THE LAND IS SUNG

ZULU PERFORMANCES AND THE POLITICS OF PLACE

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We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.

T. S. ELIOT "Little Gidding"

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All maps created by S3 Technologies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is dedicated to the memory of my father, Tony Pooley (1938–2004), and to my mother, Elsa Pooley. Growing up in Natal and Zululand, and journeying in what later became KwaZulu-Natal, enabled me to develop an understanding for this beautiful land and its extraordinary people. I was lucky to have parents who appreciated the diversity of South African cultures and who took a keen interest in music, sound, and the natural world, instilling in me a sense of commitment and conscience in advancing a just cause.

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NOTE ON LANGUAGE

This book makes extensive use of isiZulu terminology, place names, and lyrics. Anglicized spellings for isiZulu terms are avoided. The original terminology is retained throughout the text with a parenthetical gloss at the first mention of each term including both singular and plural forms. A glossary is included for terms that recur frequently in the book.

The decision to make isiZulu words an integral part of this text serves several purposes. I recognize that African languages need to be understood and appreciated on their own terms, and that certain concepts do not have a direct translation into English. For accuracy it is important to use the correct isiZulu words and to explain their usage. Consider two examples: the general term for "dance song" is *ingoma*, whereas specific styles of dance song include *umzansi*, *isishameni*, *izingilili*, *indlamu*, and *isigekle*. A second example is the distinction between the isiZulu words *utshwala* and *umqombothi*. Both may be translated as "beer" in English, but only the latter is brewed specifically for rituals involving *amadlozi* (ancestral spirits).

The decolonial turn, with its emphasis on knowledge production emanating from the Global South, aims at the recognition and revitalization of African languages and knowledge systems. By including song texts and terms in isiZulu, I have sought to open a space for dialogue on their meanings and interpretations. This avoids an "authoritative" reading of cultural practices where several are in fact plausible. It seems valuable to make such texts (and sounds) available to readers, including those involved in the research, rather than to make these texts the preserve of the ethnographer.

Specific features of isiZulu and its orthography should be noted. First is that isiZulu, unlike English, is an agglutinative language in which words are compounds of prefixes, roots, and suffixes that change the meaning and grammatical

function depending on the context of the word in a sentence. By convention, isiZulu prefixes are not capitalized in titles and at the beginning of sentences—for example, in the case of places: eMpangeni, eThekwini; institutions: umKhosi woMhlanga; and genres of music: isiCathamiya, uMaskandi. The singular and plural forms of words share the same root, but differ in prefix (e.g., isigodi/izigodi; tribal ward/s). The glossary is organized to show this relation of singular to plural terms.

The word "Zulu" is used when discussing aspects of culture and history in a general context. Whenever I refer to the language, however, I use the term "isiZulu." Less frequent is "amaZulu," which refers to the nation or to a large group of Zulu people, and "umZulu," which refers to a deep sense of culture. isiZulu is a language that employs a system of contrastive linguistic tones. The nature of this system is discussed in detail in chapter 5. Those interested should consult the comments on orthography and tone systems included in the standard *English–isiZulu, isiZulu–English Dictionary* published by Wits University Press in 2014.

The Land Is Sung

INTRODUCTION

Sounding a Way

FEBRUARY 2012

I went down to the Phongolo with Thulani, Ben Gumede's son. I wanted to speak to the musicians our fathers had listened to all those years before, and I was curious to know whether their songs were still sung. I had traveled up from Umkomaas, my hometown, crossing the broad expanse of the turbulent Thukela River into KwaZulu. I passed by the place of my birth, eMpangeni, then on to Mkhuze where my father, Tony, began his journey.[1] I crossed the steep pass over the Lebombo mountains and into Maputaland taking the road from Jozini to Kosi Bay. At Shemula, there is a fence and cattle barrier to prevent foot-and-mouth disease from spreading south. The steel grates vibrate a familiar rhythm through tires and teeth, a visceral reminder that I'm close. The Gumede homestead is located only a few hundred yards from the T-junction. That's where I meet Thulani. Ben worked with my father for decades, and our families have remained close since the 1960s. Thulani is the only one of his five siblings still residing here because work is so scarce. We pause for a cheerful greeting before starting our journey. Our route takes us along a rough gravel road skirting the Phongolo floodplain to the east and the escarpment to the west. A dusty heat makes a blur of the summer day. An expanse of wilderness stretches before us into Mozambique. Irrigated fields fringe the floodplain, but otherwise the terrain is arid, scattered with homesteads, schools, and thornbush. The road angles away to the west where olive green groves of fever trees tilt awkwardly over the watercourse, discarding leaves and salted branches. The heat is ameliorated in the cool shadows of giant sycamore figs near the low-level causeway over the

Ngwavuma River. The road banks steeply upward before we get to the town, police stations, and army barracks. Up we climb to Ndumo, place of thunder, and to the paths our fathers trod.

The humidity hangs thick in the air. Driving slowly along the crest of Ndumo Hill, we reach a sandy strait fringed by thickets, *ehlatini*. As the road dips I accelerate gently into the soft orange grit. Thulani interjects, "Bra Tom, let's go in here. My ma is visiting." Taken by surprise, I turn sharply up the embankment. Carefully, we follow dual tracks into densely wooded bush. Through the greenery I can just about make out the features of a homestead, a few stools dotted amid the sun-dappled clearing between dwellings. I park the car beneath the shade of the mottled canopy. Thulani raises his voice to announce our arrival, and motions for me to sit down. Busisiwe emerges, smiling, laughing, clapping her hands together in joy. "Hawu, kunjani umNyonyovu?" she says, greeting me by my Zulu name.[2] I am put at ease by the tone and tune of her voice, engrained as it is in my sense of place. This is her sister's *umuzi* (homestead), she explains.

I am introduced to a tall, elderly man, who exclaims: "Ah, yes, you are Mashesha's son! I recognized his straight hair." Last he saw Mashesha was in May 1964, nearly fifty years ago, when my father recorded his *isizembe* (a single-string, ratcheted musical mouth bow played by friction with a short stick) at the back gate to Ndumo Game Reserve.[3] Madolwane is holding an isizembe identical to the instrument I know from our family home. Madolwane lives near Lake Sibayi, about sixty miles away, where he makes and plays these bows, he tells me. The string of the wooden bow is made from *ilala* palm fronds indigenous to the sandy planes of Maputaland.[4] The palm frond is attached to a small bow that has grooves carved into it. The rapid alternation of a stick across these grooves creates sound by friction with the mouth used as a resonator to alternate harmonics, thereby creating a melody. Mashesha recorded the haunting hum and buzz of this extraordinary instrument on magnetic tape. It is a sound that I have come to know through the crackle and hiss of a record. Everyone knew Mashesha in those days, says Madolwane, recalling a time beyond my ken. There were other instruments played then, but no more, he says. He mentions the *stiloti* (a herder's flute) and the *genqe* (a rattle). There is also a single-stringed plucked bow that you insert into your mouth to amplify the harmonics, the *mqangasi*. Some of my father's recordings were released on an LP, *Sounds of Tongaland*, in 1966. Side A contains wildlife sounds recorded at Ndumo Game Reserve and is conceived as a kind of soundscape, without narration, depicting the passage of day. Side B is a compilation of music: singing, dancing, drums, and bows recorded not in studio

conditions but rather with the backdrop of natural sound. Most of the music tracks were recorded live at friends' homes outside the reserve, including here on Ndumo Hill. Madolwane's performance is one of the most striking on record and he has an extraordinary tale to tell. He relates to us how he walked two days from Lake Sibayi to Ndumo to make the recording. My father had a reel-to-reel recording device, a novelty in those days, and Madolwane was curious to hear himself play. When they finished recording, he listened to the playback before returning home on foot. That's the last time he saw Mashesha.

Madolwane is visiting us with a purpose. Word of my purpose has traveled before me thanks to Busisiwe and Thulani. Thulani takes us off to find Msani, better known as Mafutha Enkukhu (Fat Chicken). Msani lives a few miles further down the road, and only a few hundred yards from the Phongolo floodplain where he plows vegetables. We pass an *umaskandi* (colloquial term for a singer-instrumentalist) guitarist on the way, Masombuka Gumede, with whom we talk briefly about musicians in the area; then we venture further down the hill and off into a maze of red sand tracks that disappear into the bush. I can't imagine how farmers succeed in growing mealies and spinach on this arid land. The sand stretches out, and soon there is no cultivation and little sign of human habitation. I spin the little car gently along the faint tracks until we can go no further. We must find Mafutha Enkukhu on foot. Madolwane knows where he is going, and soon ventures off on his own. Thulani and I reach a hedge marking the boundary of a homestead. This surely belongs to Mafutha Enkukhu, so we wait in the shade. I am surprised to discover that his homestead is much larger and older than the others, measuring perhaps two hundred yards in diameter. Having rested for a few minutes, we encounter a woman who knows Msani. He is plowing in the fields down near the Phongolo River, she says, but she'll find him. Looking around, we discover a collection of plows that is matched in size and number only by a separate collection of drums and bull-roarers. An awning has been built to house the instruments, some of which are elevated on timber poles, others hanging from the rafters. Through the green-hedged foliage, the outlines of forest are visible in the distance.

Mafutha Enkukhu is a wiry, bearded man whose upright bearing exudes authority. He is elderly now, perhaps seventy years old, but has a tough vitality. His right arm was blown off by a landmine many years ago, during the civil war in Mozambique. I explain to Msani that I am here with Thulani to conduct research on music and dance. He seems to know this already and is getting straight to business. He has a dance group, he says, that performs *ingoma* (a ge-

neric term for "song," "dance"). This much we had deduced from the impressive collection of cowhide drums. The group performs often, he says, and won a big dance competition at Shemula Lodge in 1997 at the opening of the water supply to the area.[5] Mafutha Enkukhu is proud of his group and says we must make an appointment to discuss my project with his team. I explain that my research involves the study of different genres of Zulu music and dance from across the KwaZulu-Natal province, investigating the relationship of music to language, and taking an interest in its diversity. Recording is important to my study of music and dance styles, and I offer to provide an edited audio or video recording for each group. I hand him an informed consent document to review. It is printed in isiZulu and English. Thulani explains what it means and helps me answer Mafutha Enkukhu's questions.

When Mafutha Enkukhu learns that Mashesha is my father, he is excited and suggests other musicians for me to contact. This calls to mind the chance meeting we had with the guitarist, Masombuka. He was playing gospel, not umaskandi, says Thulani. But Msani knows a true umaskandi in the area, Jonathan Mathenjwa, and Masombuka will know how to contact him. As our discussions conclude, Mafutha Enkukhu directs us to ePhosheni where we will find *umakhweyana* bow players at the home of Sula Ngwenya. This large single-stringed bow has a gourd resonator and is said to have originated with the Thonga people before it was borrowed by the Zulu. In this border region there is a complex admixture of cultures.

It is noon by the time we drive back to meet Busisiwe, dropping off Madolwane. By now it is hot, the air drenched in humidity. There is at least some respite from merciless mosquitoes on the drive back. We drop Busisiwe and her sister at Ndumo Spar, a large grocery store. At the crossroads we turn in a northwestern direction, traveling parallel to the game reserve. There we are to find Sula Ngwenya at the "second right turn." It's about five miles, and sure enough a rough entrance leads us straight into his homestead. We are welcomed by an elderly woman, who tells us to wait for Sula. She talks about two women living close by who play the umakhweyana. This is exciting news because the instrument is extraordinarily rare. Eventually Sula arrives. He has good memories of my father even though he was only a boy back then. "Mashesha, he who talks with birds!" exclaims Sula, looking at us with kind eyes. We are introduced to Zenzile Khumalo, who plays music with the group of women at ePhosheni. Sula says the group played for Maputaland Community Radio based in Jozini—but that was a long time ago, and there are no such opportunities now. Work is scarce, but

some members of the group are employed by Ndumo Game Reserve to remove invasive non-native plants as part of the Working for Water initiative.[6] Later on, as we leave, I notice a faded sign with the official Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife logo on it denoting the provincial department tasked with managing the park. On future visits to the game reserve, I discover this sign in the most unexpected places: in the bushveld adjacent Nyamithi pan, deep in the thickets of the Mahemane, and in the Madiphini fig forest where truckloads of workers unclog the waterways and clean up the bush. And so my journey begins with the memory of birds and bows, and plants, and music, in a community of people who remember my family and our shared past.

From highways to regional routes, single-lane carriageways to dusty dirt tracks: new roads have been forged to the very ends of KwaZulu-Natal. A generation ago, many rural communities in this province of South Africa were isolated from the conventions of urban life. The postapartheid state's developmental agenda has changed all that. Networks of communication and information have cascaded to places long isolated. Following the deprivations meted out by the apartheid regime, the democratic dispensation inaugurated by President Nelson Mandela in 1994 has seen to the provision of basic services, and to just principles, which are now protected in a Bill of Rights.[7] Connections to electricity, water, sanitation, education, and health care have gradually spread, and the disparities between urban and rural lifeways have narrowed with the widening of roads. When I began my research, many of these roads were unpaved, some impassable. Now, a decade later, tarmac licks its way to remote corners of the country. Trucks trek merchandise to new rural hubs. Cellular technologies and digital satellite television excite expectations for a newly connected world. Concrete strip malls dispense commodities mixing trusty brands like Boxer, Pep, and Ellerines with designer labels, furniture, and building supply stores. Boom boxes draw customers with umaskandi beats. Sidewalks are overrun by vendors, shoppers, and minibus taxis. This economy of retailers, wholesalers, and street vendors is sustained by a small population of wage earners, by income from migrant workers, and by the millions of child support, disability, and pension grants from national government. With crippling unemployment levels, nearly a third of South Africa's population depend on these grants as their primary mode of income. In juxtaposition, the creeping tendrils of corporate development etch

their way into the once barren hillsides. Homesteads sprawl in myriad formations, each with its own road. Concomitant to these developments are changes in lifestyle, culture, and performance that have molded the sensibilities of musicians, dancers, and orators in the age of social media.

This book is an ethnography of Zulu performances in which I show how song, dance, and praise poetry articulate a politics of place in postapartheid South Africa. It is based on multisited fieldwork conducted from 2011 to 2021 in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. I chart the changing lifeways of rural and migrant Zulu communities focusing on how the everyday experiences of those struggling for a living wage are expressed in performance. My writing is rooted in ethnomusicology, anthropology, and sound studies. It is complemented by audio and audiovisual recordings, which are included on this book's companion website and tied to specific passages flagged in the text using the symbols and . These recordings are integral to the analysis of sound and music and to the phenomenology of performance that I develop in this book. This phenomenology explores how ways of being-in-the-world are structured by the overlapping cultures and regimes of traditional governance in the rural polity of KwaZulu-Natal and how these are in dynamic relation with the strategic objectives of the democratic state.[8] Studies of traditional and neotraditional genres of music advance new methods for musical transcription and analysis. Spiritual and political ties to land are explored in studies of ritual, ancestral belief, and the environment. Voice and movement are chronicled in transcription and thick description, in dialogue and critical reflection. The emphasis on *performances* rather than *performance* in the book's title makes the point that Zulu identities are multiple, irreducible, and adaptable.

The journeys I traveled in order to record performances have immersed me in a society undergoing radical transformation. The politics of land, identity, and belonging in South Africa are suspended across deep fault lines. Migrancy continues to hollow out the adult population in rural areas, and the neglect and corruption of municipalities leaves many communities vulnerable. Institutions of justice and democracy are under threat, and the role of traditional leaders in this mix is vexed. These leaders are formally recognized by the state as custodians of the land who administer justice in accordance with law and custom. But what role do traditional leaders play in the lives of their communities, and how are the dynamics of power performed? How do performers play with the politics of custom to address their needs, desires, and expectations in a fast-changing world?

This introductory chapter provides a context for the interpretation of con-

temporary performance focusing on the politics of identity and governance in the postapartheid state, as well as recent work in ethnography and sound studies that weighs the ambiguities of democracy and traditional governance in South Africa.[9] Singing is ubiquitous and distinctive of performances in nearly every genre discussed in this book, and it is through singing that land, genealogy, and ancestral belief are connected in Zulu cosmology. How do musicians, dancers, and orators perform their ways of being-in-the-world? I will show how performance is a mode of political action: singers sing of justice; dancers dance their freedom. The nexus of belief that structures the worlds of musicians, dancers, and orators is embedded in epistemologies of land, genealogy, and spirituality. By approaching performance through the lens of phenomenology and sound studies, this book aims to render the experience of performance vividly. The remainder of this chapter describes the ethnographic methods deployed to study performances before turning to a discussion of Zulu identities and genres of performance.

ON METHOD

The interpretive and reflexive ethnographic strategies employed in this book are influenced in different ways by anthropologists Clifford Geertz, James Clifford, and George Marcus,[10] as well as by recent ethnographic writing in ethnomusicology and sound studies. Thick description is a stylistic strategy that I use to envision the sensory world.[11] I draw on work by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in phenomenology, as well as Paul Stoller, Deborah Kapchan, Steven Feld, Veit Erlmann, Louise Meintjes, and others in the anthropology of the senses and sound studies.[12]

The advent of sound studies has set in motion a new wave of ethnographic writing that first emerged after the writing culture moment in the 1980s.[13] Writing culture fashioned a literary response to the crisis of representation in anthropology. At the time, Clifford argued that the "literary or rhetorical dimensions of ethnography can no longer be so easily compartmentalized," pointing to the ways in which "academic and literary genres interpenetrate."[14] Familiar codes and modes of representation suddenly became contested ground while the poetic and political were now inseparable. For Clifford, ethnography entails "the invention, not the representation of cultures."[15] But this invention is no less valid as a mode of interpretation. Ethnographers began to place themselves squarely within the narratives they told as interested observers who were constrained,

but also empowered, by their own unique perspectives. "Transparent modes of authority" that positioned the ethnographer as the arbiter of objective fact were now open to criticism.[16] This reflexive positioning of the ethnographer as central to the construction of the text informs my writing. Transcription and thick description are used to foreground other voices while evoking a sense of space, place, and somatic immersion.[17]

The lessons of reflexive ethnography resound in new musicological perspectives that emerged in the 1990s and after.[18] The contexts for this shift in method were a postmodern turn in the humanities and social sciences, the rise of the postcolony and postcolonial theory, feminism, as well as a resistance to authoritarian and patriarchal modes of authority and representation that undermined the rights of minorities. These factors were registered in ethnomusicology through an emphasis on research in situ through participation, observation, interviews, and the analysis of texts and performances gathered through ethnography.[19] The ensuing decades have seen numerous new paths into and out of ethnography. Ethnographies of African musics, such as those of Michelle Kisliuk and Steven Friedson, offer different ways of exploring reflexivity and phenomenology as research strategies.[20] Here I turn to recent literature in anthropology of the senses and sound studies to discuss how these fields have refashioned the poetics of ethnography.

An ethnography of somatic emplacement is poetic in its evocation of sound. Deborah Kapchan captures this when she observes that "the body begins with sound, in sound. The sound of the body is the sound of the other, but it is also the sound of the same. From the beginning, subjectivity emerges from intersubjectivity, the one is born from the many. We resound together."[21] We "resound together" in an environment. The sounds of the natural and humanmade worlds; of the birds, insects, animals, wind, leaves, trees, and grasses; of water, fire, and rain; of machines and technologies; all these elements situate us and shape our acoustic ecology.

Steven Feld's *Sound and Sentiment* pioneered a way to give voice to these elements in ethnography, both in observing the poetic dimensions to a culture situated in its natural habitat, but also in evoking that ethnoscape through a poetics of ethnographic writing.[22] This approach has gained new momentum in studies of "the Global South."[23] In *Remapping Sound Studies*, Gavin Steingo and Jim Sykes explain a new commitment to "situating sound in and from the South not as a unified, alternative notion of what sound is but as diverse sonic ontologies, processes, and actions that cumulatively make up core components

of the history of sound in global modernity."[24] Sound studies and sound writing, then, are critical to the approach to history and culture developed in this book. The conceptual imaginary that informs these fields needs further elaboration and refinement before it is employed in the chapters that follow.

SOUND WRITING

A soundscape encompasses the totality of sounds experienced in an environment and depends for its identity on elements both synchronic and diachronic. Thinking of the soundscape through semiosis enables a careful sense-making of sound. R. Murray Schafer explains how a soundscape "consists of events *heard* not objects *seen*."[25] The "keynotes" to a soundscape are its "fundamental tones" carved out "by its geography and climate: water, wind, forests, plains, birds, insects and animals. Many of these sounds may possess archetypal significance; that is, they may have imprinted themselves so deeply on the people hearing them that life without them would be sensed as a distinct impoverishment. They may even affect the behavior or lifestyle of a society."[26] For Schafer, the sonic identity of an environment is culturally embedded over time. This approach to soundscape is not adopted as a method, but his insights about the rootedness of a society in its environmental sounds are crucial to the perspectives on place, space, and identity that I articulate in later chapters.

In a reorientation of the "ethnographic ear," Veit Erlmann explains how anthropologists are "overcoming the hegemony of textual analogies" as part of a broader interdisciplinary effort to rethink the place of auditory perception in the study of the senses. Erlmann introduces the idea of "hearing cultures" to encourage ethnographers to "conceptualize new ways of knowing a culture and of gaining a deepened understanding of how the members of a society know each other."[27] The move away from textual signifiers to sounds enables us to gain insight into the ways people relate and understand their place in the world differently.[28] The recognition that ways of knowing are sounded in a sense of hearing articulates a politics important to this project, particularly in the chapters of this book that explore questions of justice and ethics. Deborah Kapchan writes of the practice of listening as compassionate scholarship, adopting an experimental approach to sound writing that is political.

> Writing *about* sound and writing *sound* are two different processes. The first maintains the positivist position of subject (writer) and object (sound). The

> second breaks out of duality to inhabit a multidimensional position as translator between worlds—the writer listening to and translating sound through embodied experience, the body translating the encounter between word and sound, sound translating and transforming both word and author. This is sound writing. When she flies, how extraordinary![29]

It is the intersection of ethics and politics in poetics that makes sound writing a powerful new approach for ethnographers. How does writing *sound* a world? Poetic writing facilitates a record of listening, and sensory responses to it, whose meanings cannot be reduced to a familiar order of things. Recorded sound enables a way of listening to the voices that figure this book and is used as a method for tracing my auditory footprints in the sonic spaces of which I am now part.

Sound studies offers a perspective that is posthuman in its emphasis on worlds beyond our own, or rather, that encompass natural worlds too often alienated by our anthropocentrism. Steven Feld's "acoustemology" speaks in important ways to the potential for sound studies to advance this agenda. Feld explains, "The anthropology of sound idea advocated for an expanded terrain when engaging global musical diversity. That expansion acknowledged the critical importance of language poetics, and voice; of species beyond the human; of acoustic environments; and of technological mediation and circulation."[30] Shedding anthropology meant embracing a new terminology that is likewise defined against others. "Unlike acoustic ecology," for instance, "acoustemology is about the experience and agency of listening histories, understood as relational and contingent, situated and reflexive."[31] Feld's acoustemology responds to soundscape without privileging sound. Like Tim Ingold, he is careful to relinquish the conceptual apparatus of landscape that is embedded with visual terminologies and ocularcentrism.[32] Listening is conceived as a relational practice that embraces feedback. Listening to the land makes sound studies an important domain of scholarship in which to present concerns regarding environmental justice and the loss of biodiversity threatening our planet. Sound writing figures the disciplinary orientation of a book that is vested in notions of relationality, reciprocity, and dialectic that are germane to recent ethnomusicology.

ETHNOGRAPHY IN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

This book is about performances as political acts.[33] To understand the nature and meaning of these acts in everyday life, I advance interpretations that are

the product of dialogue and feedback from my participants. The perspectives on the political acts recorded here are nevertheless partial, idiosyncratic, and incomplete. It was often the case that my understanding of a concept began with a misunderstanding and subsequent clarification from one of my interlocutors. This book is conceived in the spirit of this continuous and evolving dialogue as a technology of connection. This recognition of my own doing and making in the process of ethnography is explained by Gregory Barz and Timothy Cooley, who write: "By creating a reflexive image of ourselves as ethnographers and the nature of our 'being-in-the-world', we believe we stand to achieve better intercultural understanding as we begin to recognize our own shadows among those we strive to understand."[34] How we engage with others determines what we learn and come to know about their worlds in addition to our own. Reflexive ethnography rejects the confident essentialism of colonial-era representations of the Other, as well as the idea of cultural practices as "wholly objectively observable," and aims instead to position the ethnographer in relation to, and in conversation with, persons in the cultures studied.[35] Personal attachments and interactions are not hidden away in footnotes and acknowledgments. Instead, these idiosyncrasies of scholarship are recognized for what they are: motivation and rationale for scholarship that is humanistic. How we feel about our experiences shapes how we write about them.

The ethnographic texts that figure the narratives in this book alternate voices and registers, sometimes marking closely the descriptive and transcriptive while at other times analytical and reflexive modes of writing foreground my voice as well as those of my participants. I approach fieldwork as an ethical project founded on reciprocity. The nature of this reciprocity had to be negotiated at every stage of research. For the vulnerable, where day-to-day realities present critical challenges to subsistence, I found it essential to engage with the needs of communities before asking them to commit time, effort, and resources to activities for which they did not accrue a tangible benefit. The positivistic documentation of cultural practices should not be the measure of "access" or the basis for reciprocity. The appeal to posterity, which I find to be insufficient as a rationale for research, has for too long been the refrain of some anthropologists and historians. In South Africa, the weight of an exploitative history enjoins us to resist the ideology of research as an autonomous pursuit of intrinsic value. Decades of research on *Volkekunde* (folk studies) at South African universities were conducted in service of the apartheid state with the distinct purpose of advancing its policies of separate development and the repression and exploitation

of Black South Africans while supposedly adopting a scientific methodology.[36] The contemporary ethnographer must tread with trepidation when encountering ethnic and racial difference. Throughout the research process, I have negotiated a complex postapartheid racial dynamic, which meant that trusting relationships were usually established over extended time periods. It is by returning year after year that committed reciprocal relationships have been made possible. The complexities involved in relating to and explaining the experiences of others motivates my approach to a dialogical mode of scholarship. It is also why I envisage this book as a route marker in an unfolding program of research rather than its summation.

Ethnographers make sense of the cultural contexts out of which, and into which, performances are fashioned. This book explores how culture plays a decisive role in how we conceive, construct, and interact with the world around us, and how embodied knowledge is crucial to how we express ourselves in it.[37] I have adopted a holistic approach to the study of performance because music, dance, and praise poetry are performed as integral arts in Zulu societies. I use the term "performance" to describe the modes of expression through which persons explore their immediate and imagined worlds as amalgamations of sound, movement, and gesture. The emphasis on consciousness as an overarching frame of reference for ways of being-in-the-world also points to the patterns of thought and action that link performers from across a wide range of genres in shared conventions of practice. This powerful social connectionism is acquired and activated instinctively.[38] In the sections that follow, I focus on how Zulu performances emerge from Zulu identities and how genres of Zulu performance interrelate.

ZULU IDENTITIES

What does it mean to belong? In 1994, at the dawn of South Africa's democracy, belonging was open to all. The question has become fraught over the past decade with identity politics now a zero-sum game. Archbishop Desmond Tutu's vision for a "rainbow nation" has withered in the shadow of corruption and social acrimony. Claims to authenticity now appear to threaten principles of diversity and inclusion. Desperate acts of exclusion are common and characterized by acts of hostility toward "foreigners." The power of ethnic mobilization in South African politics remains strong in KwaZulu-Natal and has been used by politicians and monarchs to threaten disorder. In these contexts, Zulu identity is a crucial site of contestation for the polity.

Speakers of the isiZulu language constitute the largest language community in southern Africa. Most live in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, and the Free State. isiZulu is the lingua franca for urban residents of many metropolitan areas.[39] The dialects of present-day isiZulu are the product of long and complex genesis over the past two centuries.[40] Clement Doke described two dialects: *ukuthefula* (meaning "to be oily, slippery") and *ukuthekeza* (meaning "to quiver, to speak in a quavering voice"). The former is spoken on the east coast of the province, whereas the latter is spoken to the south and from the Thukela River northward to eSwatini (Swaziland).[41] Southern tribes in the (eastern) Cape province speak the related *ukuthetha* (meaning "to speak sharply, to scold") languages of the amaMpondo, amaXhosa, amaMpondomisi, amaThembu, and amaGcaleka. To the west of the Drakensberg and into Lesotho and the Free State are the *kubuwa* influences of the Sotho languages. To the north, in Mpumalanga and southern Mozambique, are siSwati, xiRonga, and xiTsonga speakers.[42] The region of Maputaland is populated by persons speaking Thonga, also a Nguni language. This is the root of the name Tongaland, which was originally given to the area encompassing the Jozini and uMhlabuyalingana districts in which I conducted work for this book (chapters 5 to 7). However, this border region between South Africa, Mozambique, and eSwatini is populated by speakers of Thonga, siSwati, xiTsonga, and isiZulu. The predominance of isiZulu is partly the result of the annexation of Tongaland into Zululand and Natal (chapter 1). The politics of language play out in schools where children are taught isiZulu rather than Thonga and are encouraged to compete in performances of *indlamu*, *ingoma*, *isicathamiya*, and *amahubo* that normalize cultural and linguistic features specific to Zulu cultures (chapter 6). The introduction of literacy in the twentieth century as well as the widespread availability of radio, television, and social media have changed the ways people communicate and express themselves.[43] Features of dialect are important to the analysis and interpretation of all forms of orature, including song, speech, and praise poetry, and especially in districts on the edges of nations where languages are in transition and performers switch or mix codes.

Zulu identities demonstrate important similarities and differences across KwaZulu-Natal. The idea of an undifferentiated Zulu identity has been rigorously contested in recent literature in anthropology, archaeology, and history.[44] Since the 1970s, regional differences within KwaZulu-Natal have to some degree been ameliorated by province-wide efforts to reassert a pan-Zulu identity through Inkatha, and through nationalistic performances of various kinds, such as the

cultural activities programs promoted by the Department of Arts and Culture in KwaZulu-Natal schools, and the mass events hosted at the Zulu royal residences.[45] The focus here is on performance practices at places within *izigodi* (tribal wards), and their relationship to groups, some of which have as yet received only limited attention from social scientists surveying the scope of this region's culture and history. Patrilineal groups are sometimes defined as "tribes" who fled Zululand during the reign of Shaka kaSezangakhona (c. 1787–1828), the monarch recognized as the founder of the modern Zulu nation and its enduring symbol of power. Recent scholarship recognizes these complexities through careful reconsideration of the archive.[46] The relationships between cultures in and across this region have been fluid for many centuries—before and after European colonists arrived in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Zuluness and Zulu national identity are not coterminous. In uMsinga, for instance, the Mchunu and Thembu tribes have historically maintained independence from monarchical supremacy. The idea of granting uniformity on ethnic groupings at first served colonial agendas where territories were divided by treaty and fiat, and where international borders were established at the whim of administrators with no understanding of or care for their local impact. Successive Union and apartheid governments sought control over the lives and livelihoods of Black South Africans, as well as their land.[47] Thus, questions of ownership and belonging are tied to identities to which persons may or may not subscribe. Or rather, the construction of ethnic identities is itself a fluid and contested space characterized by its heterogeneity rather than its homogeneity. Commonalities are recognized rather than assumed. The question of territorial homogeneity and difference is discussed in the next chapter, where questions of tribe, nation, and culture are weighed in relation to the vexed issue of land and identity in postapartheid South Africa.

In scholarly research on representations of Zuluness in the media and popular culture, anachronistic and stereotypical representations of Zulu "warrior culture" have been thoroughly debunked. The image of a mythic Shaka is still associated with war, conquest, and annihilation in the popular imagination. Historians and anthropologists have sought to rethink these and other stereotypes about Zulu culture and identity that have been used to advance political agendas in the past.[48] In this context, the militancy of some contemporary Zulu cultures of performance, as well as the ubiquity of martial symbols and gestures, require nuanced interpretation. To reduce these symbols to a global exoticism is to mistake the stereotypes of the past for the complex representations of the present, including

those of contemporary Zulu political movements like Inkatha.[49] Louise Meintjes has written vividly of the exploitation of Zulu bodies by apartheid ideologues and colonialists, and of their dehumanization through the circulation of ferocious images in global markets.[50] There is no closed inventory of Zulu signs signaling distinctness, difference, or coherence. There is no ur-Zulu conferring an organic unity on the plethora of individual units. This book tells specific stories about Zulu cultures of performance, describing thickly the conventions of genre and style in dance, music, and praise poetry that give meaning to the everyday. The specificities of context and culture foreground the political dimensions of performance, and these need to be understood in their proper historical contexts.

The "insidiously resilient stereotypes" that sustain fallacious representations of Zuluness today are widely condemned as essentialist and denigrating.[51] These images are contested by Zulus themselves who refuse to be associated with the cultures of violence to which they have sometimes been tied. The constructs of "tribe" and "tradition" persist in the postapartheid political imaginary, and not simply as the product of global narratives of desire. Tribe and tradition are woven into the workings of society and tied to systems of governance and representation with origins in the nineteenth century. These terms are still widely used in school textbooks, in tourist brochures, in government policies, and in the media.[52] "Tribe" refers to large patrilineal political formations under the leadership of a single patriarch or matriarch. In South Africa, tribes fall under the authority and administration of South Africa's Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA). "Tradition" is used to refer to indigenous knowledge systems, practices, and modes of performance considered specific to South Africa and consistent with its African pasts. Tradition invokes a sense of authenticity even in forms that are distinctly hybrid. Constructions of Zulu tribe and tradition are in flux and so are treated here as historically contingent.[53] In this play of postcolonial signs, the rich canvas of Zulu performances needs to be interpreted reflexively, allowing for textured arts of parody, caricature, and appropriation. The intensely personal performances recorded in women's and men's bodies articulate an aesthetics that is embedded in circumstance and convention, and which is conceived for an audience of fellow dancers, kith, and kin.

In her book *Dust of the Zulu*, Louise Meintjes is careful to identify and distance her readings from a global Zuluness by deconstructing the essentialist ideology of fixed, timeless, and unchanging Zulu identity through close analysis of the warrior hero-villain. She chronicles the lives and exploits of ingoma dancers from rural esiPongweni in South Africa, tracking their voices, bodies, and careers, and

situating their performances in the context of South Africa's violent transition to democracy. Meintjes shows how the brutal legacies of colonialism and apartheid still shape contemporary ingoma practice and its commodification. Her chronicle of *umzansi*—one of several distinct styles of ingoma danced in the province of KwaZulu-Natal—raises urgent questions about South Africa's impoverished rural communities and the status of migrant labor in its urban ghettoes.

Reading Zulu signs through a global lens risks missing their local intent, reducing their relevance to discursive regimes aimed at a northern readership. In advancing scholarship on the Global South, this book focuses on everyday representations in Zulu performances by taking account of both historical and contemporary factors in structuring worlds of experience. The singing, dancing, and praising of musicians from across the region demonstrates important commonalities indicative of shared frames of reference and a sense of shared consciousness. "Consciousness" refers here to ways of being-in-the-world, principles of thought and action made normative through practice. These principles are evident in language usage and cognition, in music, dance, and orality, and in genres of performance whose genealogies reach back several decades. This coalescence of consciousness is a product of history.

Zulu societies are continuously evolving to take account of a changing social dynamic shaped by factors of economy, health, morality, and media. In rural country districts, social distinction and status are still shaped by factors of gender and generation. The expression of these relationships is embedded in language, performance, and bearing, and is made concrete in the practice of *inhlonipho* (behavior that exhibits respect, reverence, and honor in accordance with specific social norms).[54] Marriage and associated rituals are institutions tied to Zulu cosmologies that acknowledge the centrality of modes of being-in-the-world associated with "tradition." But the fluidity of tradition is thematic to the concerns of this book. Lifeways are changing, and have been changing, since the early nineteenth century. Decades ago, in traditional law it was common for men to marry multiple wives and occupy homesteads organized hierarchically. But these practices are less common today with the institution of marriage understood quite differently, and with a high proportion of adults living in relationships that are not formally recognized as marriages. The material conditions of present-day society make different demands, and the idea of the nuclear family is increasingly undermined by other ways of imagining community. The consequences of these changes are felt across the structure of Zulu societies. The architecture of the umuzi itself used to be shaped by principles of Zulu cosmology with its

emphasis on veneration for ancestors and patrilineal descent. In some places, these factors remain strong; in many others, they are gone.

Labor migrancy is a way of life for those who rely on subsistence farming to supplement their incomes. A large proportion of adults live and work most of the year in cities and towns far from their rural homes. This disrupts the rhythms of rural life, which are beset by the challenges of poverty, unemployment, and disease. Often it is those who cannot work because of disability who remain at home in the rural districts. Factors of gender and status to some extent determine the sorts of musical performances women, men, and children engage in and can access. Even those genres that are not tied to specific communal rites—such as popular forms of isicathamiya and umaskandi—tend to be performed by all-male or all-female groups. At uMsinga, for instance, married women usually only perform in private, whereas unmarried women perform at rituals and ceremonies attended by whole communities. There are both cultural and historical reasons for these divisions, as we shall see in the chapters that follow. For instance, adolescents are socialized in peer groups whose lifelong bonds are established through rites of passage. Other codes of interaction are based on marriage practices and taboos. These relations inscribe themselves in music and dance and are evident in the public performance of gender.[55]

GENRES OF ZULU PERFORMANCE

Zulu genres of performance are marked by commonalities in sound and movement. Music is seldom independent of dance and gesture. Genres classified into ceremonial and dance songs are termed *izingoma* (singular, *ingoma*). Genres of izingoma are further delineated by gender and regional differences and are sometimes classed using the pan-Bantu term *ngoma*.[56] The Zulu societies discussed in this book are predominantly patrilineal. A clear separation of male and female roles and responsibilities is made such that performances by and for men, women, boys, and girls are largely autonomous. The demarcation of sonic spaces reinforces the relative autonomy of these groups (see chapter 3). Two popular genres of women's dance songs that I focus on in this book are wedding and *umemulo* (a coming-of-age ritual for girls and women indicating their readiness for marriage) songs. These dance songs are associated with ceremonies and rituals but are sometimes performed outside of these contexts. The umemulo is attended by the entire community who feast and dance together to celebrate the transition, and communicate this to their *amadlozi*, or ancestral spirits (chapter

3). At these events the focal point is the young women celebrated by their parents. The dancing is accompanied by singing, clapping, and stamping, and sometimes by the beating of large bass drums.

Communal song is characterized by at least two voice parts in antiphonal call-and-response, solo and chorus, singing different texts nonsimultaneously (chapter 5). Songs tend to be cyclical with the same melodies returning repeatedly, and with no fixed cadence or end point. These dance songs are designed for communal activities and encourage participation, including ululation, gesticulation, praising, and singing. Men's dance songs employ similar techniques and include subgenres that are regionally distinct and marked by specific choreographies, rhythms, and, in some cases, by instrumental accompaniment.[57] Performances at weddings, funerals and umemulo ceremonies are often accompanied by *izaga* (battle cries), which "usually comprise rhythmical or ('choral recitation') without fixed musical pitches. There is a common rise and fall of pitch, determined by the speech tones of the words, but no uniformity of absolute pitch, among the participants."[58] Adult men also sing *amahubo* (serious anthems).[59] "Each clan has its own *ihubo*, sung only on special occasions, with great reverence, and without dancing . . . The term *ihubo* is also used for war song, *ihubo lempi*, however, for regimental song, *ihubo lamabutho*."[60] In the past, amahubo were sung only when traditional beer was brewed, and served as a means of communication with ancestors. In this book, amahubo are discussed in relation to wedding ceremonies and performances at the umemulo. In both cases, communion with ancestors is a basic function, but so, too, is group identification and genealogy. Musa Xulu has shown how amahubo have been incorporated into nearly all the major genres of Zulu music, thus demonstrating the fluidity of cultural practices and the ways in which popular forms have become synthesized indigenous forms.

Many of the musical instruments and sounds associated with rural life disappeared in the twentieth century. Bow music used to be popular but these instruments have been replaced by the guitar, harmonica, and concertina.[61] Two neotraditional genres of Zulu popular music are umaskandi, a guitar-drum-and-bass style that is also performed with concertinas and violins, and isicathamiya, an a cappella vocal genre with close-knit harmonies and a distinctive call-and-response heterophonic structure that is choreographed to light stepping movements and gestures.[62] These genres are performed widely on radio and television, and I have recorded umaskandi artists all across KwaZulu-Natal. There are many other genres that we might include in this short survey of Zulu genres of performance, such *amakhwaya*, jazz, gospel, house, and *kwaito*;[63] but the focus of this

book is on the traditional and neotraditional genres, including umaskandi, as well as the songs, dances, and praises that accompany rituals and public celebrations in contemporary life.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

In this chapter I have focused on the disciplinary contexts for studying cultures of performance in situ in sound studies, anthropology, and ethnomusicology. A reflexive ethnography invested in the politics and poetics of writing culture, and the interpretive strategy of sound studies, informs the narrative strategy of this book. Zulu identity politics in the postapartheid period will be explored further in the chapters that follow, focusing on popular and traditional genres of performance.

This is a book about the politics of place, and so land tenure, governance, and representation are important themes (see chapter 1). Land is administered in rural KwaZulu-Natal by two contrastive but complementary institutions of the postapartheid state. Democratically elected councillors administer wards while traditional leaders oversee separately designated izigodi (tribal wards). Land tenure in the izigodi is administered by traditional authorities under the control of *amakhosi* (kings, or what were formerly known as "chiefs" in the apartheid era). The Zulu monarch is the custodian of the Ingonyama Trust, which is responsible for all tribal land in KwaZulu-Natal. The land question is central to the politics of South Africa because of the history of colonial dispossession and apartheid, the nature of communal land tenure, the violence associated with contestations over land, the failure of many land reform programs, and heightened political rhetoric demanding expropriation without compensation. I explain how certain aspects of land tenure and governance work, focusing on the history of these practices at key sites of fieldwork in KwaZulu-Natal. The dynamics of land tenure figure in the performances I record. Songs, dances, and orature articulate the spiritual and spatial politics of lifeworlds conceived as an extension of land. Land is thus a determining context for understanding the political economy of the rural polity, and for making sense of Zulu culture and consciousness in the postapartheid era.

Chapter 2 takes its title from the word *umsindo* (meaning "noise," "din," "uproar," or "quarrel"). It is also the colloquial term for weddings and other large communal celebrations featuring performances of music, dance, and praise poetry. The word encapsulates the polyphonic textures of Zulu acoustemology

in which voices are immersed in the simultaneity of dancing, singing, ululating, praising, chanting, and gesticulating in heightened states. This aesthetic of "simultaneous doing" is a key characteristic of Zulu performances at weddings and umemulo ceremonies (see chapters 2–4).[64] Chapter 2 is built around a thickly sounded description of a single wedding at Ncunjane in central KwaZulu-Natal and explores the aesthetics of immersion embodied in performance. In this chapter and in the two that follow, I theorize the concept of sonic space, focusing on the ordering of Zulu homesteads and communities. The competitive social dynamics displayed in performances by Mchunu and Thembu groups at this wedding illustrate how sonic spaces are constructed on the basis of reciprocity.

Chapter 3 describes features common to umemulo events drawing on multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork from across KwaZulu-Natal but focusing on events in the izigodi of Dakeni, Mazizini, Mashunka, Ncunjane, Nkaseni, and Shemula. These umemulo rituals had in common the goal of celebrating and recognizing the conduct and chastity of a daughter by her parents. The umemulo serves as the public announcement of a young woman's readiness for marriage, and of the parents' elevated status within the community. I argue that umemulo songs and dances temporarily suspend the taboos governing everyday social discourse and propriety, thus enabling and normalizing a mode of intergenerational communication otherwise forbidden. The role of sacrifice and seclusion as a mode of communication with ancestral spirits is central to this analysis.

iNgoma dance is performed at celebrations, competitions, and festivals, and after weddings and rituals. Chapter 4 explores the phenomenology of ingoma in hostel life, focusing on the genre of *isishameni* (a style of unaccompanied dance characterized by its high kick) performed by teams of Thembu men at Jeppe, the Wolhuter men's hostel in Jeppestown, Johannesburg, and back home at uMsinga. This chapter reflects on the experiences of dancers who performed at the uMsinga wedding and umemulo ceremonies recorded in chapters 2 and 3. These men are migrants accommodated in the inner-city hostels who perform ingoma on weekends and after hours. Their lifeworlds in the city have come under increasing social and economic pressures in the postapartheid era from rising unemployment, poverty, violence, and competition from other migrants. I argue that dance articulates belonging, territorializes space in the inner city, and articulates a bodily response to the challenges of worlds under threat. In this chapter I draw on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jonathan Clegg to unpack the spatial dynamics of the hostel and the relation of these communities to their surroundings.

Chapter 5 focuses on how popular praises in umaskandi guitar music are used to record history, genealogy, and identity, and how they are used as a political tool for social critique. These praises are characterized by rapid, tonally nuanced phrases of incisive social commentary set to the rhythms of instrumental and electronic music. Praises articulate the experiences and heritage of their orators and are replete with idioms and lyrical encodings intelligible only to those familiar with the contexts, symbols, and sounds specific to their perspectives. I offer interpretations of the shared conventions and martial imagery used by musicians and orators from the izigodi of Mkhomazi, Mashunka, Nongoma, Ndumo, and Nkaseni who use praises to evince sharp social critique. The genealogy in this chapter links umaskandi to other popular praises, to genres of dance and bow music, and to *izibongo zamakhosi* (the praises of kings). The politics of popular praises are tied to land, identity, and tradition in a changing world. New musico-analytical approaches are introduced to show how the prosodic dimensions to these praises reinforce their political messaging.

Themes of poverty, inequality, and performance are elaborated in chapter 6. With many parents in rural KwaZulu-Natal working far away as migrants, I found that some of the most vital performances take place in schools. The hugely popular cultural competitions facilitated by the Department of Arts and Culture are an important site for performances of indigenous music, dance, and praise poetry. But what purpose do such competitions serve in a system of education that privileges notation over performance? I argue that an inclusive vision for music literacy in South Africa would help revitalize a curriculum predicated on Western norms.

Chapter 7 is a study of sound and environmental justice at Ndumo Game Reserve, a place where communities and conservationists are in conflict over land. My father's writings on Ndumo, and his recordings on *Sounds of Tongaland*, imagined the coexistence of humans and wildlife while recognizing a history of dispossession and exploitation. When I returned some fifty years after he made the Tongaland record, I discovered a community in crisis with conservation authorities seemingly unable to maintain the integrity of the reserve's boundaries. I argue that the loss of biodiversity and the threat of extinction at Ndumo make urgent the need for interventions to support communities and conservation bodies alike in finding solutions of mutual benefit. Chapter 8 is an essay on reciprocity and the ethics of ethnography that reflects on my own recording practice in this book, developing ideas from earlier chapters. The conclusion offers an analytical summation and final thoughts on themes of land and belonging that recur throughout this book.

Zulu performances embody ways of being-in-the-world that respond dynamically to the politics of place in postapartheid South Africa. The violent contestations over land and belonging that are voiced in these performances are symptomatic of a nation in turmoil. By adopting a multisited and multigenre perspective on Zulu performances, I have sought to illuminate some of the common historical, cultural, and spiritual factors that are at play in these contestations. Land is a powerful spiritual and emotive force that binds persons and communities. The land question remains unresolved and is a bitter site of political contestation in postapartheid South Africa. The sense of dislocation that many Zulu communities feel as a result of segregation and apartheid has yet to be resolved by state interventions. To understand the importance of land in postapartheid South Africa, and its thematic role in Zulu performances, the next chapter engages with the history and politics of land tenure and governance in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.