different sides of Oudano that are almost forgotten in Namibian scholarly terms as well as in national cultural memory. The dissertation presents this art history in relation to my practice of performance and curatorship, articulating a methodology that situates the research between making performances and working with archives. This study thinks queerly about Oudano and consequently demonstrates how queer and queering unsettles power relations established through cultural hegemony, showing us other ways of being in relation.

This thesis engages through trans-cultural practices of playing and therefore conceptualises Oudano beyond its Oshiwambo and Kavango linguistic and cultural meanings. I write Namibia's theatre, drama, visual culture, history, music, dance, literature, social movements and geography into the expansive academic field of performance studies. I situate Namibia in the broader context of shared performance practices and theories in the Southern African region, the African continent, and the world at large. I wrote on Oudano in the spirit of critical consciousness and radical imagination across borders.

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